



Malatest
International

Evaluation report:

**The four-year evaluation of
Oranga Tamariki Transition
Support Service**

To 30 June 2023



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the Transition Support Service evaluation.

The evaluation was a partnership between the evaluators (Malatest International and the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre) and the Transition Support Service team. Working in partnership has strengthened the evaluation and made the findings meaningful for Oranga Tamariki.

The voices of young people, their caregivers and their transition workers were central to the evaluation. Thank you for taking the time to talk with us, to complete surveys and share your experiences.

Thank you also to the wider Oranga Tamariki staff including policy, regional leaders and social workers for your contributions.

“Ki te Kotahi te kākaho, ka whati, ki te kāpuia, e kore e whati”

When we stand alone, we are vulnerable, but together we are unbreakable.

The Malatest International team

December 2023

Table of contents

Executive summary	5
Recommendations	10
1. The Transition Support Service is a core Oranga Tamariki service	13
2. Evaluation of the Transition Support Service	16
3. The young people eligible for transition support	19
4. Transition support is provided by independent TSS partners and an Oranga Tamariki transition assistance line.....	25
5. Planning and preparation for transition and referral to a TSS partner are not consistently happening	32
6. How young people are supported during transition	39
7. Transition support has helped many young people	52
8. Opportunities to strengthen transition support.....	65
Appendix 1: Timeline of TSS development	73
Appendix 2: Intervention Logic.....	74
Appendix 3: Timeline of evaluation activities.....	75
Appendix 4: Evaluation methods.....	77
Appendix 5: Details of financial support provided	80

Abbreviations and definitions

CYRAS	Oranga Tamariki national database
ETRR	Entitlement to Remain or Return to living with a care giver
IDI	Integrated data infrastructure
Just Sayin'	Annual survey of young people eligible for transition worker support
The Action Plan	The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan
TSS	Transition Support Service
TSS Partners	NGO organisations supporting young people under contract with Oranga Tamariki
Transition worker	A social worker or youth worker employed by the TSS partners
WAM	What About Me? National survey of young people aged 12-18

Executive summary

This report synthesises the evaluation of the Transition Support Service (TSS) from July 2019 to 30 June 2023

The evaluation was a partnership between the evaluators (Malatest International and the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre) and the Transition Support Service team. The evaluation was informed by a series of activities focusing on different aspects of the TSS:

- The first phase was a formative evaluation to provide early insights into specific aspects of TSS.
- The second phase was a process focussed evaluation to provide information about what was working well and where there were challenges.
- The third and final phase continued the process evaluation, and following full implementation included a focus on outcomes.

An annual evaluation plan was developed with the Oranga Tamariki TSS team and policy team to identify evaluation priorities. Information for the evaluation was sourced from interviews, annual surveys of young people eligible for transition support (the Just Sayin' surveys) and analysis of Oranga Tamariki data about TSS.

The Transition Support Service has been established as a core Oranga Tamariki service

The TSS was implemented on 1 July 2019. It was progressively rolled out to allow the service to be established, and to continue to evolve in response to evaluation and other research.

The TSS aims to support:

- More young people to have safe and stable living arrangements
- More young people to be healthy and recovering from trauma
- More young people to have a trusted adult in their lives and are engaged with family, cultural and community groups
- More young people to have the life skills they need to thrive as adults
- More young people to be in education, employment, training or volunteering.

Transition support is available from Oranga Tamariki social workers, an Oranga Tamariki transition assistance line and from 137.75 full-time equivalent (FTE) transition workers employed by 70 TSS NGO partner organisations.

Young people are eligible for the TSS if they are aged between 15 and 25 years and have been in care or custody for over three months continuously¹.

Young people are referred to a transition worker by their Oranga Tamariki social worker or by the transition assistance line. The transition assistance line is part of the TSS team. It offers a free service to eligible young people leaving care or youth justice settings. After young people turn 21, the transition assistance line becomes their main point of contact for support from Oranga Tamariki until they turn 25. The transition assistance line is also available to anyone who wants to call including family, TSS partners, social workers and Oranga Tamariki staff. Very positive feedback about the transition assistance line was provided by all groups using the line.

Although referrals to a transition worker have increased many young people are not referred

The percentage of eligible young people who are referred to a transition worker has increased annually from 31% of eligible young people to the end of June 2020 to 61% to the end of June 2023. A total of 5,270 young people have been referred to a transition worker.

Although awareness of the TSS and referral to transition workers have increased, not all young people experience the transition planning they require from Oranga Tamariki and not all are offered transition support. Social workers have heavy workloads, there is frequent turnover of staff leading to unfamiliarity with the TSS and safety is prioritised over transition planning.

Transition support is about flexibility in responding to young people's needs

TSS is a relational service and transition workers are the foundation of TSS. The kaupapa of the TSS partners and how they support young people varies but all focus on the support needs of the young person. Some also support the young person's whānau.

Transition worker characteristics are important to young people. When asked in the annual survey Just Sayin' 23 what is important in a transition worker, 81% of young people's responses mentioned personality, 26% gender and 20% age.

Rangatahi Māori are over-represented in Oranga Tamariki care compared to their percentage in the population, highlighting the need for transition support to prioritise the cultural needs of Māori. Choice of transition worker was important to rangatahi Māori and 61% of rangatahi Māori responding to Just Sayin' were supported by a Māori TSS partner or transition worker.

¹ <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/children-in-our-care/transition-support-service/>

The steps in transition support comprise:

- **Referral.** Most referrals to the TSS partner were by Oranga Tamariki social workers or the transition assistance line. A few referrals were self or whānau referrals. Transition workers emphasised the need for early referrals to allow relationships to be built before the young person left care.
- **Building trust.** TSS partners generally spent a lot of time at the beginning of the relationship on finding the young person and on whanaungatanga with the young person. The time required to build trust varied with some providers talking in terms of years not weeks or months. Young people were frequently described as in survival mode when they first met with the transition worker.
- **Assessing and planning.** Assessments of each young person's needs are completed over time and contribute to the planning process. Information may be gained from young people 'organically' such as while walking and talking, driving. Planning is focussed on goals developed alongside the young person.
- **Supporting.** The intensity of support varied depending on the young person's needs. Support could be provided by the transition worker or the transition worker could broker connection to other services or agencies. The support provided aligned with the intended outcomes of the TSS.
- **Exits.** Exits from transition worker support are intended at age 21 with transition assistance line support to age 25. Some transition workers connected their 21 year olds with the transition assistance line and felt confident in doing so. Many maintained ongoing informal contact. Many described how they continued to support 21 year olds with multi-layered needs and/or intellectual disability.

Understanding the young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care is important in assessing the impacts of the TSS

Many young people eligible for transition support face more challenges than young people without care experience. Many have been disadvantaged in the education system, many live in families that worry about not having money to meet basic needs. Past trauma is reflected in mental health and wellbeing issues. Rainbow and disabled young people face additional challenges.

The timeframes over which changes in outcomes for young people can be seen varies and is influenced by:

- The young person's individual support needs

- The time required to build a trusting relationship before they could support young people to progress towards their goals
- The young person's health and wellbeing on leaving Oranga Tamariki care.

Transition support has helped many young people

Qualitative and quantitative data indicate that the transition support provided to young people is demonstrating progress towards achieving the TSS outcomes.

Results from the first Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI)² analysis suggest that by the age of 19, referred rangatahi:

- Were more likely to be issued a Restricted licence. Although they were less likely to be issued a Learner driver licence this may reflect earlier Oranga Tamariki support to attain a learner driver licence.
- Recorded better justice sector outcomes, as reflected by most specifications showing lower likelihood to record Prison/Remanding Correction sentences, Prison/Remanding or Community Service Correction sentences, and under some specifications, also lower likelihood to record Police Offending events.
- Had a lower likelihood to record Emergency Department admissions, to receive benefit income (three fewer months on average), and a lower likelihood to record a *vulnerably transient* status.
- Were estimated in some specification to be more likely to, and on average, earn Wages and Salary income for an additional 2.5 months.

Subsequent analysis will examine outcomes expected to appear over longer timeframes.

In-depth interviews with young people have demonstrated changes such as building trusting relationships with their transition workers. In response to Just Sayin' 23, most (84%) young people (both in care and who had left care) were positive about their transition worker. Most (84%) said they had received support from their transition worker with at least one aspect of their lives that aligned with the intended outcomes of the TSS.

Based on the Just Sayin' 23 survey findings and qualitative feedback, the transition support provided for rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people and young people from other ethnic groups was similar.

² <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/integrated-data-infrastructure/>

Barriers remain for young people transitioning to adulthood

There are opportunities to strengthen transition support. Remaining challenges include those that can be addressed by Oranga Tamariki and those requiring interagency collaboration including:

- Ensuring equitable access to the TSS for young people in all localities. Current funding has resulted in regional differences in the number of eligible young people per transition worker FTE. These differences broadly align with lower referral rates (or recorded referral rates) in regions with higher numbers of eligible young people per transition worker FTE.
- Improving Oranga Tamariki planning processes and rates of referrals for transition support.
- Working with other government agencies to ensure access to trauma counselling and ongoing support for other needs for young people with multi-layered needs. Some young people will not reach thresholds for health agency support after they turn 25 and there is currently no strategy to support these young people.
- Lack of suitable housing limits transition.

Interagency collaboration is also required to respond to the unacceptable differences in experiences of young people with care experience compared to their peers without care experience. Improving transition outcomes also has the potential to reduce the intergenerational disadvantage currently seen in the children of families with care experience.

Recommendations from the evaluation align with the challenges outlined above.

Recommendations

There is sufficient evidence from the evaluation that the TSS design meets the needs of young people and emerging evidence of the breadth of outcomes being achieved through transition support.

Ensure ongoing and adequate funding for transition support:

- Continuing to adequately fund the TSS to continue and respond to identified challenges will continue to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from Oranga Tamariki care to adulthood and in addressing the responsibilities Oranga Tamariki has to young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Inequities in funding contribute to disparities between regions and limited support options for many young people. Regional variation is driven by referral rates from Oranga Tamariki, geography including travel time, demographics, the complexity of support and type of services needed by young people in each region and the availability of NGO services to become TSS partners. TSS partners need to be funded at a level that is equitable across regions and sufficient to enable transition worker engagement with young people and relationships to be built before young people leave care.
- Monitor and respond to any increased resourcing needed by the transition assistance line as the cohort ages out of transition worker support and moves to transition line support being the main avenue of support.
- Increase the number of supported accommodation places and consider other options to ensure young people have suitable places to live.

Improve Oranga Tamariki planning processes and rates of referrals for transition support:

- Explore and trial ways to increase the extent Oranga Tamariki social workers maintain their responsibilities under the Care Standards. Social workers have heavy workloads and prioritise safety over transition support. The relationships some have with young people may not enable the trusting relationships required to plan for transition. Potential options include:
 - Scoping the role of regional leads covering smaller geographical localities. Responsibilities for the roles would include coordinating relationships and communication between Oranga Tamariki sites and TSS partners with the aim of increasing referral rates.

- Scoping the extent regional leads or other roles could lead transition planning. Placing this responsibility on transition workers would make it more difficult for young people to see them as independent from Oranga Tamariki.

Enable equity of access to transition support for young people:

- Equitable funding and improved planning and referral are likely to enhance equity.
- Choice of transition worker is important to young people. Support from a kaupapa Māori provider is important to most rangatahi Māori and many Pacific young people. Not all regions have sufficient populations to have separate kaupapa Māori and/or Pacific TSS partners. However, collaborative approaches and networking amongst TSS partners would enable choice such as support provided alongside a local transition worker.
- Improve recognition of the importance of cultural support and how to provide to meet essential needs of rangatahi Māori.
- Work within Oranga Tamariki and with other agencies to ensure rainbow and disabled young people receive the support they need. These groups of young people were disadvantaged across all aspects of their lives.

Develop ways to improve access to support for young people with multi-layered support needs:

- Ensure the transition line team and transition workers have access to support and advice for young people requiring multi-layered support and for whom more specialist support is required than it is reasonable to expect the transition line teams to provide. Appropriate support from health professionals with expertise in trauma counselling for young people is essential. This expertise could be provided remotely by telephone or video to improve accessibility for young people and the TSS teams.
- Ensure that transition workers understand they have flexibility to continue to support young people with multi-layered needs past age 21 if the transition worker considers that is the most appropriate for of transition support. Additional resourcing may be required.

Improve reporting systems to enable more accurate monitoring and identification of young people's support needs:

- Databases and information flow are limited by variation in TSS partner case management systems and lack of consistent recording of information about referrals in CYRAS.
- Develop reporting templates and efficient ways of integrating regional Oranga Tamariki information into CYRAS. Better monitoring data will inform numbers of young people requiring transition support and the support they require enabling resources to be targeted more accurately.

Continue to work with other central and regional government agencies to address the systemic barriers to effective transition:

- Continue the work with other government agencies enabled by the Action Plan. Interagency coordination is important both centrally and regionally to align services for the transition cohort and to respond to the cohort's needs while in care and when transitioning to adulthood. Interagency work includes ensuring eligibility criteria such as for housing, benefits are aligned, suitable housing is available and young people have access to support for mental health including trauma and addiction.
- Many young people disabled by the effects of FASD and with other intellectual disability do not reach the thresholds for support by health agencies. Urgent interagency work is required to ensure there is support in place for these young people once they reach age 25 and are no longer eligible for Oranga Tamariki support.
- More education is required for social workers and more support for caregivers to support disabled young people. Eligibility based on chronological age is a barrier for young people with developmental challenges. An increased focus on interagency policies is required to address the support needs of young people with disabilities to improve access to services.

1. The Transition Support Service is a core Oranga Tamariki service

Young people who have been in statutory care or a Youth Justice residence are among those who have the highest needs and require the most support in New Zealand. To assist eligible young people from these groups to move into adulthood and independent living³, the Transition Support Service (TSS) was established as a core Oranga Tamariki service.

The TSS aims to support:

- More young people to have safe and stable living arrangements
- More young people to be healthy and recovering from trauma
- More young people to have a trusted adult in their lives and are engaged with family, cultural and community groups
- More young people to have the life skills they need to thrive as adults
- More young people to be in education, employment, training or volunteering.

Transition support is available from Oranga Tamariki and transition workers. Young people are eligible from TSS if they are aged between 15 and 25 years and have been in care or custody for over three months continuously⁴.

The TSS was implemented on 1 July 2019⁵ and progressively rolled out. The phased approach was planned to allow the TSS to be established, and to continue to evolve in response to evaluation and other research.

1.1. The TSS design was based on feedback from young people and other stakeholders

Oranga Tamariki worked extensively with young people and other stakeholders, including caregivers, frontline professionals and other groups, to inform the design and development of TSS. This included working with rangatahi Māori, iwi and Māori organisations to integrate their views into the design of the service.

Oranga Tamariki defined the service proposed to Cabinet as a graduated service model which starts while young people are still in care or a Youth Justice residence, through to age 25.

³ Office of the Minister for Children. Paper Six: Transition Support.

⁴ <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/children-in-our-care/transition-support-service/>

⁵ [Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 No 24 \(as at 14 August 2018\), Public Act 386A Advice and assistance for people moving from care to independence – New Zealand Legislation](#)

The service proposed was:

- Underpinned by a relationship-based model, with a focus on building a relationship with the young person and supporting them to build positive relationships with their family, whānau and other trusted adults.
- Based on preparation and planning starting as early as possible.
- To provide after-hours crisis support.
- To be able to respond to reasonable requests for financial assistance, with a focus on maximising existing entitlements.
- To be able to provide or facilitate a range of housing supports.

An additional requirement identified during consultation with young people was that transition support would be provided by organisations independent of Oranga Tamariki.

Three options were presented to Cabinet and the mid-range option, approved and funded: strong preparation, continuing response – a relationship-based service that prioritises investment while young people are preparing to transition out of care or a youth justice residence, and provides a strong level of support throughout their transition.

1.2. Oranga Tamariki care standards set out the minimum requirements for transition

Preparation for leaving should start with discussions and transition planning with Oranga Tamariki social workers from age 15 - 16. Social workers offer young people support from a transition worker employed by a TSS partner. The transition worker will help young people plan for a positive future when they leave care. Young people are eligible for support from the transition worker until they turn 21, with access to advice and assistance from the Oranga Tamariki transition assistance line to age 25.

The National Care Standards⁶ and the Oranga Tamariki Act⁷ set out the minimum requirements of Oranga Tamariki social workers in the transition process:

- An assessment of life skills and the provision of advice and assistance.
- Oranga Tamariki social workers work in partnership with young people, their family/whānau, aiga, caregivers (where relevant), practitioners and other people who are important to them in transition planning processes to develop a transition plan.

⁶ [National-Care-Standards-regulation-booklet.pdf \(orangatamariki.govt.nz\) – Part V](#)

⁷ [Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 No 24 \(as at 01 April 2021\), Public Act – New Zealand Legislation](#)

- The life skills assessment is attached to a young person’s transition plan, and official documentation and information about access to services is required.
- Before young people leave care or custody Oranga Tamariki must assist them to obtain any official documentation they need, such as ID, verified online identity, photo identification, a copy of their birth certificate, a bank account and information about enrolling on the General or Māori electoral roll.
- Eligible young people must be referred to a Transition to Adulthood Service after they turn 16 years of age, or at least six months before they will leave care; whichever comes first.

The development of TSS is summarised in Figure 1 and in Appendix 1⁸

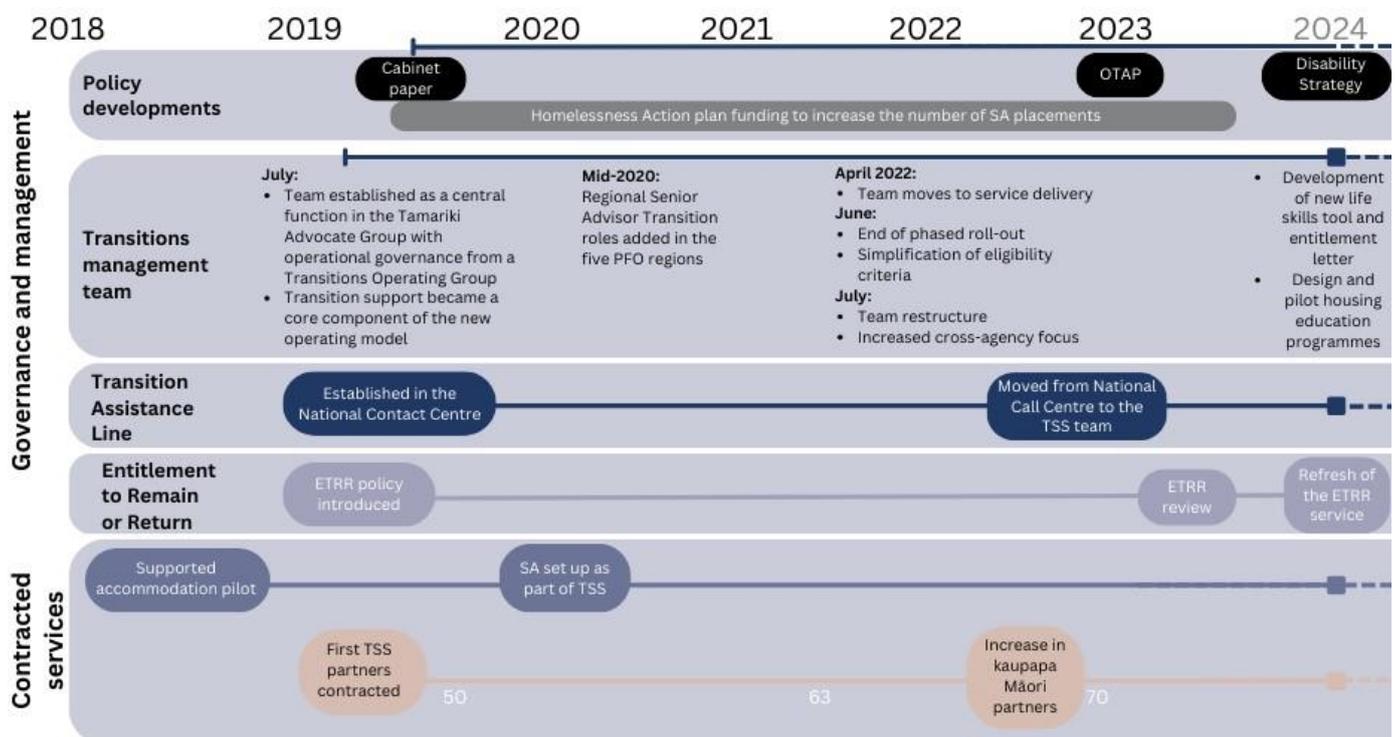


Figure 1. Overview of the main changes to the TSS 2018-2023/24

2. Evaluation of the Transition Support Service

2.1. A four-year evaluation of the TSS has informed service development

An evaluation was commissioned by the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre to “support evidence-informed development of the service and to gauge its effectiveness⁹”. Evaluation and monitoring activities have been completed both internally and through a contract with Malatest International (an independent research and evaluation company).

- The first phase was a formative evaluation to provide early insights into specific aspects of TSS.
- The second phase was a process focussed evaluation to provide information about what was working well and where there were challenges.
- The third and final phase continues the process evaluation and following full implementation, included a focus on outcomes.

This report synthesises the evaluation from July 2019 to the end of June 2023.

2.2. A logic model developed by Oranga Tamariki provided the theoretical foundation for the evaluation

A logic model developed to guide the implementation of the TSS was used as the theoretical foundation for the evaluation as it provided a comprehensive summary of the activities expected from Oranga Tamariki and the TSS partners and the intended outcomes of transition support (Appendix 2).

Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act underpins Oranga Tamariki practice and underpinned evaluation activities:

- The evaluation team included kaupapa Māori evaluators who informed planning, interviews, analysis and reporting of information from rangatahi Māori.
- Surveys and interviews could be completed in te reo Māori.
- Ethnicity data were collected in surveys and interviews.
- Analyses provided information specific to rangatahi Māori.

⁹ Evaluation CSO 2019.



Figure 2. High-level details of Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act

2.3. Information for the evaluation was sourced from qualitative and quantitative information

The evaluation was informed by a series of activities focusing on different aspects of the TSS. An annual evaluation plan developed with the Oranga Tamariki TSS team and policy team identified evaluation priorities. Evaluation activities are summarised in Appendix 3. Details of the methods used for major evaluation activities are summarised in Figure 3 and in Appendix 4.

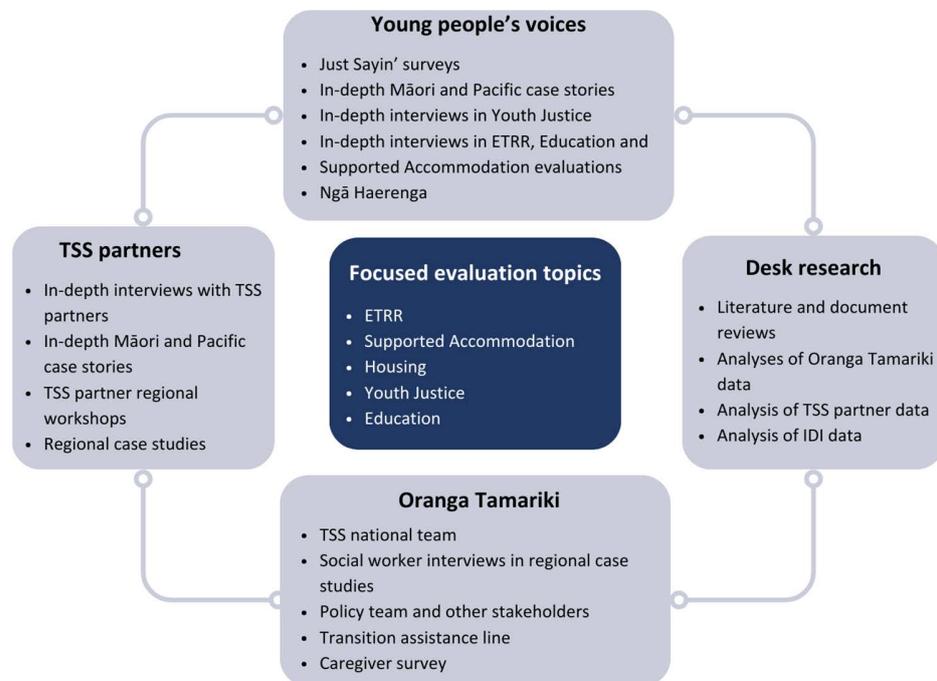


Figure 3. Summary of evaluation methods

2.4. Strengths and limitations of the evaluation

The strengths of the TSS evaluation included:

- Collaboration between the evaluators and the Oranga Tamariki TSS team informed evaluation priorities.
- A mixed methods approach including information sourced through qualitative and quantitative methods enabled the voices of young people, their caregivers, TSS partners and Oranga Tamariki to inform the evaluation.
- Annual repeat Just Sayin' surveys of young people eligible for transition worker support was a substantive evaluation activity enabling changes over time to be viewed. The surveys were cross-sectional and took a census approach.
- Comparison between young people with care experience with and without transition worker referrals recorded enabled quantitative analysis of short-term outcomes.

Limitations to the evaluation findings in this report include:

- Limited access to TSS partner data about how support is provided and the duration and intensity of support. A common case management tool was not funded as part of the TSS limiting access to consistent TSS partner reporting. However, TSS partner reporting is strengthening and additional data will be available to inform future service development.
- Incomplete Oranga Tamariki centralised recording of information about young people including support needs, status of transition support and contact details. While contact details may be recorded by the social workers supporting young people, incomplete and inaccurate information meant many young people were not able to be contacted to take part in the Just Sayin' surveys.
- Some outcomes for young people receiving transition support will take longer to achieve than the evaluation period. Therefore, only information about short-term outcomes can be assessed using analysis of data from the IDI¹⁰.

¹⁰ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/integrated-data-infrastructure/>

3. The young people eligible for transition support

3.1. The profile of young people leaving care today reflects policies and practices of earlier years

Times are changed and people today have much different mindsets towards our rangatahi and tamariki since I was in Oranga Tamariki. I'd change a lot back then but today's okay, but please look after our babies. (Young person – Just Sayin' 23)

Rangatahi Māori are over-represented in Oranga Tamariki care compared to their percentage in the population, highlighting the need for transition support to prioritise the cultural needs of Māori.

In response to Just Sayin' 23, 59% of young people still in care considered Oranga Tamariki helps make things better for them.

Comments from Just Sayin' 23 survey respondents reflected a range of care experiences, from stable foster parent scenarios to living rough and experiencing abuse and neglect. Examples of their comments are summarised in Figure 4.



Positive experiences

“They have helped me be able to come back home to live with my dad & they have helped me alot with everything that I've needed.”

“Yes I have fulfilled my dreams thanks to Oranga Tamariki and my amazing social worker.”

“They have supported everything idea/questions/ I have said, they are always on to it. They've helped get my licence and getting passport renewed with help from Oranga Tamariki.”

“Yes, they have actually helped me come a long way, and learn a lot of things.”



Mixed experiences

“...They showed me how beautiful the world can be, and also how horrible it is. Yet they've taught me many life lessons that I never could have had, if I was as secluded as I was.”

“Being honest Oranga Tamariki ruined me so much but helped in some ways. Brung more pain to me than happiness though, but made me stronger 'n see life different.”

Varied social worker experiences

“OT (Oranga Tamariki) is alright other than the fact it does depend who you get as a social worker to how your experience will go. Most of them are supportive, some aren't doing their jobs.”

“Not getting things I am entitled to. Social worker not following up on things I ask for or listening. One kid gets more and one kid gets less based on social worker. That's not fair! Causes a lot of arguments...”

“They have helped especially my social worker [name].”



Abuse and neglect

“I was molested, abused physically and mentally and constantly told my mum doesn't want me and then no one took me to the doctors even though I told them I thought I [was sick]. I was right....”

“When living at one house it was really unsafe. Social worker didn't listen. Lost a lot of weight.”

“I was placed in care of untrustworthy unsafe foster carers who were weird especially the husband.”

“Last month I had an attempt and nothing was really put in place to help me get past it like no therapy or anything really.”

Frequent comments were about the need for Oranga Tamariki to listen more to the voices of children.

“[Oranga Tamariki] hasn't helped. - not listening to me when I need help - not listening when I wanted to move group homes. Listen to me. - listen to me about my mental heath - listen to me when I ran away - listen to me when I wanted 1 on 1 at my group home.”

“It's hard to speak up about things that happen in my life because I was always ripped from my family when I did. Please give the children more voice and choice.”

Figure 4. Examples of comments made by young people about their care experience in response to the Just Sayin' 23 survey

Nico's story describes a young person's request to be listened to.

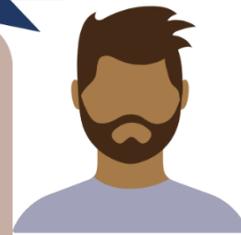
Nico's story

It's a simple ambition, Nico's one. "I just want to be a better parent than my parents," he says simply. "To give my kids what they deserve."

"I had nothing growing up, I had to steal my bikes, shoes, clothes from lost property. I would never want my son to do that...never want him to be hit by another male...I'll protect him, and my daughter. Anything happens to them, I would be the first one there, straight away. Just to be there for them. Because, you know, I didn't have that love."

He's well on the way to achieving his ambitions. Aged 20 he has two children he "ultra loves" with a partner of seven years he loves and respects, and whose whānau he credits with helping him get where he is now. They've got a house, a car, full cupboards, and lots of kids' toys. And they don't owe anyone money.

Nico's Dad left when he was two, and his little brother a newborn. His Mum re-partnered and had three more babies before breaking up with their father. So Nico took on the man-of-the-family role – without anyone to show him what it really meant. He remembers teaching his siblings to use the toilet, ride bikes, chopping the wood, weeding the garden. And he cooked and cleaned.



"I wouldn't change it. Because I love my siblings. I am their Dad, you know, I'm their role model sort of thing."

At some point – he was maybe 11 or 12 – he went into a boys' home. He identifies that as the start of his troubles – went in good, came out naughty. Nico was bounced around an estimated 60 placements and ended up dropping out of school. He took dozens of beatings, he says. He thought "getting a hiding and being told to f**k off" was just what happened when you were naughty. He graduated to stealing cars, ramming shops, getting money wherever he could. Life was pretty wicked, he says,

"basically until I met her, and we started going out together, then she kept me out a lot of trouble, man. She just wanted me to stay and just, you know, be good."

His time on Oranga Tamariki's (OT) books is nearly up. Nico knows his own kids came close to being there too, but after taking part in counselling, anger management, Māori and life skills programmes Nico and his partner have kept the family together. He'd still like Oranga Tamariki to get to know him, to disregard his case notes, ask him about himself. Listen. He'd like that for all kids in care.

3.2. On average the transition cohort face more challenges than young people without care experience

Between June and November 2021, *What About Me?*¹¹ a national survey of young people reached 7,209 year 9 to 13 students in school settings across Aotearoa New Zealand. The survey was also completed by an additional 502 young people aged between 12 and 20 years old, recruited and surveyed in community settings such as Alternative Education, Youth One Stop Shops and health and social services.

Findings were compared between the 1,351 young people reached in the school sample and the community cohort who said that either they or their family had been involved with Oranga Tamariki and young people without care experience (Figure 5).

The care experienced cohort provided very similar responses to young people supported in community settings and were also over-represented amongst the young people supported by community providers.

Differences between the care experienced and school cohorts highlight the additional support the cohort with care experience need across all aspects of their lives. A higher percentage in the care experienced and community cohorts have worried about money for essentials and gave more negative responses to health and wellbeing questions.

... this is actually a different cohort, that they have further needs than the general population. (TSS national team)

3.3. Rainbow and disabled young people in the transitions cohort face additional challenges

Based on *What About Me?* and *Just Sayin'* survey findings, there are young people within all cohorts who face additional challenges, especially young people who identify as rainbow and disabled young people (Figure 6).

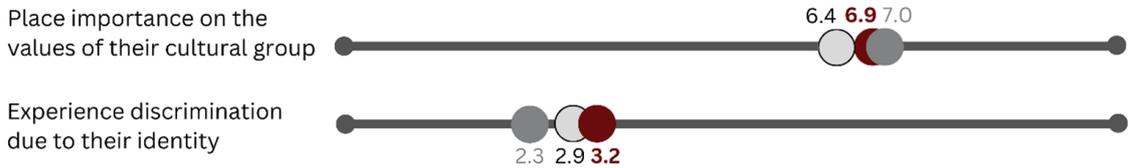
¹¹ <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/consultations/youth-health-and-wellbeing-survey-results/index.html>.

What About Me? | Survey Findings

Between June and November 2021, What About Me? survey reached 7,209 year 9 to 13 students in school settings across Aotearoa New Zealand, 502 young people in community settings (from 39 organisations around the country). 1,351 young people across both cohorts said that either they or their family had been involved with Oranga Tamariki.

Key: ■ Oranga Tamariki experienced cohort ■ School cohort ■ Community cohort

Identity



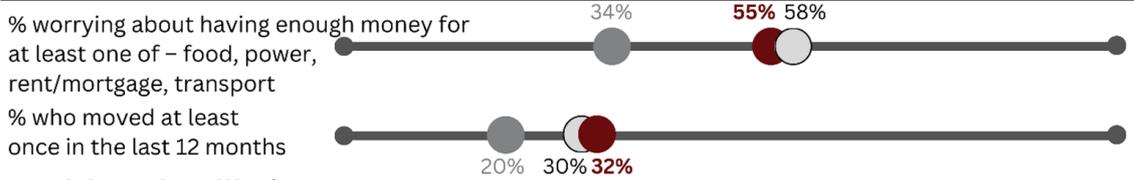
Connection to whānau



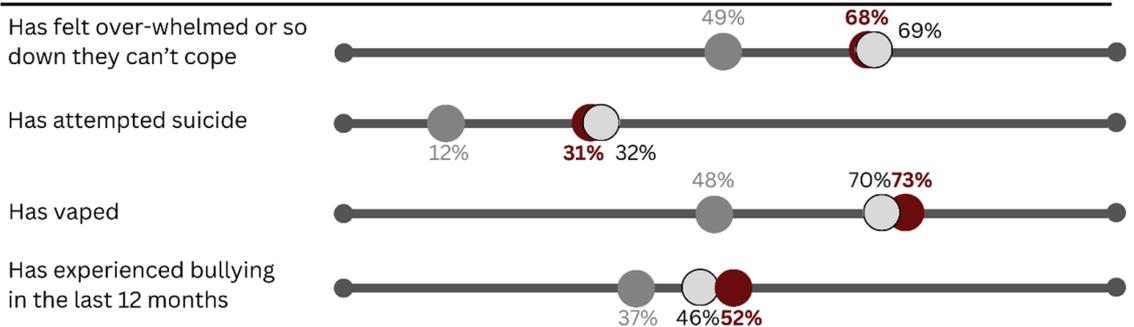
Support



Housing



Health and wellbeing



Employment

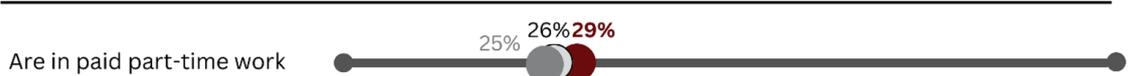


Figure 5. What About Me? survey findings for young people with Oranga Tamariki experience (personal or whānau) in school and in the community compared with young people without care experience in school and in community settings (scale question means run from 0-10 (the most positive))

Profiles of young people

Young parents

20% of respondents from Just Sayin' 23 said they were either a parent or about to become a parent.

Young parents:

- Mostly live with their child (82%)
- Gave poorer ratings for liking where they lived than non-parents
- Gave poorer ratings for health support than non-parents
- Had a smaller proportion who knew how to get in contact with Oranga Tamariki than non-parents.

I believe you have changed your name and not the workers. It's hard for me to have faith in a system who failed me and my kids and my whole family so terribly since I was 3. I'm 23 now. (Just Sayin' 23)

Thank you to all our Oranga Tamariki workers. It can be tough with our Tamariki and whānau but y'all have the most strongest jobs... (Just Sayin' 23)

Disabled young people

57% of respondents from Just Sayin' 23 self-identified as disabled from a scale derived from the Washington short-form.

Disabled young people were less positive about their quality of life, including their:

- Living arrangements
- General wellbeing and identity
- Education, training and employment
- Access to support to learn skills for their future
- Access to health support

What you do makes a difference. A lot of the workers don't know that, as they think they're just doing their job, but in reality, they are helping so many people. (Just Sayin' 23)

[I need] Life long physio, Help with travel to doctor, Any supports the physio recommends, Help with gas or groceries when unable to work due to physical disability. (Just Sayin' 23)

Māori and Pacific young people

49% of young people responding to Just Sayin' 23 identified as Māori, and 14% as Pacific.

Rangatahi Māori and Pacific young people:

- Rated their hopefulness for the future as slightly higher than non-Māori, non-Pacific. Pacific young people felt more proud of who they are than other groups.
- Reported lower access to support to learn skills for their future
- Reported lower access to health support

Let young people have their say, listen, look & speak when needed. We all need help and support someday and time. Everyone deserves to be heard and seen. (Just Sayin' 23)

[TSS partner] have been trying to help me with getting like my whakapapa. You know, my family tree, stuff like that. (Supported Accommodation)

Rainbow young people

22% of Just Sayin' 23 respondents were rainbow, with 19% self-identifying as LGBT+ and 3% questioning their identity. Rainbow young people:

- Rated their wellbeing as lower than non-rainbow
- Rated how safe they feel at home as lower
- Felt substantially less secure in their identity, proud of who they are and hopeful for their future
- Rated their access to support to learn skills as lower
- Made up higher proportions of the disabled group

[I need] more intensive immediate mental health support that is unique to myself and my complexities. More support getting back into the community and creating new relationships, more support on being a young person not someone fighting everything. (Just Sayin' 23)

I have no complaints - I would say they [Transition Support] were helpful. (Just Sayin' 23)

Youth Justice

17% of young people are eligible through Youth Justice, or care and Youth Justice. Those with Youth Justice experience:

- Have complex health and social issues
- Have lower achievement of NCEA 1 and 2 than non Youth Justice experienced young people
- Described wanting practical skills and employment, and needing to build basic literacy as a requirement
- Face challenges with accommodation after leaving a Youth Justice residence

Yeah, I've got my level one for literacy, numeracy. Yeah, I've done that by like, coming in and out of here. (YJ qualitative)

In here [in Youth Justice] I don't really go to anyone [for help], I stay by myself. My back's always to the wall, always watching around. You've gotta be, it's like a prison in here. (YJ qualitative)

Figure 6. Profiles of young people from different demographic groups

4. Transition support is provided by independent TSS partners and an Oranga Tamariki transition assistance line

4.1. A national network of TSS partners has been established

By 30 June 2023, there were 70 TSS partners across Aotearoa New Zealand), (Figure 7) including kaupapa Māori, Pacific and other health and social service providers. The TSS partners employed 137.75 full-time equivalent (FTE) transition workers – people with suitable qualifications or experience for the role, such as a social worker or youth worker. More transition workers will be added to the service for the 23/24 financial year.

We've got transition services across the country. We've managed to establish a national service. We've got a great range of partners. We get some really great feedback [from young people] ... (TSS national team)

The TSS had to be developed quickly so the initial TSS partners were identified by Oranga Tamariki regional leaders as organisations that could establish transition support within the three-months from April to June 2019.

Subsequently, the TSS team talked with organisations about what would work in each area and identified the TSS partners needed to fill any gaps. The aim was to give young people more options and increase emphasis on kaupapa Māori services to meet the needs of rangatahi Māori.

Over time we've been able to take a more considered approach with the partners ... where there were gaps, since then, we've been actively trying to get a better provider mix ... that can actually support and enable young people to have a bit more of a choice ... (TSS national team)



Figure 7. The national network of TSS partners at the end of June 2023

4.2. The national and regional TSS teams provide transition worker training and induction

To support a shared understanding with TSS partners about the TSS model of care, the TSS national team have started training for transition workers including:

- Induction training about the basics of the TSS
- Training on specific topics such as financial assistance, StudyLink and ACC or ways to support young people

As an example, at our hui we just had, we had some disability training because that's always identified as a big need. (TSS regional team)

The flexibility of the Oranga Tamariki contracts with the TSS partners enables young people to be supported within each organisation's kaupapa if the TSS partners and transition workers understand the principles underpinning the transition model of care.

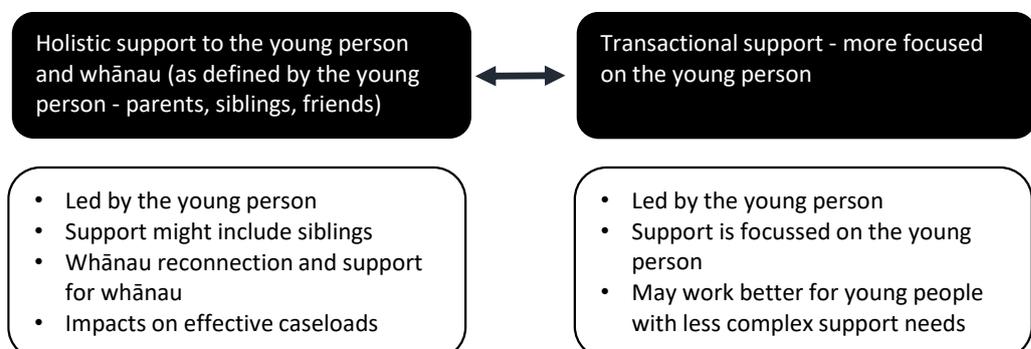
Transition services have a very close relationship with their partners, we know most of them, they call us, ... there's a closeness between us and we trust our partners to do what they're supposed to be doing. (TSS national team)

The national TSS team are also supporting TSS partner networking.

I don't think we can underestimate the benefit of being an enabler when it comes to having our providers come together. ... I think wherever possible, when we can support those providers networking and working together, strengthens the service. (TSS national team)

4.3. The kaupapa of the TSS partners and the way support is provided varies

The TSS model of care is a relational service. The kaupapa of the TSS partners varies within the TSS model but all focus on the support needs of the young person.



The balance between relational and transactional support varies between and within TSS partner organisations.

... there will be young people that actually do just say, 'I just need a bit of help to access these things, I don't want to meet all the time, I don't want to talk about my feelings' and that's fine. (TSS national team)

The different ways partners provide support has implications for TSS partner caseloads. Where support was provided to the young person and whānau the caseload was effectively higher and TSS partners may not be able to support the same numbers of young people as TSS partners who offer support only to young people. Transition worker support for couples and young parents also increased the numbers of young people they supported. Those supporting young parents were typically supporting the family unit with the partner and baby.

There were also a few TSS partners who offered specialised services and supported other TSS partners with the transition support they offered to specific groups of young people such as disabled young people.

We are very lucky to have a disability provider [in our region who] has been amazing in supporting our other transitions kaimahi in that field. But ongoing training is very important. (TSS regional team)

In practice, caseloads varied but most transition workers interviewed for the evaluation reported caseloads of 15-16 young people. The transition workers were aware of the contracted caseloads and tried to maintain the appropriate number of young people they supported but some could not turn young people away.

The number of young people a transition worker can support is influenced by the complexity of the support needs of the young person as well as by logistics such as travel time. Caseloads also reflect engagement with local Oranga Tamariki offices as Oranga Tamariki are the main sources of referrals to the TSS partners.

Some of our partners cover a huge area, ... there is nothing additional in the contract that recognises that. (Regional Oranga Tamariki)

4.4. Regional variation in the location of TSS partners and transition workers affects equity of access

Regional variation is driven by geography (including travel time), demographics, the complexity of support and type of services needed by young people in each region and the availability of NGO services to become TSS partners. The funded number of young people supported by a transition worker FTE is shown in Table 1. Transition workers in the East Coast region (and temporarily in the Upper South) supported the highest numbers of young people per FTE and those in the Lower South region supported the lowest number. Additional FTEs and TSS partners have been funded for the 23/24 financial year.

There are also regional differences in rates of referral of young people to transition workers. There was a trend for the regions with the highest numbers of young people per transition worker FTE to have lower referral rates. However, regional differences may also reflect differences in the consistency of recording referrals in CYRAS.

Table 1. Regional numbers of funded TSS partners and transition worker FTE (Oranga Tamariki data) and eligible young people in the region to year ending June 2023

SCAF Region	Number of TSS partners	Number of transition worker FTE	Number of all transition worker eligible young people	Eligible young people per transition worker FTE	% recorded as referred
Te Tai Tokerau	3	9	196	22	60%
Auckland	8	32	797	25	52%
Waikato	8	14	282	20	61%
Bay of Plenty	9	15	246	16	68%
Taranaki-Manawatu	5	10.5	246	23	69%
East Coast	7	10	271	27	50%
Wellington	8	13.5	215	16	63%
Canterbury	11	18	303	17	77%
Upper South ¹²	1	2.75	84	31	70%
Lower South	10	13	180	14	72%
Total	70	137.75	2,820	20	61%

Young people leaving care are also mobile and many move to another region. Transition workers described unpredictable increases in numbers in some regions. The mobility and unpredictability of where young people will move to makes it difficult to maintain a regionally consistent ratio of young people to transition workers.

¹² When the number of providers reduced from 3 to 1 the young people were transferred to the remaining provider. This resulted in high number of young people FTE. In the next quarter the number of FTE increased to the previous level of 4.75 resulting in a rate of 18 eligible young people per FTE in the Upper South.

4.5. Most young people are referred to a transition worker aged 17 or 18

Funding and caseloads also effect the age of referral (Table 2). Insufficient resourcing for transition workers has the potential to increase caseloads and as a result to increase waiting times for a young person to see a transition worker. Young people in some regions may not meet with a transition worker until they are about to leave care whereas in other regions transition workers can be part of the planning process from a younger age. Increased waiting times and uncertainty about availability may deter social workers from referring a young person to a transition worker.

So in the [region] for example, they are referring sometimes at the point of leaving care at 18 because the kaimahi do not have the caseload availability to take on any kids younger than that, so sometimes they're missing out on the gold, the transition FGC or that co-working relationship with social workers ... (Regional Oranga Tamariki)

Table 2. The percentage of young people in each age group referred to a transition worker¹³

Oranga Tamariki service regions	Just Sayin' 23		CYRAS	
	Age	Number surveyed	% asked if they want a transition worker	% recorded as referred
	16	79	59%	46%
	17	73	77%	69%
	18	60	83%	76%
	19	67	76%	78%
	20	47	68%	73%
	21	50	76%	-

4.6. The transition assistance line complements transition worker support

When the TSS was established call line support was provided through the National Call Centre. In October 2022, a dedicated transition assistance line was established as part of the TSS team. The transition assistance line has a team of five advisors, a client support specialist and a team leader. After-hours support continues to be provided by the National Contact Centre.

¹³ There are limitations to both information sources. Just Sayin' 23 findings reflect a response bias due to lack of contact details and differences in response by demographic group. CYRAS data may contain incomplete information and there may be regional recording differences.

The transition assistance line is a free service offered to eligible young people leaving care or youth justice settings. After young people age out of transition worker support, the transition assistance line becomes their main point of contact for support from Oranga Tamariki.

Transition assistance line call data showed that 8,453 calls were made or transferred to the line in the 2023 financial year. Of the 442 young people surveyed through Just Sayin' 23, 19% had called the transition assistance line. The 85 young people who had called the transition assistance line in the Just Sayin' 23 survey commonly requested support to meet their basic needs, including support for housing (including help with rent payments), health (including mental health), and education or training.

The transition assistance line is also available to TSS partners, social workers and other Oranga Tamariki staff.

What I hear though, is the feedback around the transition line, being extremely supportive, always open to our phone calls. Nothing's a silly question. We can ring 100 times. They are fantastic. (Manager, TSS partner)

Each advisor is responsible for a region with the aim of establishing relationships with TSS providers and developing specialised knowledge of the support available in the area. Understanding the importance of the transition assistance line team support for the regions has led to increasing the off-line time for the team to allow proactive support for the regions.

Having the transition assistance line as part of the national office team has enabled the team to hear insights from the team and these have informed other work including cross-agency work.

... the movement of that team into the transitions team has been hugely beneficial and a recognition that the work that they are doing is more virtual youth development rather than just taking calls and responding to requests for assistance. (TSS national team)

5. Planning and preparation for transition and referral to a TSS partner are not consistently happening

5.1. Transition preparation, assessment and planning is led by Oranga Tamariki social workers

Oranga Tamariki social workers are tasked with developing a transition plan with young people and their whānau. A Family Group Conference (FGC) or hui-ā whānau are held to discuss the transition plan.

However, transition planning is still not consistently happening. In response to Just Sayin' 23, 52% of surveyed young people in care and 54% of young people aged 21 or younger who had left care recalled someone talking with them and working out a plan for when they leave care.

When transition planning happened, most young people considered they had a say in their plan (75% of young people in care; 80% of young people who have left care) and many said that it reflected their goals and aspirations as they moved towards adulthood (66% of young people in care; 65% of young people who have left care)¹⁴.

Having the individual, such as myself, who you're planning a future for to get them involved as much as possible and, despite them not yet being adults, because it is about them, I think they should be able to express their ideas and express their thoughts and feelings about adulthood and how it should be. As at the end of the day it is about their life, and the transition support system should be there to support whatever they personally come up with. (Young person – Just Sayin' 23)

Whānau involvement in transition planning and the extent young people want whānau involved varied and could be a barrier to the planning process. Just Sayin' 23 findings indicate that 56% of young people in care and 58% of young people who had left care wanted their whānau involved.

Talk to the boy/girl separately and talk about goals and future plans and then talk about it all with family because the boy/girl might not have the voice to speak up at the Family Group Conference. (Young person – Just Sayin' 23)

¹⁴ Just Sayin' 23 – percentages of those who recalled planning conversations.

I mean, so far my care has been quite adequate, and I love the people I'm surrounded by as they were my family, as my real family absolutely refuses to come to my Family Group Conferences. ... (Young person – Just Sayin' 23)

Of those who wanted their whānau involved this was not happening to the extent the young person wanted (61% of young people in care; 65% of young people who have left care).

Having more of a say in terms of options. Social worker has too much of a say. Me and my family should have more say. (Young person – Just Sayin' 23)

More checking in with my family and trying to support us in making plans together. (Young person – Just Sayin' 23)

5.2. Young people are offered transition worker support by their social worker as part of planning for leaving care

The process for connecting young people with transition assistance is summarised in Figure 8. The Oranga Tamariki social worker continues to support young people until they leave care. Ideally, transition workers provide support with transition planning alongside the Oranga Tamariki social worker and start to build a relationship with the young person over this time.

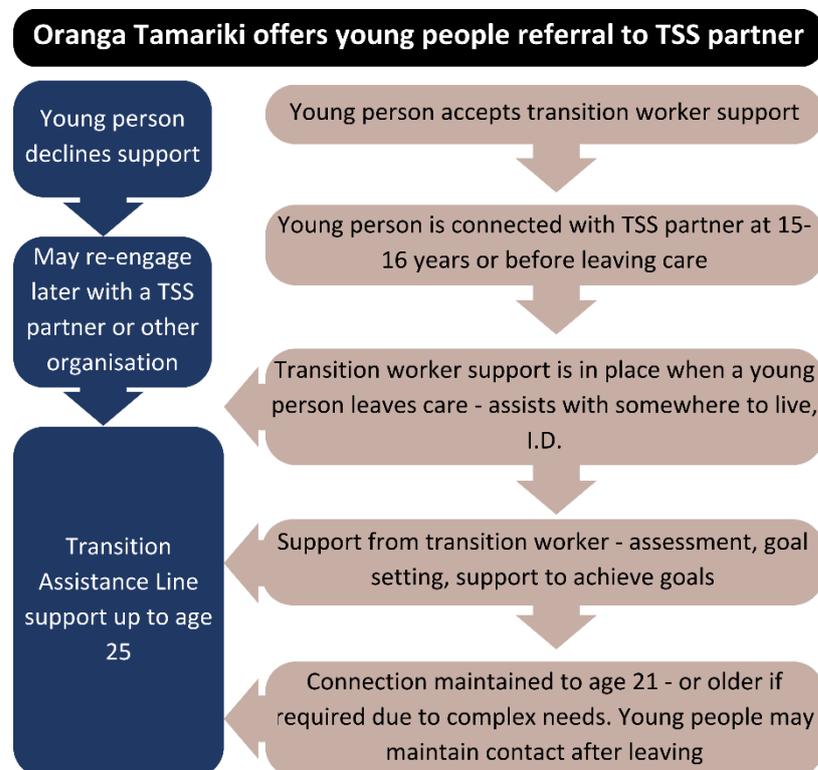


Figure 8. The process for connecting young people with transition support

At the start of the TSS, eligibility criteria were complex and lack of understanding of the TSS was a barrier for social workers in connecting young people with transition support. The eligibility criteria and the language used to describe eligibility have simplified since the initial roll-out and young people have aged out of some of the initial constraints. The TSS team also considers exemptions and how to set up transition support for young people that don't quite meet the criteria.

... initially they had to draw a line in the sand about eligibility too, so we kind of knew that the numbers were going to start and then build and then eventually they would plateau as people are exiting. (TSS national team)

Although transition planning is an Oranga Tamariki Care Standard and an important element of effective transition not all young people are offered transition support. Social workers have heavy workloads, there is frequent turnover of staff and safety is often prioritised over transition planning.

... the babies and everything like that always takes priority because that's where the risk is, that's where the energy goes into. ... that's where transitions seems to fade away a little bit. (TSS national team)

To the end of June 2023, transition worker support has been offered to 5,270 eligible young people (Table 3). The percentage of eligible young people who are referred to a transition worker has increased annually since 2019 as awareness of transition support has increased but has plateaued. To the end of June 2022 and 2023, 61% of young people eligible for transition worker support have been referred to a transition worker. Young people may also be offered transition worker support by the transition assistance line.

Table 3. Cohort of young people and numbers eligible and referred to transition workers (Source: Oranga Tamariki, CYRAS data)

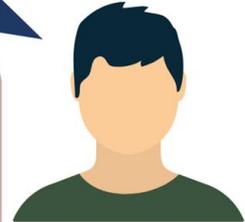
	July 2019	June 2020	June 2021	June 2022	June 2023
Total cohort	5,736	5,531	5,324	5,206	5,146
Eligible for a transition worker	1,673	2,066	2,372	2,713	2,820
Referred to a transition worker	108	640	1,251	1,539	1,732
Percentage of eligible young people referred	6%	31%	53%	57%	61%

It feels like home

It's sixteen-year-old Bo's third time in a youth justice facility, and he quite likes it. After five months he says "it's all good, it feels like home." And compared to the other two he's done time in this is much easier "because you don't have to watch your back that much."

"We can have laughs and joke, we can call each other shit and we're all good at the end of the day." In other places, you couldn't take the risk. You'd be blindsided, he says.

Bo does a full day of schooling – mainly learning to read and write because while he was quite good at maths before this, he wasn't at literacy. And he's going for his licence, working out, keeping fit and doing an agricultural course. He doesn't quite know what will happen next, with sentencing still a while off. If he's not in jail, he says, he will go back to whānau.



"It feels safe. My brothers are always there. And my whole street family is there."

Both mum and dad are supportive, he says. There's not much they can do right now but he's allowed phone calls, they always come to meetings, they stand there for him in court.

"They are always there for me."

It seems to be a matter of mood, rather than where he lives, that dictates his choices. What happens next is not something he's sure about. Once he turns 18 he's no longer in Oranga Tamariki care. While he's been the focus of many Family Group Conferences – he's been under Oranga Tamariki care since birth - the plans which each one prompts don't extend beyond his time in this facility.

Bo says he doesn't know about transition support – that he is entitled to someone to help him transition out of Oranga Tamariki care. If he wants help he can go to mum and the bros, he says.

Nor does he know his whakapapa, or about tikanga. And he doesn't really care. Asked if there is anything else that could be done for him he specifies clothing vouchers. He likes brands, like Nike he says, but he lost all his when he was raided. He's looking forward to the vouchers and getting out of boring unit clothes.

Transition support is voluntary so young people can decline support. If they do decline, they can ask for transition support later. Most but not all young people offered support from a transition worker agreed to receive support (85% of young people in care; 87% of young people who have left care)¹⁵.

¹⁵ Just Sayin' 23

5.3. Young people receiving transition support reflect the demographic profile of the eligible cohort

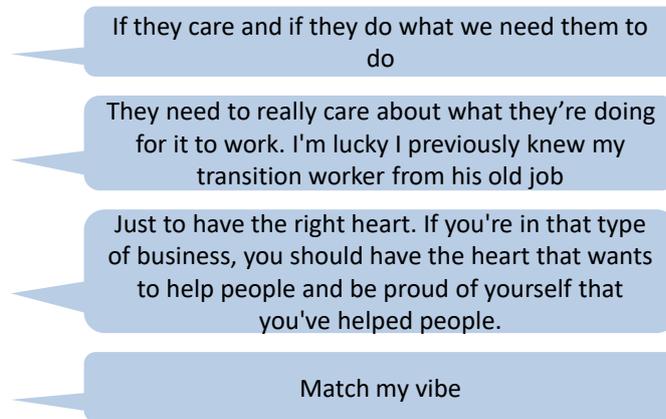
The demographic profile of referral rates to a transition worker is broadly representative of the transition eligible cohort (Table 4). Substantially more females than males use the transition assistance line and more young people with care only experience than those with youth justice experience. Reasons for these differences have not been explored. It is important to note that differences in transition assistance line use may reflect differences in the profile of young people who responded to Just Sayin’.

Table 4. The demographic profile of young people eligible for transition support (Referral rates sourced from CYRAS and transition line assistance profiles from Just Sayin’ 23)

Demographic characteristic	Representation within the cohort eligible for TSS	Referral rates (Proportion of eligible young people referred to a TSS partner)	Representation within the cohort supported by transition assistance line
Gender			
Male	59%	60%	22%
Female	40%	63%	75%
Gender diverse	1%	69%	2%
Ethnicity			
Māori	56%	62%	56%
Māori and Pacific	10%	58%	7%
Pacific	7%	56%	4%
NZ European and other	27%	62%	33%
Eligible through ...			
Care	83%	60%	91%
Care and Youth Justice	8%	73%	4%
Youth Justice	10%	64%	5%
Number of placements			
0 recorded	3%	23%	0%
1-4	77%	60%	87%
5-9	14%	69%	10%
10+	7%	75%	4%

5.4. Choice of transition worker is important for young people but difficult to achieve in some regions

Transition worker characteristics are important to young people. When asked in Just Sayin' 23 what is important in a transition worker, 81% of responses mentioned personality, 26% gender and 20% age.



In response to Just Sayin' 23, 39% of young people still in care who had been offered and agreed to transition worker support said they had a choice of transition worker and 40% of those who had left care.

Choice is influenced by the geographic locality where young people live as in smaller localities there may be only a few transition workers. Different regional processes also aligned with the extent young people felt they had a choice of transition worker. In some regions a panel of TSS partners discussed referrals and selected the transition worker likely to match the needs of a young person. In other regions, transition worker profiles were provided to young people so they could select a transition worker.

Choice of transition worker was important to rangatahi Māori and 61% of rangatahi Māori responding to Just Sayin' were supported by a Māori TSS partner or transition worker. The percentage has increased over the Just Sayin' survey years. Of rangatahi Māori who do not have a Māori TSS partner, 28% would like to have one.

Fifty percent of Pacific young people with a transition worker were supported by a Pacific TSS partner or transition worker. Of those not being supported by a Pacific organisation 12% said they would like to have a Pacific organisation support them.

Increasing transition worker FTE will increase young people's choices by increasing the number of transition workers and adding more kaupapa Māori TSS partners. However, in small regions lack of choice will remain because of the small numbers of young people. Options such as remote support for a TSS partner from for example a kaupapa Māori or Pacific organisation may help provide young people with more choice.

In some of our smaller rural communities, because the numbers are so low, you can't have that diversity. It's also sometimes a challenge about having a service available when you might not have a half a caseload or a caseload worth of young people there. (TSS national team)

6. How young people are supported during transition

The care pathways for young people and their connection with transition support are summarised below.

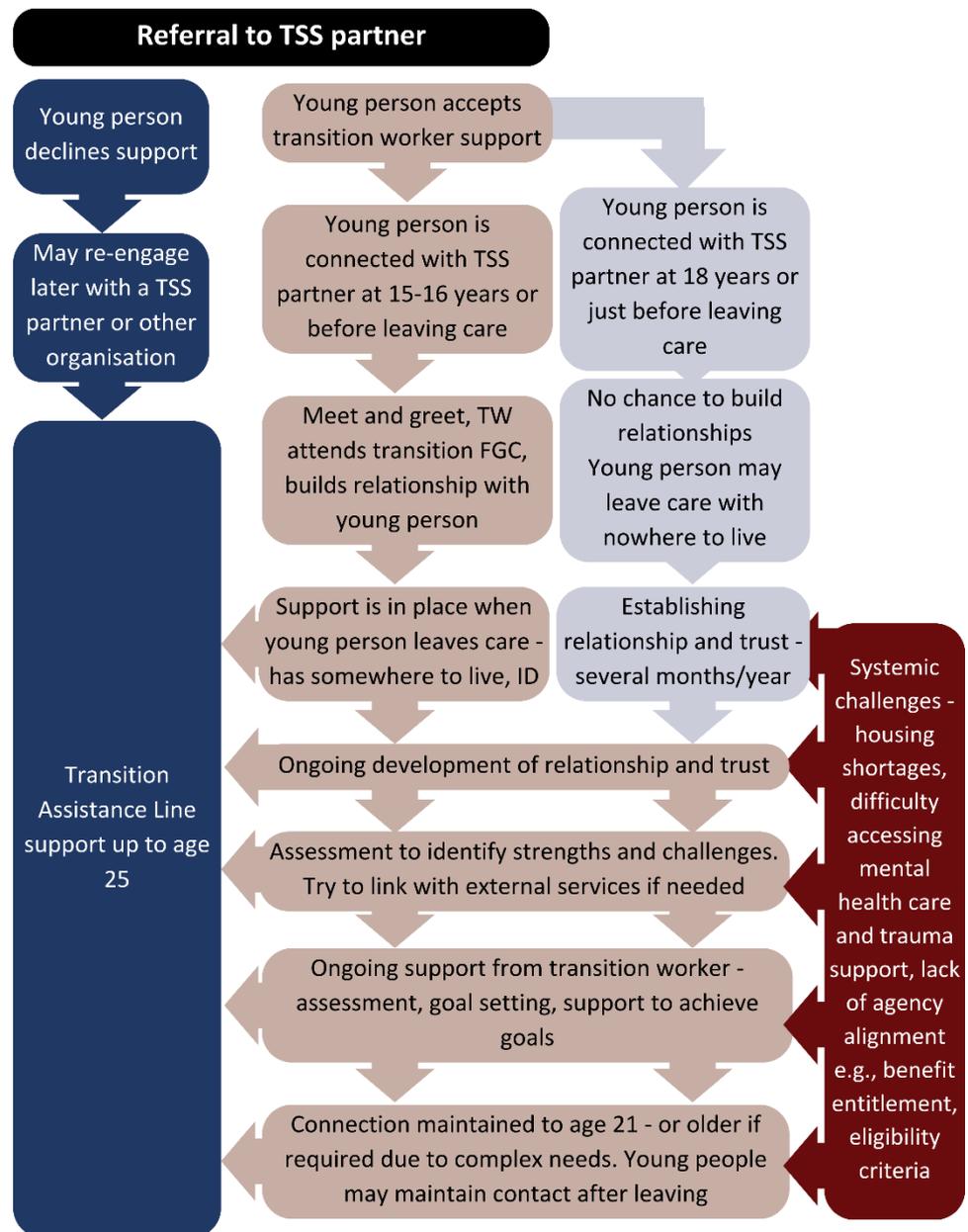


Figure 9. Care pathways after referral to a TSS partner

6.1. Transition support is about flexibility in responding to young people’s needs

One person is on a different journey to another, so maybe housing is the biggest issue, maybe connecting with my whānau is a big issue at the moment, ... or maybe there's the practical, need to make some food, know how to cook or budgeting. So it's really diverse. That's the cool thing about transitions. (TSS regional team)

The steps in transition support comprise:



Referral

Most referrals to the TSS partner were by Oranga Tamariki social workers or the transition assistance line. A few referrals were self or whānau referrals. Transition workers emphasised the need for early referrals to allow relationships to be built before the young person left care. The first step for TSS partners after receiving a referral was to go through the information and seek to fill any gaps.

We are getting the kids too late – some are five months away from turning 18. The kids are sheltered to age 18 then they strip it all away. Transitions can start at 15, why aren’t we getting them at 15? (Transition worker)

Building trust

The scenario transition workers said worked best was an introduction by the social worker and then a later meeting with the young person by themselves. TSS partners generally spent a lot of time at the beginning of the relationship on finding the young person and on whanaungatanga with the young person. Sometimes after referral young people can be hard to track down. One provider described “stalking” them on social media. Once contact was made the connection could be built. The time required to build trust varied with some providers talking in terms of years not weeks or months. Young people were frequently described as in survival mode when they first met with the transition worker. Building trust and responding to basic needs was essential before or alongside assessment and planning.

They are still in survival mode. They just want someone to listen to them ... they don’t have hope and they can’t see goals. (Transition worker)

I feel like [Ttransition worker] cares. When you care, you get the best out of the work that she’s doing. She's helped me, trying to achieve stuff, get stuff, get somewhere, learn. (Young person - Interview)

Assessment and planning

Assessments of each young person's needs are completed over time and contribute to the planning process. Information may be gained from young people 'organically' such as while walking and talking, driving. Providers have different tools to guide the assessment process. After assessment and once the young person is ready the transition workers develop goals with the young person to support their plan. Transition workers described a goals-based planning framework. The FGC plan may be used as a guide. Goal setting looks different between providers and young people and could have an initial focus on small goals. Progress was assessed regularly, often six monthly but there may be little progress in a six-month time span.

The bro's been real mean with like easing through this process of transitioning out with trying to help me explore my hobbies and that, because I don't have [many] hobbies. [Transition worker] goes out of the way and checking on things I like. (Young person - Interview)

Support

The intensity and duration of support varied depending on the young person's needs.

So this rangatahi is like very independent and kind of just needs someone to bounce ideas off. ... (Transition worker)

Support could be provided by the transition worker or the transition worker could broker connection to other services or agencies.

... it is all about connecting them to what they need as an adult. ... if it's a specialist or professional type service the young person needs, ... how do they connect them to who can assist them? (TSS national team)

The support provided aligned with the intended outcomes of the TSS:

- More young people have safe and stable living arrangements
[I was left on the street] ...The accommodation I was in wasn't good. They wouldn't listen when I said [where I was staying] wasn't good. They would say its fine, I got to stay there... [Transition worker] has helped me a lot, with housing stuff. (Young person - Interview)
- More young people are healthy and recovering from trauma
[My TW] helped with everything that I needed. Needed to go to the doctor, got that sorted. Got a new doctor, who's a lot better. Just made things so smooth compared to [Oranga Tamariki] and the lots of paperwork and lots of processes that they have to do. (Young person - Interview)

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

Identity was described by a transition worker as “huge at that age”. Understanding whakapapa and reconnecting with whānau were important for a young person to build identity.

We’ve had events and dinners at [TS] that I’ve been able to attend with Mum. We had this little chart I remember doing with Mum. It was nice, because in the end, we had this big page full of all our dreams and hopes and plans of what we wanted to do. I [was] very happy because I felt like I connected with Mum a lot more and [TW] because it was family-based. I was able to get across to Mum with all my ideas, I found out those were her ideas. (Young person - Interview)

Understanding who the young person considers to be whānau is the first step, then young people are being supported by transition workers to reconnect with biological whānau if that is what they want. Transition workers noted supporting young people to reconnect with whānau even if they didn’t feel it was the best for the young person.

So a lot of the rangatahi I work with have become disconnected from their whānau. ... we try and support that reconnection. Quite often that's not cut and dry. Quite often they are disconnected and not interested or that relationship is just completely broken down. And it takes work on both sides to want it to even happen. But we're always working towards keeping the door open and trying to make that connection happen, especially if the rangatahi wants that to happen. (Transition worker)

Many Māori and Pacific young people said reconnection with whānau/family was essential for healing, finding their sense of belonging and grounding. One young person and their whānau said support was also needed to rebuild family relationships due to the years of separation.

We’re now having to go through all the emotions, the ups and downs in our relationship. I have to work out how to be a child to my mum, and mum to be a mum to me in this short amount of time. We’re having to go through all of this now, because we lost all those years that we would naturally gone through it. (Young person)

Young people who don’t want to connect with their biological whānau are supported to build kaupapa whānau who would be their personal support network into the future.

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

The variation in life skills and motivation amongst the transition cohort was discussed in each group. Huge needs for literacy and numeracy education were noted.

Transition workers described generally good access to bridging programmes and skills development opportunities. However, transition workers described reluctance from many young people to engage with education. Support with health and housing often needed to come first.

I want to go to Uni but I'm real indecisive on what I want to study. So [TW] has helped me get stuff...She helps me with that, finds courses. I wanted to do trades. And she helped me with that, to find trades. I didn't end up doing a trade. (Young person - Interview)

Anything to do with that other stuff, you know with jobs or all that, I just go to [my transition worker]. She makes it real easy though, she won't make it difficult. We're gonna do this and then we just do it, she makes it simple. (Young person - Interview)

Employment became a focus when young people were ready. Transition workers assisted with preparing CVs and cover letters, searching for jobs, assisting young people to learn how to apply online and helping transport young people to interviews. Employment was described as more of a challenge for young people exiting Youth Justice or Corrections.

- More young people have the life skills they need to thrive as adults
Achieving basic life skills was interwoven throughout transition. Life skills varied hugely so support to develop life skills was linked to the young person's plan.

[TW] takes me to all these courses, relationship courses, just to be a better person, managing money, got my forklift licence, my full licence. (Young person - Interview)

I went to the bank the other day to talk to the people, about opening a savings account ... Usually when I go into places like shops, dairies [they] are all good but banks, places that need your ID, [where they] talk to you like for a long time - it's stressful. But over the past few weeks it's been getting better, probably because I used to jam the [video] games too much. (Young person - Interview)

Financial assistance

Financial support is provided through the transition assistance line and the TSS partners. Oranga Tamariki will provide at least \$1,500 to young people leaving care to assist them to buy essential items to live independently (also known as the Achieving Independence grant). This may include: furniture, flat items, bedding, towels, toiletries, cleaning supplies. TSS partners have a flexible fund of \$7,500 per FTE transition worker per year – to be used to provide Financial Assistance to young people they are actively working with. TSS partner returns and information from Oranga Tamariki contracting systems report the final expenditure in FY23/24 was \$529,493.80. However, this is unlikely to be a full accurate account of all the financial expenditure. Some providers are still not clear on what financial assistance can be used for. For others their organisation's financial processes and delegations are a barrier for transition workers. The TSS team have offered online hui in October and early November for providers to help them understand and manage the financial assistance. The Transitions Helpline is also available and is utilised by many providers seeking advice. Financial assistance is provided for a variety of reasons detailed in Appendix 5.

I didn't know anything about a benefit, she helped me get on the benefit.
(Young person)

6.2. Service exits

Exits from TSS partner support are intended at age 21 with transition assistance line support to age 25. Some transition workers connected their 21 year olds with the transition assistance line and felt confident in doing so. However, we frequently heard that 21 is often too young, particularly for young people with complex needs and/or intellectual disability. Transition workers were positive about Oranga Tamariki recognition of the need for age exemptions for eligibility to the TSS support.

They are meant to disengage at 21 but some still need somebody ... the transition assistance line is better than nothing and we try to engage them with it at 21. (Transition worker)

6.3. Supported accommodation is part of transition support services

Oranga Tamariki provides supported accommodation as part of transition support. There are 17 supported accommodation providers located across Aotearoa. Nine of the providers were Kaupapa Māori organisations, with five being Iwi-led Kaupapa Māori organisations¹⁶.

Supported accommodation aims to provide safe, stable, supported accommodation for rangatahi and facilitate the development of life skills and interpersonal skills needed for transition to adulthood¹⁷. The target group for this service is rangatahi who are transitioning from care to young adulthood and are aged from 18 – 21 years¹⁸.

To the end of June 2023 there were 154 supported accommodation places, 110 (71%) were current and there were 26 (17%) pending referrals. At least 49% of contracted placements were with Iwi or kaupapa Māori providers.

Table 5. Supported accommodation placements and occupancy to end of June 2023 (Oranga Tamariki data).

Region	Number of placements	Number of current placements	Number of pending referrals
Te Tai Tokerau	4	4	0
Auckland	56	45	2
Waikato	5	4	2
Taranaki-Manawatū	9	3	3
East Coast	13	10	3
Wellington	18	18	8
Upper South	4	4	1
Canterbury	30	17	7
Lower South	15	5	0
Total	154	110	26

¹⁶ An evaluation of Supported Accommodation comprised visits to 13 supported accommodation providers and interviews with 54 staff and 23 young people. 3% of provider returns did not specify whether the organisation was a kaupapa Māori provider.

¹⁷ <https://orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Working-with-children/Information-for-providers/Service-Specifications/Supported-Accommodation.pdf>

¹⁸ Some 16 and 17 year olds who are still under the care or custody of Oranga Tamariki may be referred if the Oranga Tamariki site have assessed and approved an independent living arrangement.

There was variation between providers both in the accommodation options they offered and in the way they supported young people. The accommodation options offered are driven at least in part by the availability of housing types in the localities and existing housing each provider had when contracted as a supported accommodation provider.

Most referrals to supported accommodation came from Oranga Tamariki. An effective referral contained the information about the young person to enable the providers to assess whether they could provide the support a young person needed and ensure safety for the young person and others they supported.

Each of the supported accommodation provider organisations had a values system that underpinned their kaupapa. Some organisations were also TSS partners, some were organisations that offered other programmes, other social housing, and some were small and embedded in their communities. The organisations were described by stakeholders as 'having a heart' and this was demonstrated in the way they described their service to the evaluation team and the support they provided to young people.

Some organisations focused on providing support in a family environment and others in semi-independent flats. Supported accommodation service agreements with Oranga Tamariki are flexible and allow supported accommodation models that fit with each organisation's kaupapa. Key challenges for supported accommodation providers were similar to those facing all TSS partners: young people's past trauma and challenges in engaging with specialist mental health support, young people's contexts and alcohol and drug use.

Current approaches of building trust, assessing needs and setting goals seem to be effective in supporting young people. The flexibility of the current model enables support for young people to be tailored to their needs. More administrative data is needed from providers to fully understand the support they provide. An online case management tool that supports consistent information collection and provider reporting would help build understandings of supported accommodation models.

There's never enough [Supported Accommodation] I feel very lucky that we have supported accommodation. ... It still doesn't meet the needs of every rangatahi, so we still have the rangatahi that are too high needs for supported accommodation and struggling to get housing and need way more intensive support. That's the big gap for our region. (TSS regional team)

Supported Accommodation

Emma is 17 years old and is currently in high school. She has been in Oranga Tamariki care for less than five years. She was referred to supported accommodation through her social worker, when she moved regions. The social worker felt she was too independent for a caregiver but too young to go flatting. She has now been there for a year.



I just managed to settle through the past month. But yeah, it took a while for me, because it takes me a while to settle in and get comfortable and know that like everything's safe and all right.

Emma loves living in supported accommodation, describing it as 'probably one of the safest environments' she has ever been in. Supported accommodation supports her towards independence, as guided by her. She has received support for dental health and budgeting courses, and is currently planning to go for her learner's licence for the second time, which she narrowly failed in her first attempt. At the time of her interview, she was trying to decide which university she would go to.



You go from not having a parent and you feel like you're supporting yourself, and there's no one to guide you. But when you're in this house, you feel safe. There are rules put in place, but it's for your own safety. And there's also people around you guiding and helping you to guide your own path that you need.

Supported Accommodation

Rangi is 16 years old and is currently in high school. He found out about Supported Accommodation when he was doing a cleaning job for one of the providers. He had no previous involvement in the care system, but was living in an unsafe environment with his mother and her boyfriend, so when he got to the home, it took almost half a year to properly settle in.



[My previous home] never felt like home. You open up the fridge, you expect food. And all there was was beer. That was probably about it. Open up the cupboard, there was just like some old kind of spaghetti.

He completed goal setting with his Supported Accommodation provider, with one goal being connecting better to his whānau. Being away from them and in a safe and secure environment has helped foster a stronger relationship. Rangi received support for food, transport, cooking, goal setting and CV building. The provider also connected him to a free driving training programme to help him get his licence. The safe and stable environment allowed Rangi to figure out what he wanted to do with his future. The stability of the house meant that he began going to school again. When the weather was bad, kaimahi gave him a lift to school or the gym, which allowed him to stay in his routines.



I've never had this kind of stability in my life before. And this was definitely the place to be.

6.4. Remaining or returning to a caregiver (ETRR)

The entitlement to remain with or return (ETRR) to a caregiver is the only obligatory provision under the legislation in terms of accommodation support. A primary aim of ETRR is to maintain relationships and support and provide the young person with a stable living arrangement.

One of the Oranga Tamariki transition planning functions is to make sure that young people and their caregiver know of this entitlement when a young person wishes to remain or return to living with a caregiver. Additionally, Oranga Tamariki has the lead responsibility to provide on-going training and support for caregivers, monitor the living arrangements, and provide financial assistance to meet the reasonable costs of the living arrangement.

Numbers of young people taking up ETRR have continued to grow and 96 young people remained or returned to their caregivers in the year ending 30 June 2023.

However, in response to Just Sayin' 23, on leaving care, few young people (9%) wanted to remain with their foster parents. Many (38%) wanted to live by themselves or with flatmates after leaving care, or with a partner (25%). However, only 29% were currently living by themselves or with flatmates and 21% with a partner¹⁹.

Transition workers in our evaluation workshops were generally aware of ETRR. Some young people who needed supported accommodation were in ETRR living arrangements. Transition workers considered informing young people and caregivers about ETRR and arranging it needs to be led by the social worker and supported by the local Oranga Tamariki office.

Most of the 41 caregivers who responded to questions about ETRR included in the Oranga Tamariki caregiver survey were aware of the ETRR policy (83%), with most caregivers willing to care for a young person who is 18 to 21 (63% said yes if the young person was already in their care, with an additional 22% saying yes regardless). Many were aware of the financial support provided to caregivers under ETRR (63%).

ETRR only seems to work with whānau or with caregivers who become whānau. (Transition worker)

Challenges for ETRR identified by the transition workers included:

- Caregivers may receive less payment under ETRR
- The requirement for the young person to pay the carer may be a point of tension

¹⁹ Just Sayin' 23

- Carers and young people who ‘hated’ Oranga Tamariki wanted to end contact with them
- Processes and social worker attitudes to ETRR varied.

Entitlement to Remain or Return

Alex came to his caregiver at 17 years old as the caregiver's first foster child. He left his previous caregiver's home presenting as female and came to the caregiver as a transgender male. The caregiver was supportive and accepting of Alex's gender identity and paid to get him a new wardrobe aligning with his gender. Alex was appreciative of the support that ETRR had allowed for.



I still have a place to live, I still have food and I'm safe.

ETRR also helped Alex learn skills in money use. He had never previously had his own money, and ETRR gave him a safe space to learn about money. Alex is currently saving up to have gender affirming surgery, and ETRR has allowed Alex to put money into savings.

The caregiver, Craig described Alex as having complex needs, including autism, ADHD, PTSD and dyslexia. He felt Alex may not be ready for 'transitioning' to adulthood.



Alex will be no [more] ready to flat as 25 years than he is at 20 years ... If things don't work out, he could be here till he's 40 years ... At times, [he has the developmental] capacity of a 12 year old.

Alex's caregiver worked with his transition worker on a transition to independence plan. However, when a new transition worker was appointed, communication broke down. At the time of the interview, the caregiver hadn't heard from her for six weeks. The caregiver ended up taking on the responsibilities that a transition worker usually would, to ensure her young person received the support he needed.

6.5. Transition assistance line support

Young people, social workers and TSS partners are supported by the transition assistance line through inbound and outbound calling. All were very positive about the support they received:

- Young people from all demographic groups were accessing the transition assistance line but a greater proportion of females had called the transition assistance line compared to males.
- A greater proportion of young people who had left care had called the transition assistance line compared to those who were still in care.
- Most of the young people included in the transition assistance line evaluation found out about the transition assistance line from their

transition worker or their social worker. The young people we interviewed consistently wanted to have known about the transition assistance line earlier.

- The main types of support young people requested were around basic needs such as health, housing and education. The types of support requested differed by age.
- Interviewed young people were particularly complimentary about the transition assistance line advisors. Advisors were described as patient, friendly, understanding, non-judgmental, helpful and thorough.

Every time I've called them, I've never come back disappointed. I've always been very, very happy and grateful for the conversation, and I feel like I'm really supported by the line. (Young person – Just Sayin' 23)

I've heard nothing but good things about the transition line, all of the young people have always said that it's super, super helpful and easy, easy, not like WINZ. (Transition worker)

Transition Assistance Line

Miriama is a 21-year-old young person who used to have a transition worker. She found out about the transition assistance line through VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai.



She has called the line multiple times, typically for support with food or transport, but only when absolutely necessary. One time she requested transport and accommodation support to see a close family member who had recently faced a medical emergency.

The transition assistance line supported her with flights and accommodation. When she arrived, she realised Uber was unavailable in her home town, so she called the line again. They supported her by ordering and paying for a taxi.



[Advisor] was really good... even on the phone, she got back to me pretty quickly... And then when I ran into issues because, I got there to find that there's no Uber, there is no nothing. And I had no way [to get there], no one to pick me up. And she was able to get me a taxi. (Miriama)

6.6. Young people may also receive support from other organisations

Just under half (49%) of young people said they were not receiving any other support than the transition support service. About half of all young people (51%) were receiving support from other organisations, including a counsellor (31%), a youth service (31%), a health provider (30%), someone at the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) or Work and Income (WINZ) (26%), an accommodation or housing provider (11%), and someone else (19%)²⁰.

Support from other agencies highlights the need for good communication and consistent eligibility criteria between different government agencies. Transition workers highlighted the advantages of having a contact person at agencies such as Work and Income and Kāinga Ora who understood the transitions cohort.

²⁰ Information from Just Sayin' 23

7. Transition support has helped many young people

7.1. A new service has been implemented in a short-time frame

Transition support is now available for young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care. The TSS has been established with a nationwide network of TSS partners. The support provided to young people demonstrates progress towards the outcomes it was intended to address.

We've got a service, it's well established, the number of young people being offered the service and that know what it is, that's continuing to grow. The referral rate or the offer rate is continuing to grow. (TSS national team)

7.2. Initial analysis of IDI data demonstrates quantitative evidence of positive outcomes

A first analysis of IDI data has been completed by Oranga Tamariki²¹. It is important to note that while short-term changes are evident there has not been sufficient time to demonstrate changes in longer-term outcomes.

Results of the first IDI analysis suggest that by the age of 19, referred rangatahi:

- Were more likely to be issued a Restricted licence. Although they were less likely to be issued a Learner driver licence this may reflect earlier Oranga Tamariki support to attain a learner driver licence.
- Recorded better justice sector outcomes, as reflected by most specifications showing lower likelihood to record Prison/Remanding Correction sentences, Prison/Remanding *or* Community Service Correction sentences, and under some specifications, also lower likelihood to record Police Offending events.
- Had a lower likelihood to record Emergency Department admissions, to receive benefit income (3 fewer months on average), and a lower likelihood to record a *vulnerably transient* status.
- Were estimated in some specification to be more likely to, and on average, earn Wages and Salary income for an additional 2.5 months.

These results were largely repeated when examining the outcomes for rangatahi Māori, possibly since they account for about two-thirds of the overall study

²¹ Apatov, E. (2024). Transition Support Service: Early outcomes findings for the first cohorts.

population. The findings were not repeated when focusing on Pacific Peoples²², though this group recorded large employment outcomes (seven additional months receiving Wages and Salary income, and additional \$20,000 NZD from Wages and Salary income).

Changes in young people's outcomes can take time to be seen. The timeframes over which changes in outcomes can be seen is influenced by:

- The young person's individual support needs.
- The time required to build a trusting relationship before they could support young people to progress towards their goals
- The young person's health and wellbeing on leaving Oranga Tamariki care.

Later analysis of IDI data will be important to provide quantitative information about the extent longer-term outcomes are being achieved.

7.3. Qualitative data complement the IDI analysis

In response to Just Sayin' 23, most (84%) young people (both in care and who had left care) were positive about their transition worker.

Young people still in care said their transition worker understands what kinds of support they need (80%), is there when they need them (80%), and does what they say they would do (most or all of the time) (82%).

Young people who had left care said their transition worker understands what kinds of support they need (79%), is there when they need them (80%), and does what they say they would do (most or all the time) (81%).

Early changes such as building trusting relationships have been demonstrated through the stories of a selection of young people that illustrate the differences made by support from their transition workers²³.

²² Small numbers of Pacific peoples in the transition cohort may affect the significance of findings.

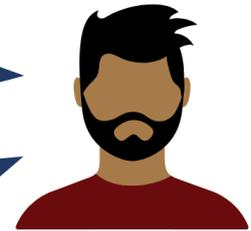
²³ Names have been changed. The stories are drawn from in-depth interviews with young people and transition workers.

Isaac's story

Growing up as a young Pacific person in Aotearoa New Zealand has been “mean so far” Isaac says, and it’s even better now with a transition worker alongside him. Isaac is comfortable in his Pasifika identity. His nana and an aunty are important links to his heritage and culture, and he connects with others through church, sports and several trips to his home island. “Weaving and learning to be an Islander,” he says of those visits. Other family have not been such a consistent part of a life which has included foster parents and care homes. He was in care with his sisters for a while, but their paths diverged when he took the opportunity to return to a previous carer, and they didn’t want to. It was difficult, he says, because they were each asked individually so didn’t have the chance to talk about it amongst themselves. Now 19, he’s preparing for the next part of his life with the transition worker’s help - although he wasn’t too keen on the idea before he met *Mike.

“He sits me down and he asks me what do you get into? I just say like gaming and that. He says I have a few people who work with that kind of stuff... we can go soon and check it out.”

“He’s really cool, he always calls me up,” Isaac says now. “We just vibe.”



He thinks there was a family group conference or two about him, but they involved talking about him rather than to or with him and despite trying to eavesdrop he couldn’t work out what was being said. Nor did he leave with a plan – although he had his own.

With Mike’s help, Isaac had a job within a week. Mike’s his go-to guy for most things now. He doesn’t pressure him to do anything straight away, and always asks if he needs help with anything. Often those problems involve the cops, he notes. Generally, they’re working on getting him interview-ready and building his confidence. Getting his licence has been part of that, as is helping Isaac feel more confident about entering crowded places.

“Sometimes he just takes me. He gets me talking to people, so that’s pretty good and he took me to this one place that was a place to just talk to people about your day and that. I met two other boys there and now I play on the game with them.” “Afterwards, now I feel pretty good. “

Jude's story

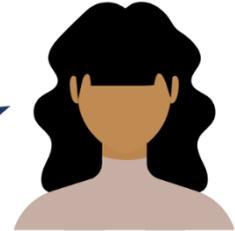
Her mum didn't want her to have a transition worker because she thought they were messing with her brain, but *Jude rates the Transition service more highly than most of what she's had from the agency.

One of several children, she has most recently been in her mum's care under Oranga Tamariki supervision. Now she's 18 and no longer on their books – and her immediate goal is to leave home soon.

"She's not bad," she says of her mum. "It's just you know, she's too much. It's hard for mum to let go."

Referring to FGCs Jude says having her mum there is inhibiting.

"I can't say stuff in front of them because we'll go home. And then she'll ...be mad at me for so much stuff, when it's, you know, not something she should be mad about. "



There have been other carers – which split up the family. She and her sister were kept together for a while, but other siblings were in other places. She got used to it, thought moving around a lot, going place to place, was what being in care meant. The longest stay she recalls was two years. "It's just shitty," she says. There were some positives – she lists getting clothes, going to school holiday programmes, being offered opportunities to connect culturally. Jude values her mixed heritage.

"I like it, being Māori-Pasifika, because I have all types of families. I have lots of family."

She recalls a pretty constant turnover of social workers. Sometimes with no warning until someone turned up and introduced themselves as the new one. As well as the lack of consistency, Jude also had issues with confidentiality.

Her transition worker is vastly different. She's "like my counsellor. Every time I see her, I am always talking to her about what happened at home and stuff. "

"She always invites me out to like go places and stuff. And I always you know, jumped at it like yes, I want to go because I want to get out of the house. And I'm like, yeah, so it's been good."

Leaving home is coming up. Also on Jude's agenda is getting her licence. But otherwise she's not so sure about her goals.

"I'm still kind of confused about what's supposed to happen, kind of stuck."

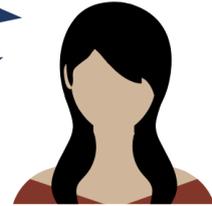
Olive's story

Mum has substance abuse issues and Dad was in jail for most of her young life but their daughter Olive is adamant she's a good parent and her kids are going to have a much better life than she did.

She says for many years "home" was where Mum was, and she and her siblings were tied together "like shoelaces." But that came to an end after Dad went to jail, mum fell apart and they went into care. Family get-togethers, always on terms dictated by Oranga Tamariki gradually fell away.

"That was what kept my mum grounded," the 20-year-old says.
"But when she lost seeing our sisters, she just went AWOL"

She's still in touch with some whānau "but they're not the family I want to be in touch with because they're not the ones that have their shit together..."



Olive is charting a different course – one in which Oranga Tamariki doesn't feature. "You could be young like me and have kids, but still get your shit together," the mother of two, with a third due soon, says.

She was 17 and in care when she first became pregnant. The carefree teenager became responsible – giving up drinking, stopping smoking marijuana.

Then, within hours of giving birth, a social worker told her there would be a meeting to discuss whether she could keep her daughter.

"Obviously, I was upset about it. I was a new Mum. I didn't know anything about anything...I didn't know there was people out there that support mothers and stuff. I didn't know any of it. All I had was my Mum."

The meeting didn't happen. Later there was an apology.

Officials also contacted a previous boyfriend who they mistakenly believed was the Dad, and shared information with him. There were meetings with his family that she was not part of. Later there was another apology. "I hate OT. And that's with passion," Olive says.

She's positive though about the transition worker(s) in her life.

The transition worker helped her get into a house, onto a benefit, then into budgeting courses, parenting programs, Plunket...She drove her to midwife appointments, bought her kids their first outfits.

"Because I had no family at the time, she became family. That was a big bonus."

"Before I was like, I hated everybody, I didn't want to do anything, I just wanted to go to school...Somehow they turn that around and you end up adapting."

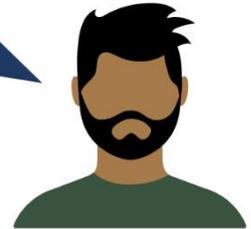
The right way and the wrong way

"It's good," 18-year-old *Billy says about his time on remand in a Youth Justice facility.

"It basically tells you to have a think about what you have done, and lets you know there's always an option with the right way and the wrong way."

While it's his first time on remand, Billy is well-used to being in care. It's been part of his life since he was six.

Of Oranga Tamariki, he says "no complaints. I think they have done what they basically can do, really."



He credits his most recent caregivers, who he describes as old school, with getting him on track. At this point, after six months inside to reflect, he regards the input he's had, and continues to get, as pretty positive. He believes the right people are involved in his life, providing him with tools, skills and guidance.

He knows being on remand is a consequence of bad choices, and he's making the most of it. He is being helped to connect with his Māori heritage, and his transition worker is helping figure out next steps. He knew the transition worker already, through a friend, and describes their relationship as easy – it's comfortable hanging out and talking. His transition worker has done more than he expected.

The two of them "go around and talk to people about information, how to get into this and whatever...eliminate the ones we don't need and pick the ones we want."

The needs of other clients meant his transition worker couldn't attend Billy's recent FGC, but someone else did and overall, Billy thinks, the right people from both whānau and agencies were involved, and in planning what comes next for him.

He likes having a plan. His includes a flat and a job – preferably on a farm or maybe in forestry rather than where "shit happens, like last time". Longer-term he'd like somewhere to call home, and his own family. If he wants help, he'd call Oranga Tamariki or his dad. He didn't know about the Transitions Assistance Line, but sees that sort of ongoing support as useful for others. Overall, Billy feels supported to attain his goals, 100 percent.

"They just support me so I can get there and achieve what I want to do." ...
"Basically they (OT) have given me a chance to just sit down and physically turn my life around."

Ngā Haerenga/ Transition Journeys²⁴

Ngā Haerenga is a small qualitative longitudinal study of young people who have left care both eligible and ineligible for TSS. Forty-four young people were interviewed in year 1 and 24 in year 3. Ngā Haerenga follows their transition to independent living from Oranga Tamariki care and custody arrangements.

We found that a wide range of outcomes were reported by rangatahi who remained in the study in year 3. Most reported that overall things were going okay since leaving care. However, some rangatahi continued to struggle (for example with mental health issues).

Four key āhuratanga (themes or characteristics) of the dynamics and aspects of ragatahi journeys were identified. They enabled or, in their absence, constrained successful outcomes. These were:

- Hononga (connectedness with whānau, former caregivers, friends, whenua, culture, and whakapapa)
- Haumarutanga (safety, stable and welcoming social services and community spaces)
- Mana ake (increasing sense of self-agency, identity, and purpose)
- Ārahitanga (guidance and support from whānau, social services kaimahi and people in the community).
- The most important theme that appeared in many journeys was the importance of hononga for enabling successful outcomes.

7.4. Transition workers have helped young people to progress towards the intended outcomes of the transition service

Most (84%) young people responding to Just Sayin' 23 said they had received support from their transition worker with at least one aspect of their lives aligned with the intended outcomes of the TSS (Table 6).

Based on the Just Sayin' 23 survey findings and qualitative feedback, the transition support provided for rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people and young people from other ethnic groups was similar.

²⁴ [Ngā Haerenga | Transition Journeys Longitudinal Study Phase 1 | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)
[Ngā Haerenga | Transition Journeys Longitudinal Study Phase 3 | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

Table 6. The extent young people considered their transition worker had helped with important aspects of their lives.

Young people who thought their transition worker had helped with...	All young people (n=221-222)	Rangatahi Māori (n=112-113)	Pacific young people (n=30)
Connection with birth whānau	31%	33%	43%
Connection with doctor or nurse	42%	40%	57%
Connection with counsellor	32%	29%	30%
Connection with dentist	25%	22%	30%
Connection with education and training	47%	43%	50%
Connection with employment	22%	23%	30%
Received transition worker support across at least one of the aspects above	84%	83%	90%

7.5. **The service design meets the needs of young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care**

Progress has been made towards the service definitions proposed to Cabinet and is consistent with Oranga Tamariki legislative obligations²⁵.

TSS is underpinned by a relationship-based model, with a focus on building a relationship with the young person and supporting them to build positive relationships with their family, whānau and other trusted adults.

There was consensus amongst the TSS evaluation team and supported by evaluation findings that most of the underpinning principles of TSS design are in place and remain relevant. Interviews with transition workers and the young people they support have demonstrated that relationships are built between the transition worker and the young person.

Transition worker support to build positive relationships with family, whānau and others have been described by young people. In response to Just Sayin’ 23 31% of young people described their transition worker as supporting connection with birth whānau.

Transition support is provided by organisations independent of Oranga Tamariki.

²⁵ Legislative obligations: Needs assessment: S386A (2)a; Planning and preparation: S386A; Maintaining contact: S386C; ETRR: S386AAD; Advice and assistance: S386A/S386B

Consultation during TSS design highlighted the need for transition services to be independent of Oranga Tamariki. The need for independent services has been confirmed throughout the evaluation. The importance of communicating to young people that the service is independent as part of the planning process was emphasised by young people.

They've been prying into my life for the most part of nine years and I am over it. (Young person – Just Sayin' 23)

Based on preparation and planning starting as early as possible.

Meaningful early preparation and planning for leaving care has been a challenge for the TSS roll-out. Regional variation reflects differences in regional processes and transition worker FTEs.

Just Sayin' survey data found 59% of 16 years olds recalled being asked if they wanted transition worker support, increasing to 83% for 18 year olds. CYRAS data record referrals to a transition worker for 46% of 16 years olds increasing to 76% of 18 year olds.

These percentages are low given the time since TSS roll-out and the important role of the social worker in explaining the transition support available.

What's come through, all the way through the [TSS] evaluation is that the weak point or the point where things aren't working so well is that connection between the social worker or connecting the young person with the transition worker and working together. (TSS national team)

To provide after-hours crisis support.

After-hours crisis support is provided by the National Call Centre. Information about the support provided by the National Call Centre was not included in the evaluation. However, the transition assistance line supports many young people, social workers and transition workers during working hours.

Feedback about the value of the transition assistance line was positive from all groups. The young people from the Just Sayin' 2023 survey who called the transition assistance line were satisfied with the support they received, with 86% saying the transition assistance line helped a little or a lot.

To be able to respond to reasonable requests for financial assistance, with a focus on maximising existing entitlements.

Financial assistance is provided to young people through the TSS partners and the transition assistance line.

Transition assistance line call data shows 1,527 requests for financial assistance were logged from July 2022 to June 2023 and 75% were complete. Of completed requests, 50% were related to driving, cars, transportation or travel. The second most common request related to food (20%), followed by 'other', which included accessing the Achieving Independence grant. Financial support for

health, accommodation, clothing, employment or education, and official documents each totalled less than 5%.

I've been using it a lot lately, just getting basic furniture to get me sorted for when I do get a proper house, which is very big for me coming from a low income family. (Young person – interview)

TSS partner returns and information from Oranga Tamariki contracting systems report the final expenditure in FY23/24 was \$529,493.80. However, this is unlikely to be a full accurate account of all the financial expenditure.

To be able to provide or facilitate a range of housing supports for young people.

Supported accommodation is part of the TSS. There are 154 supported accommodation placements and at least 49% of contracted placements are with Iwi or kaupapa Māori providers. Interviews illustrated the many ways supported accommodation contributed to achieving the TSS outcomes for young people.

I got a lot of support before I even moved into this place. [Transition worker] she'd come and pick me up and with the car... and we squeezed all my stuff in there... (Young person - interview)

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

Transition workers and the Oranga Tamariki regional team called for more supported accommodation places across a wider range of locations.

The entitlement to remain with or return (ETRR) to a caregiver is the only obligatory provision under the legislation in terms of accommodation support. While awareness of ETRR is increasing the model does not fit the needs of many young people who want to become independent and live by themselves or with friends or partners. However, ETRR provides a safety net for young people to try other types of accommodation and meets the needs of disabled young people who may not be ready to live independently.

I think [ETRR information] all needs to be upfront. When these kids turn 18, if they leave care and they go splat they can come back, if they enjoyed their time with you. The young people need to know. (Interview, Caregiver)

An ETRR refresh is likely to remove some barriers for young people wanting to return to live with whānau.

7.6. There are systemic challenges in supporting young people

A nationwide shortage of housing impacts on the transition cohort

Housing shortages are a nationwide challenge for many people. Shortages impact on young people transitioning from care, residences and prison as safe and stable housing is fundamental to effective transitions. Some young people may have nowhere to go. Transition workers spoke about housing being the very first need they look at before a formal needs assessment.

Other things are too far up the ladder if they don't have accommodation.
(Transition worker)

Young people transitioning have no references so private rentals, even if affordable, are difficult to access. Transition workers also described difficulties for young people getting into Kāinga Ora housing and overcrowding in Kāinga Ora cabins. Transition workers in all regions described emergency housing as unsuitable and/or unsafe for young people.

... I've got 12 on my caseload, and over half of them don't have stable accommodation. (Transition Worker)

Other housing challenges for young people were described by transition workers and need to be explored further. These included:

- Limited social housing for couples.
- Living with whānau is not an option for all rangatahi and whānau in social housing may not have space.
- Lack of alignment of government housing policies affecting for example eligibility.

Specialised support for mental health and trauma is difficult to access

Across all regions, transition workers described mental health and trauma as prevalent amongst the young people they supported. Transition workers consistently described mental health services as a 'big, black hole' in services. TSS partners are very clear that clinical mental health support is outside the scope of their role. One region described external agencies expecting transition workers to be there for 24/7 when a young person is in crisis. Adult mental health services have long waiting times in many regions. In the absence of adequate support transition workers could be left holding the risks for young people associated with mental illness.

That type of thing – mental health – is way above my pay grade. (Transition worker)

... how do we support our transition partners ... they have an understanding of trauma ... but transition partners aren't there to address some of these

other issues, they're not mental health clinicians, so they need to know how to access those services when appropriate. Then the severe disabilities, what I've seen is, transition partners can be quite unsure of what to do in that space ... That is a gap. (TSS national team)

Transition workers wanted to be able to access a counsellor for young people who had expertise in grief and trauma and an understanding of the transition cohort. Some noted that counselling needed to be available from ages 14 or 15 and not 18. They also emphasised the importance of continuity of care as young people were reluctant to repeat their stories to different professionals.

Providers also noted challenges with how to support young people with substance abuse issues. Rehabilitation services were described as hard to get into. One provider noted there are no rehabilitation services designed with young people in mind, and few kaupapa Māori services.

I've got one young man I'm supporting that his drug use is so high I'm just keeping him engaged with medical services and checking in on him regularly to make sure well, basically a well-being check-in for him. It's sort of come down to is he still breathing? Is he still with us? (Transition worker)

Transition workers do what they can to support young people with mental health issues. Building trust and confidence help support young people to engage with other services.

I will take young people to their health appointments. I can support them throughout that meeting, too, if they are happy for me to do all want that support. (Transition worker)

Specialist support and/or advice was also needed by transition workers for young people with intellectual disability

In workshop discussions and in Just Sayin' survey findings, a substantial proportion of young people in the transitions cohort were described as having some intellectual disability. Transition workers described head injuries and FASD as common reasons for intellectual disability.

Planning discussions include Oranga Tamariki social workers, the transition worker and may include an organisation with specific skills in supporting young people. Regional disability advisors provide support to social workers and transition workers in their regions. They have a good knowledge of the organisations that can provide disability support and can connect transition workers with these organisations.

...we rely really heavily on our disability advisors and we ask them to come and korero directly with partners because they usually want to talk about particular kids. Often those disability advisors have a really big view of the disability system, they understand what happens inside Oranga Tamariki

and they know the young people. They're great for that one-on-one with partners. (TSS regional team)

One transition worker described young people with FASD needing more than TSS could provide. Lack of support for young people with FASD was described as:

A big hole in the system that flows into the Corrections space. (Transition worker)

Education about FASD for families was also identified as a need. Transition workers described Oranga Tamariki as having good resources and wanted to be able to access them.

There is not enough education for the families and [young people] quickly burn bridges with family and support services. (Transition worker)

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Aroha began living with her caregivers, Gina and Peter, at age nine, and left when she was 18 to live with family. Shortly after, she requested to return to the caregiver under ETRR when returning to live with family did not work out.



After eight or nine years of advocating, last year, we managed to get the transition service and OT to agree to an assessment, which cost six and a half thousand dollars, and out of that, [Aroha] was diagnosed with FASD. (Gina)

Receiving a diagnosis did not qualify Aroha for additional support through Ministry of Health or Oranga Tamariki, but for Aroha, and her caregivers it was never about that. Having a FASD diagnosis has supported Aroha to understand her life experiences to date.

When she got the feedback from the psychologist, she walked out on air, it was like, finally someone gets me and confirms that not that I'm naughty or bad but my brain is wonky because I had a poison in it when I was in my mother's womb. (Gina)



Aroha had been put down in the past by her biological whānau. "Her sister calls her 'the family retard'", Gina explains. If they had the diagnosis years ago, it would have been easier to shut down the discrimination she faced. But it is better late than never.

8. Opportunities to strengthen transition support

8.1. Governance, management and leadership

The TSS team was initially set up within the Tamariki Advocate Group under the umbrella of a Transitions Operating Group who could help implement things across different business units. TSS subsequently moved into service delivery.

The move enabled work across service delivery and service lines to become more cohesive. (TSS national team)

The interviewed stakeholders considered the national management structure in place provides effective support to TSS implementation. The team is small and works together effectively. Stakeholders described the team as responsive in identifying and responding to TSS implementation needs, including the needs of different regions.

I'm really proud of the team that I have, they're a really responsive team, a very passionate team and very proactive. (TSS national team)

We are quite a small team but we do seem to get quite a lot done and we are quite visible in the Oranga Tamariki space. (TSS national team)

Regional insights and coordination

While the TSS team has recognised and responded to regional differences, the communities, NGO services and young people's contexts vary between regions. Understanding the regional differences is important to ensuring equity for young people across the regions. Regional insights and coordination are provided through the transition assistance line team and the regional disability advisors and Oranga Tamariki Māori Partnerships and Communities team. Existing regional leads cover large regions.

... every region has a difference, every region has their own flavour for it, which works for them. Regionally developed, nationally supported, which I think is perfect, ... (TSS National team)

There is the potential for regional advisors covering smaller geographic areas than at present to have a stronger role in providing regional insights. Regional advisors could inform the numbers of FTE required, support TSS partner development and build networking and relationships between Oranga Tamariki social workers and TSS partners. There is also the potential for regional advisors to have a more central role in coordinating planning and preparation through transition planning meetings and monitoring whether planning and referral to TSS partners is happening.

8.2. The TSS partners

The TSS partners are the foundation of transition support. They provide the support independent of Oranga Tamariki that young people asked for. Flexible contracts enabled organisations to work within their kaupapa. Induction training for new staff is likely to facilitate adherence to the TSS design principles.

You can't just do it once and then it's done because there's a continual churn of staff. I think recruitment and getting the right people into these roles is a challenge, particularly in some areas too, finding people with have the skill sets. (TSS national team)

The transition worker role is a demanding role and it is essential that the people taking those roles have a passion for the work and a commitment to enhancing the lives of young people. Some TSS partners have described recruitment challenges. Pay equity challenges were out of scope of the evaluation but noted by several stakeholders as barriers to transition workforce recruitment.

8.3. Communication

There is increased awareness of TSS through growth of the service and national and regional communication. A communication strategy aimed at young people, caregivers, and Oranga Tamariki staff will enhance referrals to transition support. A new letter of entitlement may increase referrals by making young people and caregivers more aware of the transition support available and by making it easier for social workers to explain the TSS.

I guess a much better understanding of what transitions is and it becoming more and more of the regular and considered part of a young person's journey. ... While we've still got a lot of work to do in terms of making sure that all young people get offered and get the supports that they need, I think it's now a very considered part of a young person's journey. (TSS regional team)

TSS partner networks are also an effective way to develop expertise through sharing experiences. These are in place in some regions but not in others.

I'd really like to see national and regional conferences for transitions partner so that they can get together and have a really good opportunity to connect and share and learn and all those good things. (TSS national team)

8.4. Service delivery

The most challenging aspect of service delivery is connecting young people with transition support. Preparation for transition needs strengthening. Several strategies have been tried and new ones such as the letter of entitlement may

make a difference. However, the social worker focus on safety remains and in a stretched workforce other ways of making the connection between young people and transition support are important.

Opportunities to improve transition planning and connection with a transition worker have been identified:

- Improving planning by shifting the focus away from FGCs.

Moving transition planning away from FGCs as the primary vehicle. Ensuring an individual focus on the young person's needs. The FGCs have quite strict rules around whānau invitations that may not work for all young people of transition age... shifting the languaging a bit to say it really needs to be a comprehensive and inclusive rangatahi and whānau-centred planning process. (TSS national team)

- The development of the life skills assessment tool.

... thinking about what kind of support is needed around life skills and what the young person's goals and aspirations are and starting to think about that early and in an age and developmentally appropriate way. (TSS national team)

- Social workers need to understand TSS and the transition worker role.

- Induction sessions are in place for new social workers.
- Regional leads and TSS partners are arranging opportunities to work with Oranga Tamariki sites, including on site work.

I think for me relationships are really good. And I think we're seeing that through a computerised system from somewhere else in the country is not the same as getting a referral from [me] saying, 'hey, look, here's this current [young person], do they want to give me a ring about him? And we'll have a chat', you know? (Oranga Tamariki social worker)

... the transition worker and social worker have to be working together and then also, the social worker has to believe that the transition worker is doing a good job. (TSS national team)

- Social workers need to explain TSS in a way young people understand and to emphasise that the transition worker is not part of Oranga Tamariki.

... working really hard to help young people understand that transitions is not Oranga Tamariki because I think that there is that barrier almost immediately, especially if they've just been discharged. 'I don't want anything to do with Oranga Tamariki. (TSS regional team)

- Induction sessions help promote understanding.
- The new letter of entitlement for young people and caregivers clearly sets out the TSS.

It's creating really awesome conversations on sites ... this information is really helpful to talk to my current young people who are coming up to 15/16 so that I'm really clear, they're really clear what their entitlements are. I think for our social workers, having a really clear letter has helped them feel more confident speaking to the transition space because often that's the issue is they want to say something but they go 'I don't want to say the wrong thing' because you might not be entitled to that, but because it's on a letter, it's really simple. (TSS regional team)

- Young people and their caregivers need to understand transition support available for them²⁶.
 - The new letter of entitlement aims to build awareness amongst young people and caregivers. Other forms of communication may be required to reach young people.

The letter of entitlement, and it's got a little QR code they can scan that will take them to the website, and so that's obviously for their caregivers, their whānau, their other important people as well, to understand and to help advocate for them for what they need. ... We're just printing now, just business cards with the transition assistance helpline number on it. ... (TSS national team)

- Systems need to be in place at Oranga Tamariki sites to ensure referral is offered to young people.

[Oranga Tamariki National Office] want it all to go through CYRAS and [they will] send them out to the providers. I think that's kind of a good idea, because we can see that it's happened. But actually, I don't like to practice like that. I like face to face contact. I'll do a referral. I'm sending them to them. But I also email them out to [Transition Worker]. (Oranga Tamariki social worker)

- Young people are more likely to be offered transition worker support if there is a person at the Oranga Tamariki site who coordinates transition support. In a few regions, transitions FGC coordinators were funded from an underspend and were effective in coordinating referrals.

Where it works better is where there's some kind of dedicated resource or oversight in service delivery or MPC and when the senior advisors are there, to actually help keep the service championed and help keep people doing what they need to do

[The referral process has] been a bit sort of all over the place until more recently, until I can't remember his name, has started sending reminders to

²⁶ Caregivers also have a role in explaining transition support. In response to an Oranga Tamariki survey responses from 41-110 caregivers of young people 16 and above, 78% of caregivers were aware of a young person's entitlement to a transition worker from aged 16 to 21 (78%).

all social workers, because I think we were missing some young people who weren't sitting on my transition to independence caseload. (Oranga Tamariki social worker)

- A centralised 'reminder and tracking system' also helps to ensure young people are not missing out.

I think it very much does come down to who in a site knows what transitions is and how to do that and is interested and passionate about it, how they get support to do that in terms of what's there in the regions to kind of move things along. (TSS national team)

8.5. The transition assistance line

Transition assistance line staff thought the service was adequately set up to manage the number of calls currently received and they were satisfied with their roles. However, efforts to increase knowledge of the line and increases in the number of young people over 21 who are eligible for transition support will likely increase the frequency of calls and the service may need to expand. Transition service management are aware of this and are monitoring demand.

Opportunities to strengthen the transition assistance line include:

- Extend the transition assistance line after hours and through the weekend or upskill staff within the National Contact Centre to be confident with transitions-specific support.
- Explore whether calls to the transition line that are transferred to the National Contact Centre can be answered 'Transition line' rather than 'Oranga Tamariki'.
- Access to expertise and professional development around trauma-informed care and cultural practice frameworks, such as Te Whare Tapa Whā is an opportunity to strengthen transition assistance line support.
- Promote the transition assistance line more, particularly to those who are preparing to leave youth justice residences.
- Improve communication around reasons for declined financial requests.
- Make it clear that young people can talk to another advisor if their usual advisor is not available.
- Provide clear updates on the status of financial requests.

8.6. Housing

Shortages of suitable housing for young people are a barrier across the country. Progress towards transitioning to adulthood is limited if young people do not have stable accommodation.

Supported accommodation fills an important gap for young people. However, there are not enough places within current Supported Accommodation partners and some regions have no access. Supported accommodation is most effective when the type of accommodation and support align with the young person's support needs speaking to the need of increasing the types of supported accommodation as well as the number of places.

Finding suitable housing is even more of a challenge for disabled young people. The challenge will remain for those who need support to live independently after they turn 25.

Solutions suggested by TSS partners included:

- Incentive funding to allow private landlords to give young people a chance. However, this option is not feasible within government agency financial rules.
- Young people in rural areas may need to leave whānau to get accommodation if offered a place in supported accommodation. Ideally housing needs to be near to education and training opportunities.
- Funding to provide transitional housing.

Transitional housing would be a huge solution. That's probably one of the biggest barriers that we face for independence. (Transition worker)

TSS partner suggestions could be considered alongside interagency work on housing solutions.

8.7. ETRR

The primary focus of ETRR is the continuation of supportive relationships for young people. For those young people whom it was working well for, ETRR provided them a tūrangawaewae – a place from which they could stand and plan for the future as they transitioned out of care and into adulthood.

Many of the former and current ETRR arrangements are focused on the caregiver and young person as being family/whānau. The role of whānau is often 'enduring' where young people would have been welcome to stay with them regardless of the policy.

The low take-up of ETRR and the high proportion of disabled young people accessing ETRR suggest that while ETRR is filling a gap for some young people, it is not the main housing option for young people transitioning from Oranga Tamariki care. Other housing solutions are essential.

In response to evaluation feedback from young people and transition workers, Oranga Tamariki have completed a ETRR refresh project with the aim of increasing uptake by amending the caregiver approval process. This change

would make it easier for young people to return to whānau if that was the option they wanted.

I think it's increasing access to ETRR to make it available to more young people and more flexible, so they can be supported to stay with trusted adults that they feel safe with. (TSS national team)

8.8. Systems and processes

Contracts with TSS partner provide flexibility for organisations to deliver transition support that fits with their kaupapa within a standard set of objectives. Induction training for transition workers is likely to maintain a focus on the TSS service design.

A challenge for TSS partners and the national team is to receive consistent and usable reporting from the TSS partners. Some are small organisations that may require support with case management systems and alignment to the information Oranga Tamariki need.

Centrally, CYRAS does not accurately include information about the specific needs of young people from different groups such as rainbow, young parents and disabled young people. Inclusion of this information would enable more targeted support and early planning of how to respond to their transition needs. CYRAS data also do not record the duration and intensity of support received by young people. The lack of this data limits understanding of what effective support looks like.

The cohort of young people that we are working with, they have come from the care space, so I just think it's us really recognising that because these young people have come from that space, we've been effectively their parents, so we need to do what normal parents do and support their kids into adulthood. (TSS national team)

8.9. The TSS can influence some outcomes but others sit in the broader environment and require inter-agency collaboration

Transition to adulthood does not just sit with Oranga Tamariki. Effective transitioning and breaking intergenerational cycles of disadvantage require interagency collaboration and commitment during:

- Pre-transition life stages – through education and health and support with basic needs.
- Preparation for transition – early planning that targets young people's specific needs and identifies the adult services they require.

- Access to adult services during and after transition and in the broader environment young people transition into e.g. access to suitable housing, to health and social support as adults.

There is a gap in specialist services for young people such as substance use support services and specialist mental health services that needs to be filled. There are also gaps in primary care such as general practice in some localities. Some young people struggle to access services that are available to them because of previous trauma and anxiety about how they will be treated.

Access to support is required for disabled young people who do not reach current thresholds for specialist services. The new Oranga Tamariki Disability Strategy is a starting point for planning transition support for disabled young people.

Appendix 1: Timeline of TSS development

Date	TSS changes - governance and management	TSS partners	Support for young people
2018		Supported Accommodation pilot	Limited transition support when young people left care, funded community services in Auckland and Te Tai Tokerau
2 August 2019	Cabinet Paper issued		
	The Transition Support team is established as a central function in the Tamariki Advocate Group with operational governance from a Transitions Operating Group Transition Assistance Helpline established in the National Contact Centre	First TSS partners contracted April - June to develop TSS	
1 July 2019	Transition support became a core component of the new Oranga Tamariki operating model		1,673 young people eligible for transition worker support - 108 referred
Late 2019	Funding received for four years through the Homelessness Action plan to increase the number of Supported Accommodation placements (beyond Budget 19 funding)		
March 2020	Impacts of COVID	Supported Accommodation is set up as part of transition support	
Mid-2020	Regional Senior Advisor Transitions roles established in the five PFO regions		
30 June 2020			2,066 young people eligible for transition worker support - 640 referred 47 supported accommodation placements 9 young people choosing to remain / return to living with a caregiver
30 June 2021		63 TSS partners and 121.25 transition workers	2,372 young people eligible for transition worker support - 1,251 referred 107 supported accommodation placements 46 young people choosing to remain / return to living with a caregiver
April 2022	TSS team moves to service delivery		
30 June 2022	End of phased roll-out Simplification of eligibility criteria	70 TSS partners and 137.75 transition workers Increase in kaupapa Māori TSS partners	2,713 young people eligible for transition worker support - 1,539 referred 136 supported accommodation placements 61 young people choosing to remain / return to living with a caregiver
July 2022	TSS national team restructure - reduction from 15 FTE to 8.5 FTE		
	Increased focus on cross-agency work to support young people		
November 2022	Transition Assistance line moves from National Call Centre to the TSS team		
2023	Oranga Tamariki Action Plan		
April 2023	Review of ETRR - highlighting opportunities to increase access through to changes to practice policy settings		
30 June 2023		70 TSS partners and 137.75 transition workers 17 Supported Accommodation providers	2,820 young people eligible for transition worker support - 1,732 referred 154 supported accommodation placements 96 young people choosing to remain / return to living with a caregiver
Plan for FY24	Increase in Transition Worker FTE - additional 12FTE Development of new tools - life skills assessment tool, entitlement letter ETRR Refresh: Policy changes to broaden the caregivers included under ETRR. Oranga Tamariki Disability Strategy Design and pilot housing education programmes		

Appendix 3: Timeline of evaluation activities

The evaluation activities are summarised in . Reports indicated as internal inform the annual evaluation reports and have not been published separately. Published reports can be found here: <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/research/our-research/>

Reports noted as ‘to be published’ will also appear on the link above.

Figure 10. Evaluation activities

Activity	Completed by	Published
Year 1: July 2019 - June 2020		
ETRR formative evaluation	Malatest	Internal
Supported Accommodation Evaluation	Malatest	OT website
Provider data analysis	Malatest	Internal
Just Sayin’ 20	Malatest	OT website
Year 2: July 2020 - June 2021		
Housing literature review	Malatest	OT website
Qualitative profile of TSS partners	Malatest	Internal
Preparing for transition survey of 16 year olds	Malatest	Internal
Māori and Pacific voices of young people and TSS partners	Malatest	Internal
Voices of young people in Youth Justice residences and their social workers/case workers	Malatest	OT website
Just Sayin’ 21 and theme reports	Malatest	OT website
Year 2 report	Malatest/ Oranga Tamariki	OT website
Ngā Haerenga Phase 1	Oranga Tamariki	OT website
Year 3: July 2021 - June 2022		
Regional case studies	Malatest	Internal
Just Sayin’ 22 and theme reports	Malatest	OT website
Year 3 report	Malatest/ Oranga Tamariki	OT website
The Ngā Haerenga Research Rōpū. (2023). Ngā Haerenga Transition Journeys Phase Three (orangatamariki.govt.nz)	Oranga Tamariki	OT website
Year 4: July 2022 – December 2023		

Social worker and care giver surveys	Oranga Tamariki	OT website
ETRR review	Malatest	Internal
Exploration of post-secondary school educational needs of young people leaving care	Malatest	Internal
Literature review of the needs of young parents	Malatest	Internal
Review of supported accommodation	Malatest	To be published
Review of the transition assistance line	Malatest	To be published
Perceptions of TSS partners	Malatest	Internal
Perceptions of TSS national and regional teams and social workers	Malatest	Internal
Just Sayin' 23	Malatest	To be published
Analysis of What About Me? data for young people with care experience	Malatest	Internal
Final evaluation report	Malatest/ Oranga Tamariki	To be published
Transition Support Service: Early outcomes findings for the first cohorts	Oranga Tamariki	To be published

Appendix 4: Evaluation methods

Theoretical foundation

A logic model and measurement framework provided the theoretical foundation for each aspect of the evaluation and underpinned the development of interview guides and surveys.

Workplans were developed for each aspect of the evaluation and discussed with the TSS team before the approach was finalised.

Just Sayin' surveys

Young people were eligible to complete Just Sayin' if they were 16 to 21 years old and eligible for a transition worker.

Four surveys have been completed.

- Just Sayin' 20: completed by 141 young people eligible for transition worker support and 49 young people not eligible. The survey was augmented by a later additional survey of 16 year olds eligible for transition worker support.
- Just Sayin' 21: completed by 331 young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who were eligible for support from a transition worker.
- Just Sayin' 22: completed by 408 young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who were eligible for support from a transition worker.
- Just Sayin' 23: completed by 376 young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who were eligible for support from a transition worker AND 66 young people older than 21.

Oranga Tamariki provided Malatest with a list of names with contact phone numbers of young people eligible for the survey. Oranga Tamariki was not told who completed the survey, unless the young person specifically asked for Oranga Tamariki to contact them (a final question in the survey).

Young people were invited to take part in Just Sayin' by text message and phone calls through:

- An initial text message one week before calling young people to give them the opportunity to decline participation in the survey
- Three more text invitations
- Two-to-three phone calls to each young person (on different days and different times of the day).

Young people were told they could respond 'No' to a text message and they would not be contacted again. Text messages contained a direct link to the survey and a link to the Just Sayin' website (Justsayin.nz) with more information. Malatest also asked all TSS partners to promote the survey and to encourage young people to complete it.

Young people could complete the survey online or by telephone. Those who completed the survey received a \$30 voucher in recognition of their time.

There were some differences between the transition eligible cohort and the young people who responded to the survey. Data were not weighted to account for these differences as we considered non-contact bias to be more substantial.

The survey was reviewed by the ethics advisor from Oranga Tamariki and approved prior to any contact with young people.

Interviews

Many interviews were completed throughout the evaluation with young people, whānau and caregivers. Details of interviews can be found in the evaluation reports listed in Appendix 3:

- Interviews were completed kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) at locations convenient and comfortable for the young person or provider or via video links.
- Most interviews with young people were organised by their transition worker, who helped with support during interviews and often also helped with transportation to locations.
- All interviews with young people in Youth Justice residences were completed kanohi ki te kanohi.
- Anonymised case studies were used to describe young people's contexts and experiences.

Interviews with other stakeholders:

- Other stakeholders interviewed over the four-year evaluation included:
 - The Oranga Tamariki national team, regional coordinators, social workers, policy leads
 - The TSS partners – individual interviews and annual workshops
 - Supported Accommodation partners
- Interviews comprised a mix of site visits and kanohi ke te kanohi interviews and interviews via video link (primarily during and after COVID)
- Workshops were used to gather information from groups such as transition workers and Oranga Tamariki social workers.

A general inductive approach was used to guide the analysis of qualitative interview data. Thematic analysis was conducted to develop a coding framework and identify emergent themes, clusters, and categories. Māori and Pacific evaluators led analysis, bringing their own interpretive frameworks (e.g., Kaupapa Māori research, Pacific and other methodologies, epistemologies etc.), and reflective positioning to ensure that findings were framed, interpreted and reported in a way that considered the context, worldviews and safety of participants.

Administrative data analysis

Analysis of the CYRAS data was based on data supplied by Oranga Tamariki. Eligible young people were those who were listed as eligible in the data (eligible as at the end of June 2023). Data on referred young people are based on young people who were eligible as at June 2023 and who were recorded as referred to TSS.

Appendix 5: Details of financial support provided

Financial support is provided to young people through the TSS partners and the transition assistance line.

Transition assistance line call data shows 1,527 requests for financial assistance were logged from July 2022 to June 2023 and 75% were complete. Of completed requests, 50% were related to driving, cars, transportation or travel. The second most common request related to food (20%), followed by 'other', which included accessing the Achieving Independence grant. Financial support for health, accommodation, clothing, employment/education and official documents each totalled less than 5%.

The main categories of financial support provided by TSS partners was for house needs including rent and moving costs (16%), food (12%), communication (10%), clothing (9%), health (6%), transport or travel related (14%).