ORANGA TAMARIKI
Ministry for Children

EVIDENCE CENTRE
TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

New Zealand Government

International best practice and models for youth justice residences

Summary report

March 2023

EVIDENCE CENTRE
TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre works to build the evidence base that helps us better understand wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children, young people and their whānau.

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Introduction

Oranga Tamariki is looking to develop a new model of care for its youth justice residences. As one part of a wider piece of work, the youth justice residences team asked the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre to prepare an international literature evidence brief on proven or promising models of care found overseas.

This report provides a high-level summary of the key findings from the main report: *International Best Practice Models for Youth Justice Residences: Evidence Brief.*

Background

In practice, the term *youth justice residence* is usually reserved for, and understood as, a country's secure youth justice and care and protection residential facilities; the following are classified as youth justice residences in New Zealand:

- Korowai Manaaki in South Auckland (up to 40 young people)
- Whakatakapokai in South Auckland (up to 15 young people)
- Te Maioha o Parekarangi in Rotorua (up to 30 young people)
- Te Au rere a te Tonga in Palmerston North (up to 30 young people)
- Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo in Christchurch (up to 40 young people)

In New Zealand, a youth justice residence is for young people aged between 14 and 17 years[1] who have been:

- Placed on remand (before they appear in the youth court and/or until the case is settled)
- Sentenced to supervision with residence
- Sentenced to imprisonment (and admitted to a residence for some or all of this time).

The purpose of youth justice residences in New Zealand is to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment where young people can get their lives back on track and improve their prospects for the future.

There are many ways that countries use youth justice residences (also referred to as detention centres). These are mostly to:

- protect and manage the risk to the community[2]
- punish or discipline the young person
- offer restoration, rehabilitation or reintegration
- promote health and wellbeing and/or care and treatment.

[1] In certain circumstances youth justice residences may also have some 18 year olds there.

Findings from the evidence brief

There is a growing understanding on what is *important* for young people in detention centres, and to a lesser degree on *what works*

Youth justice residences are different depending on the country. However, the purpose of youth detention needs to be clear, and explicitly shape the service design and performance monitoring. The following areas have been identified in the literature as important for young people:

Detention is a last resort – Detention goes against the basic rights of young people and so should only be used as a solution when all other options have failed.

Smaller units that are closer to home – Small 'home-like' facilities that are closer to the homes of young people are better than large correctional-style facilities some distance away.

Competent staff – Increasingly other countries and organisations are requiring their residential youth workers to hold an academic and/or professional qualification, or in some instances be prepared to undertake and complete a professional qualification once appointed

Valuing education, training and learning – Education for young people in a youth detention centre should be valued and easily accessible. It is important that youth detention centres and educators have a strong relationship, that educators are well qualified and equipped to support young people in their education and learning and that the transition to further education or training from custody is well supported.

Developing and fostering strong relationships – It's important that youth detention centres invest in the development of strong relationships between young people and staff and that purposeful quality relationships with young people are part of placement decisions and staff rosters. Good relationships between staff and young people are critical for a safe, positive and purposeful environment.

Engaging and including parents and whanau – Living away from parents and whānau is not the norm for young people. Strengthening and facilitating parental and whanau engagement and recognition that youth justice custody does not take away the rights and responsibilities of parents are important considerations.

The system-models in some other jurisdictions look promising

The Missouri Model of Juvenile Rehabilitation (USA) – Developed over 30 years, the *Missouri Model of Juvenile Rehabilitation* has provided a blueprint for other US states looking to move away from large correctional-type facilities to more effective, smaller, therapeutic, 'cottage-style' provision. The Missouri model is focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment and uses an applied therapeutic approach.

Close to Home (USA) – New York City's *Close to Home* program applies key aspects of the Missouri model with a strong focus on developing a range of local youth justice residential provision from non-secure home-like placements to limited secure placements that have some security features for higher risk youth.

Washington State Juvenile Rehabilitation Integrated Treatment Model (USA) – The more clinically-focused *Washington State Juvenile Rehabilitation Integrated Treatment Model* incorporates a selection of prescribed assessments and programmes, which are integrated and aligned with the internationally-used *Risk-Need-Responsivity* (RNR) framework.

Multifunctional Treatment in Residential and Community Settings (Scandinavia) – The *Multifunctional Treatment in Residential and Community Settings* (MultifunC) is a Scandinavian programme for high-risk youth offenders, which combines six months in non-secure residential care, with six months support at home, and family work throughout the 12-month programme.

Secure Children's Homes (England and Wales) – England and Wales' long-established network of Secure Children's Homes (SCH) accommodate the most vulnerable children, with some also, or alternatively, providing for children detained on welfare grounds. These are smaller, and more 'home-like' facilities, with qualified staff and high staff-to-child ratios.

There are no evidence-informed youth detention centre specific models

There are no evidence-informed youth detention centre-specific models. However, there are several widely used Manualised Evidence-Supported Programmes (MESTs) and training programmes which are often trauma informed, especially in the USA. MESTS are programmes supported by evidence to be effective which have a manual outlining how to deliver the intervention, to ensure there is consistency in how they are delivered.

Sanctuary Model of Care (USA) – The Sanctuary Model of Care is a US trauma-informed organisational change accreditation model that supports the wellbeing of both staff, and children and families who have been impacted by adversity. The model has four main components including:

- the development of a shared organisation-wide knowledge about the impact of trauma on children, families, staff and organisations

- trauma-informed organisation-wide decision making, problem solving, planning and values
- use of shared language
- use of the Sanctuary Toolkit – a set of practical and simple tools

The Three Pillars of Transforming Care (Australia) – The Three Pillars of Transforming Care is an Australian trauma-informed training programme. It aims to help agencies ensure that their staff and carers understand, and are sensitive to, the developmental impacts of early adversity and trauma.

PRESENCE (Online) – PRESENCE is a new online organisational training programme that aims to help organisations to become trauma-informed, trauma-responsive and trauma resilient.

Children and Residential Experiences (CARE) – CARE is a principle-based programme designed to enhance the social dynamics in residential care settings through targeted staff development, ongoing reflective practice, and data-informed decision-making. CARE aims to engage all staff at a residential facility to change practices in order to provide trauma-informed and enriched living environments and to create a sense of normality for children and young people.

Frameworks can be used to strengthen quality and practice

Scotland has implemented secure care standards

Scotland has recently developed a set of 42 specific secure care standards with the stated aim of helping to drive transformational change. The standards set out what support children and young people in Scotland should expect when in, *or on the edges of*, secure care.

Standards Accreditation Bodies

Standards Accreditation Bodies provide an independent fee-for-service review process that determines whether a social work, healthcare or educational organisation or programme (not-for-profit or for-profit), can demonstrate their ability to meet defined third-party standards of quality. For example, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International has 30 different sets of child and youth standards including Juvenile Justice standards covering secure residential, non-secure residential, and non-residential settings.

Practitioner certification as professional development pathway

As an alternative and/or to complement an academic or professional qualification, practitioner certification is a professional development pathway that may be available in some countries for some professions. For example, in the US and Canada, the Child & Youth Care Certification Board assesses and certifies child and youth care practitioners who can demonstrate their commitment to the Board's standards of care and ongoing competence development.

Evidence-based practices are an alternative to Manualised Evidence-supported Programmes (MESTs)

Evidence-based practices (also known as common elements, common factors or kernels) are growing in popularity as an important alternative to Manualised Evidence-supported Programmes (MESTs).

Evidence-based practices are being used by programme designers and practitioners, and developed, refined and integrated as part of professional development plans, and through induction and team training events, individual online learning opportunities, team meetings, modelling, and supervision.

Sixty evidence-based practices for use with children, staff or families, have been identified through the subscription-based *PracticeWise Evidence Based Services Database (*PWEBS) including for example:

- crisis management (support recovery from an emergency event or situation)
- line of sight supervision (manage and reduce dangerous or inappropriate behaviours)
- problem-solving (provide children with a systematic way to negotiate problems and to consider alternative solutions to situations)
- social skills (provide the youth with concrete skills to develop healthy relationships and navigate social situations)
- support Networking (increase family access to resources and social supports).

There are several tools that are widely used

The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) tool

Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) aims to reduce recidivism and is widely used across Anglo-American countries in criminal justice, as well as in some youth justice jurisdictions. Empirically-supported, RNR is a principle-based approach which has also influenced the development of a number of other offender assessment and rehabilitation instruments.

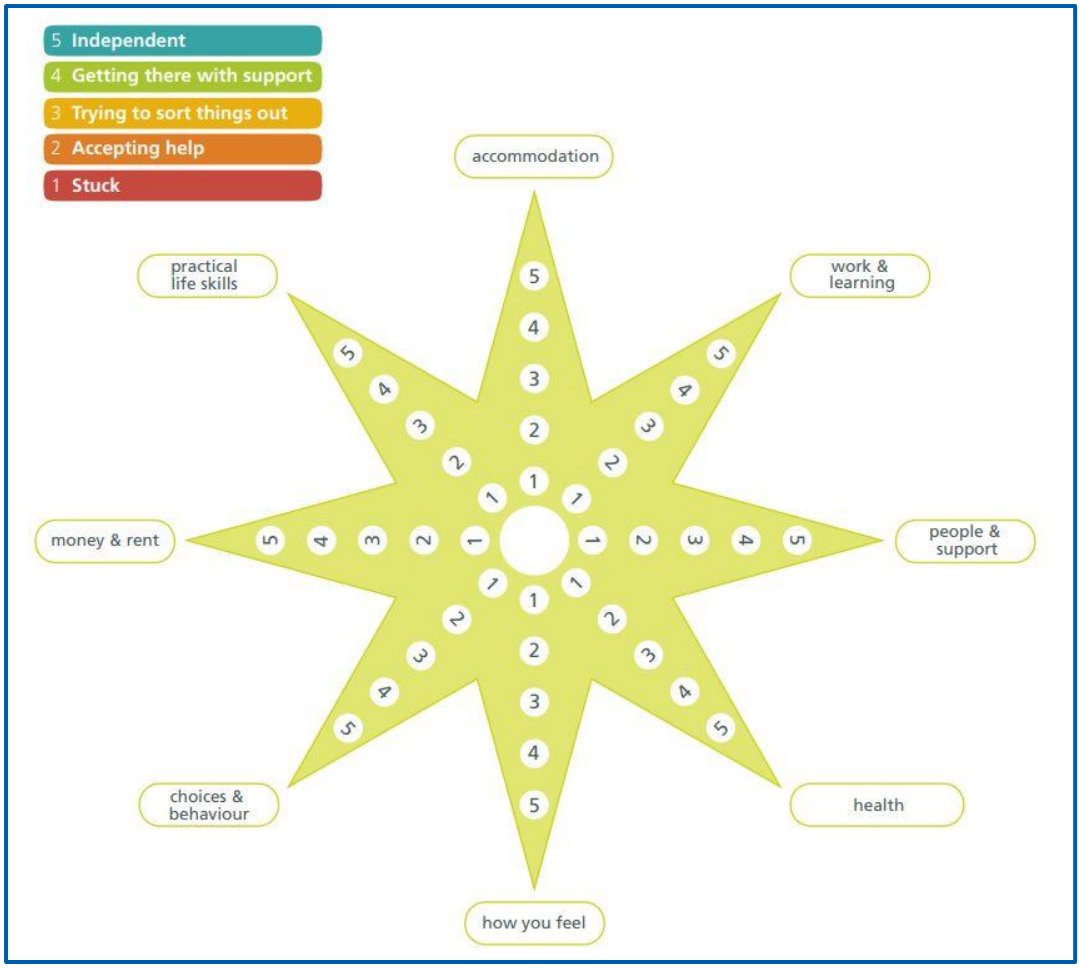
The three core RNR principles are:

- **Risk principle**: Match the level of service to the offender's risk to re-offend.
- **Need principle**: Assess criminogenic needs and target them in treatment.
- **Responsivity principle**: Maximise the offender's ability to learn from a rehabilitative intervention by providing cognitive behavioural treatment and tailoring the intervention to their learning style, motivation, abilities and strengths

Detention Risk Assessment

Popular in the US, Detention Risk Assessment Instruments are assessment tools that are used to objectively inform decisions (and so seek to eliminate bias) on whether to detain or release an arrested youth. Some are empirically-based although more often they have been developed in consultation with stakeholders.

Outcomes Star



Outcomes Star is a holistic framework that supports reflective conversations and action planning over time between a service user and their keyworker i.e. a designated practitioner within the service. With several of the 40 published versions relevant to youth detention contexts, Outcomes Star is widely used in both the UK and Australia, and reportedly is also used in Europe, Asia, Africa, the USA, and New Zealand.

There are other learnings from individual youth detention centres in other countries

Other learning can be gained from individual youth detention centres in Spain, Norway, Ireland, Scotland and Australia. These examples provide insights into different contexts and systems as well as ways of integrating policy, service and building design, models, frameworks, evidence-based practices, professional practice, and knowledge and evidence-building. These examples of youth detention centres suggest the importance of:

- having a clear purpose which is coherently reflected in what staff do and how they do it
- predominantly using youth detention centres for sentenced youth rather than remand
- buildings that reflect a positive design and home-like environment
- small facilities or small units within larger facilities
- placing young people locally
- purposeful relationships with youth workers
- high staff qualification requirements
- centres located in, or on the outskirts of, a major city
- placements being sufficiently long
- relational security
- long-established positive staff cultures
- secure youth justice provision being successfully operated by NGOs or an independent government-appointed management board
- a focus on civil rights
- outside areas devoted to animal and/or vegetable cultivation
- low levels of violence and little use of physical restraint
- families being encouraged to visit at any time or to stay in an apartment at the facility overnight
- the centre being subject to routinely frequent external oversight or independent research or evaluation.

Conclusion

Across the world, youth detention centres serve different purposes. Other than the fundamental importance of other countries being clear on what their purpose is, and ensuring that this is fully reflected in service design, staffing and systems, there is no simple international consensus on what youth detention centre best practice looks like. There is also very little in the way of comparative research.

However, whether drawing primarily on the US *models* tradition or the European *professional practice* tradition, much can still be learnt from overseas literature, system-models, Manualised Evidence-supported Treatment (MEST) programmes, frameworks, evidence-based practices, and case studies, and their possible application to our particular context.