“MAKING OURSELVES VISIBLE”

THE EXPERIENCES OF TAKATĀPUI AND RAINBOW RANGATAHI IN CARE

By Point and Associates and the Community Design Team

March 2023

Acknowledgements

This project was led and guided by Point and Associates and the Community Design Team (collectively 'the project team'). Point and Associates were commissioned as project navigators to facilitate a community-designed participatory project to give visibility to the lived experiences of diverse takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care. The Community Design Team was established to ensure broad intersectional representation of takatāpui, MVPFAFF+[1], and rainbow community groups and connected individuals, including those with care-experience.

The project has benefitted tremendously from their experiences, deep knowledge and connections with takatāpui and rainbow communities. From Point and Associates Julie Radford-Poupard and Nadine Metzger; the Community Design Team, Albet Lockie, Josh Sade-Inia and Karah Mackie; Kevin Haunui (Tīwhanawhana Trust); Moira Clunie (Te Ngākau Kahukura); Maggie Shippam (Disability sector); Tommy Hamilton (OutLine contract counsellor and private practice therapist); Ahi Wi-Hongi (Gender Minorities Aotearoa, GMA); and John Fenaughty (Senior Lecturer, University of Auckland). Albet Lockie, Josh Sade-Inia and Karah Mackie joined the project as Point and Associates peer researchers and Community Design Members. They are a big part of the reason for the project's success. They offered invaluable advice to the project and connected with rangatahi with compassion and care.

- The project team would like to express our deep gratitude to the rangatahi who took part in this project. They participated in this project with open hearts and a desire for positive change. They told us they took part because they hoped that sharing their experiences and advice would result in other rangatahi being better supported in care. We are strongly committed to honouring this challenge.
- Several people advised at the beginning of the project on developing the approach and engagement with rangatahi. They are named in the document as informants. Their knowledge was very valuable in shaping the project.
- Tommy Hamilton, Gloria Fraser and Jessica Garisch offered their time and expertise voluntarily as part of a pastoral care team available to support rangatahi. They were kind and giving with both their time and expertise.
- VOYCE Whakarongo Mai supported the project in multiple ways. They openly shared their research experiences, reviewed our approach, invited and connected rangatahi with the project and offered their support to all rangatahi participating in

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[1] Acronym for Pasifika identities Māhū, Vaka sa lewa lewa, Palopa, Fa'afafine, Akava'ine, Fakaleitī, and Fakafifine and other Pasifika identities.

the project.

- Tycho Vandenburg generously externally peer-reviewed phase one of the project approach and ethics, and gave the community design team great insights into how we could strengthen our approach.
- We'd also like to acknowledge the social, transition and youth workers, other kaimahi and care partner teams who support takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi. We appreciate you connecting us to the project's rangatahi and providing them with ongoing support. They told us your support profoundly affects their experiences in care.
- The project team have worked closely with Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People team. The team conceptualised the community-designed participatory approach for the project and has connected the project team to key people across the organisation. Oranga Tamariki provided targeted funding to enable the participation of community design team members. They have provided critical support and connections for the project.
- We'd like to acknowledge the many takatāpui and rainbow organisations and individuals who supported this project, working with kaimahi within Oranga Tamariki and its predecessor for years to bring a project like this to fruition and throughout the project, providing advice, and connecting and supporting rangatahi.

Funding for this project

This project has been fully funded by Oranga Tamariki.

Clunie, M., Fenaughty, J., Haunui, K., Hamilton, T., Lockie, A., Mackie, K., Metzger N. Radford-Poupard, J., Sade-Inia, J., Shippam, M., Wi-Hongi, A., (2023) *Making Ourselves Visible: The Experiences of Takatāpui and Rainbow Rangatahi in Care*. Point and Associates and the Community Design Team.

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Executive summary

The Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People team commissioned Point and Associates (Point) as project navigators to facilitate a community-designed participatory project to give visibility to the lived experiences of diverse takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care.

This project centres on what takatāpui and rainbow care-experienced rangatahi want Oranga Tamariki to know about them and their experiences of care. This is important for raising awareness about the aspirations and needs of diverse takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi and to provide Oranga Tamariki with insights from those who are care experienced.

The project was led and guided by a community design team made up of a diverse group of individuals and rainbow organisations. Tīwhanawhana, a takatāpui community group that provides advice, advocacy, and support for takatāpui, partnered with the project and provided mentorship and guidance.

The community design team and Oranga Tamariki were committed to building a good working relationship with each other and Oranga Tamariki provided more resource and time to ensure this could be done.

The community design team chose photo elicitation interviews as the data collection method. This visual methodology uses photos taken or chosen by the participants to generate conversations in interviews.

Nine rangatahi shared their experiences of being takatāpui and rainbow in care. They were a diverse group of rangatahi aged between 14 and 23 years old and were currently, or recently, in the custody of the Chief Executive under a Care or Protection or Youth Justice order.

The community design team undertook a reflexive thematic analysis to code and analyse the interviews and photographs, examining the data, identifying common themes, topics, ideas and patterns of meaning.

The findings of this project highlight the significant challenges that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care experience and how these challenges directly contravene their rights described by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Oranga Tamariki Act and the National Care Standards. The findings also illustrate that when these rights are upheld, takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care can thrive.

Most of the rangatahi interviewed had faced significant challenges around their physical and mental safety while in care and detailed abusive incidents related to their sexuality and gender identities. Key challenges included:

Being takatāpui in care

Being takatāpui is different from being non-Māori and rainbow; it involves whakapapa, identity, inclusion and a historic context of acceptance of gender and sexual fluidity. We heard, however, that takatāpui rangatahi in this project were almost exclusively cared for by non-Māori carers. They told us the alienation and disconnection they felt from their culture also impacted their takatāpui identities.

Abuse experienced in care

Five of the nine young people detailed varying experiences of abuse in care, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse. All but two of the rangatahi shared experiences of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and self-harm.

The absence of trust and connection with social workers, a lack of training and experience for carers and kaimahi working with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, alongside a failure to uphold rights in care, were identified by the project team as all contributing factors to the abuse.

Poor and inconsistent access to gender-affirming healthcare

Whilst most rangatahi detailed issues with individual social workers, they also spoke about systemic issues within Oranga Tamariki and the wider care system that made it difficult for them to get their basic health needs met. As a result, many young people had to use their own emotional labour and advocacy skills.

Not feeling safe and supported in their identities

Alongside specific abusive incidents, most rangatahi participants experienced ongoing and normalised transphobic, biphobic, homophobic or interphobic microaggressions. Rangatahi told us that cis-heteronormative assumptions and practices were pervasive within Oranga Tamariki.

The rangatahi who took part in the project described feeling safe in their current living situations – in and out of care. This project also explored what worked well for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care. Key findings included:

Supportive, affirming connections

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi want to see stronger personal connections with social, transition, youth workers and other kaimahi, Caregivers, foster whānau and families, peers and other supporters, who affirm their sexuality and gender identity. These positive relationships can be life-changing.

Feeling secure, loved, and celebrated in their identities

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi want every takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care to feel secure, loved and celebrated in their identity. While connection and support from others contributed to the young people feeling accepted for who they were, several talked about what it felt like to be not just accepted but celebrated.

Advocacy

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi want to see real change because of this project. Several rangatahi talked about participating in this project because they want things to be better for others, for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to feel safe and supported in care, and for their rangatiratanga to be upheld; for takatāpui and rainbow young people to be accepted and recognised in their entirety.

These recommendations have been developed for Oranga Tamariki by the project team in response to the project findings.

Develop culture and systems to ensure Oranga Tamariki is a safe organisation for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi

- Acknowledge the significant challenges and disparities takatāpui rangatahi in care experience and prioritise action to address the obligations of Oranga Tamariki under Te Tiriti o Waitangi through the approach outlined in Section 7AA Quality Assurance Oranga Tamariki Standards.
- Resource an external advisory body to support Oranga Tamariki to continue developing their capacity so that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi can receive appropriate responses within Oranga Tamariki that align with care standards and human rights expectations.
- Ensure the external advisory body includes perspectives from people with lived experience of being in care, as well as a range of intersecting identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.).
- Uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations by ensuring that the external advisory

body is led by Māori and takatāpui whānau.

- Work across government and with communities to identify and address structural barriers (policy, practice, legislation, mindsets) that impact on takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Use Oranga Tamariki influence as a major employer of youth and social workers to advocate for inclusion of takatāpui and rainbow content in all tertiary youth work and social work programmes, as well as health practitioner workforce training and ongoing professional development.
- Ensure the needs of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are visible to decision makers, and they have the opportunity to participate in all policy and programme development relevant to them (e.g. the re-designed feedback and complaints service).
- Continue to partner with and resource takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, organisations and communities (e.g. community design team) to develop and implement the recommendations of this report, further research to extend knowledge in particular areas and to support Oranga Tamariki to strengthen their relationships and trust with takatāpui and rainbow communities.

Work safely and confidently with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to create trusting and supportive connections.

- Design compulsory, ongoing, culturally appropriate training around creating safe and affirming environments for takatāpui and rainbow young people for all social workers, group-home staff and other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi. The training should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.
- Provide an internal takatāpui and rainbow practice role or group that social workers, group-home staff and other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi can connect to for information, advice and support.
- Develop processes and systems so that takatāpui and rainbow social workers can be prioritised to work with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Introduce policy and practice guidance that reduces the frequency of change of social workers working with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Develop policies and procedures to foster the wellbeing of rangatahi who experience changes to social workers and/or care placements (e.g., develop best practice handover requirements and processes between practitioners; enable rangatahi to meet caregiving whānau prior to moving, etc.).

Uphold the rights and dignity of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi

- Update care standards to include specific reference to the rights of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi, especially transgender, non-binary and intersex tamariki and rangatahi, to be heard and participate in decisions that are important to them and affect their lives.

Improve mental health supports

- Update internal guidance and training on preventing suicide and self-harm to include advice about understanding risk and protective factors specific to takatāpui and rainbow young people.
- Link takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to appropriate takatāpui and rainbow services and provide advocacy and support to ensure that any specialist mental health services they access are rainbow-affirming and safe.
- Extend mental health access and entitlement to all care-experienced takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi regardless of whether they are still in care.
- Recognise that access to gender-affirming care improves mental health for trans takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care.

Improve access to gender-affirming healthcare and other forms of rainbow-responsive healthcare, including for intersex tamariki and rangatahi

- Create guidelines, resources and training for kaimahi and caregivers about rainbow inclusive healthcare, including health care for tamariki and rangatahi with variations in sex characteristics.
- Ensure kaimahi know that access to gender-affirming clothing, including binders, is an immediate need and can be purchased by social workers.
- Leverage Oranga Tamariki systems influence to enhance awareness within the health system of the rights to gender-affirming, appropriate and confidential healthcare for takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care.
- Fully fund and ensure access to gender-affirming healthcare and wellbeing resources for tamariki and rangatahi in care who need it, such as counselling, clothing, hormone blockers and therapies and other resources such as binders.
- Use gender-neutral clothing, sleepwear, bags etc for young people in emergency care.
- Ensure that intersex young people are not involved in medical procedures

without their full knowledge and informed consent, including delaying non-lifesaving procedures until young people can make their own decisions.
- Ensure that young people in care can access sexual health and relationships education that is relevant to takatāpui and rainbow young people.
- Ensure that young people have access to sexual health services, contraception, condoms, dental dams, and PrEP therapies (etc.) as required.

Support caregivers and whānau

- Provide respectful whānau support to help whānau and families understand what being takatāpui or rainbow means and what takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care need to thrive and be secure in their identities.
- Update caregiver handbooks to include takatāpui and rainbow content. The content should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.
- Develop culturally appropriate training around creating safe and affirming environments for takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi for all caregivers, including foster parents, residence and group-home staff. The training should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience, and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.

Ensure safe caregivers for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi

- Screen all caregivers for their attitudes and skills to support tamariki and rangatahi with minority sexuality, gender and sex characteristic identities.
- Check that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are supported in their placement and moved to a more appropriate placement if they request this.
- Develop the policies and practice guidelines for placement and care of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi.
- Ensure takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are not placed with caregivers who require religious participation in activities that go against the young person’s belief system.
- Update approval and monitoring processes for service contracting of partner homes, especially faith-based services, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of rainbow and takatāpui rangatahi.

Wider support systems

- Develop relationships and processes by which takatāpui rangatahi are supported to safely connect with their hapū and iwi.
- Support whānau/hapū/iwi led activity to uplift takatāpuitanga and address the impacts of colonisation that produced homo/trans/bi/inter-phobia.
- Work with schools to improve safety and reduce bullying of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Work with schools, in partnership with tamariki and rangatahi, to provide better support and resource for neurodivergent and disabled tamariki and rangatahi.
- Ensure takatāpui or rainbow rangatahi in smaller, rural communities who want peer support, have access (e.g., remote access) to takatāpui and rainbow support groups or networks.
- Look at opportunities to facilitate activities for takatāpui and rainbow care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi.

Further research and data collection

- Co-design and develop metrics with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care to monitor and audit the effectiveness of guidelines and practices recommended in this report.
- Undertake further research to understand how well-equipped social workers, other kaimahi, carers and group and residence staff are to support takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care and their whānau.
- Undertake further research into youth justice facilities and systems, especially with takatāpui, whakawāhine, tangata ira tāne, Pasifika rainbow and MVPFAFF+ and trans and intersex rangatahi.
- Work with care partner homes (who rangatahi identified as being supportive) to learn from practices and processes so these can be replicated across the system.
- Undertake kaupapa Māori research into being takatāpui in care to understand the additional challenges and harm faced by takatāpui rangatahi and how these are and can be mitigated.
- Support more research into the experiences of tamariki and rangatahi whaikaha in care with a particular focus on those who also identify as takatāpui and rainbow.

Oranga Tamariki and the community design team will meet to workshop the report and these recommendations and discuss key actions to take forward.

Introduction

In this report, rangatahi share the challenges they faced being trans, non-binary, and multiple sex attracted in the care of Oranga Tamariki. Some of their experiences in this report may be difficult to read and may be especially triggering for takatāpui and rainbow care-experienced people. We encourage you to look after yourself as you read this report. Take breaks as you need them and reach out to someone if you need to talk. We have included a list of potential supports in Appendix A.

The Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People team commissioned Point and Associates (Point) as project navigators to facilitate a community-designed participatory project to give visibility to the lived experiences of diverse takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi[2] in care.

Community design team

The project was led and guided by a community design team. Tīwhanawhana, a takatāpui community group that provides advice, advocacy, and support for takatāpui, partnered with the project and provided mentorship and guidance. Kevin Haunui from Tīwhanawhana had a core role on the community design team, working alongside other Māori design members.

Point invited VOYCE Whakarongo Mai Youth Council and the Oranga Tamariki Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to join the project with care-experienced takatāpui and rangatahi, as research associates and community design members. These channels were used so that rangatahi had existing support and experiences of engagement with these types of projects. Albet Lockie, Josh Sade-Inia and Karah Mackie joined the team.

Point also connected with diverse takatāpui, MVPFAFF+[3], and rainbow community groups and connected individuals offering the opportunity to be part of the community design team. A snowball technique was used, with current members helping to identify and recruit other members to ensure broad intersectional representation. Given

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[2] For this report we refer to takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi as being takatāpui, gender diverse, same-sex attracted, multiple-sex attracted, including those that identified as trans, non-binary, pansexual, bisexual, queer and other identities.

[3] Acronym for Pasifika identities Māhū, Vaka sa lewa lewa, Palopa, Fa'afafine, Akava'ine, Fakaleitī, and Fakafifine and other Pasifika identities.

takatāpui and rainbow organisations are under-resourced and stretched, potential members were given the option to be informers or designers. Informers[4] shared their knowledge, experiences and insights via a one-hour interview. We asked them about:

- how the project could place Te Tiriti front and centre,
- how we could engage with care-experienced rangatahi,
- what community ownership of the project could look like,
- potential methods for the project and project design, and
- how we could share the findings.

Designers met regularly over several months to design the approach to the project and consider these questions.

Community design team members are: Kevin Haunui; Albet Lockie; Josh Sade-Inia; and Karah Mackie, and from Rainbow community groups and organisations: Moira Clunie (Te Ngākau Kahukura); Maggie Shippam (Disability sector); Tommy Hamilton (OutLine contract counsellor and private practice therapist); Ahi Wi-Hongi (Gender Minorities Aotearoa, GMA); and John Fenaughty (Senior Lecturer, University of Auckland).

All designers and informers were remunerated for their participation at $80.00 per hour.

Many takatāpui and rainbow folk brought this project into existence. For several years prior to this participatory project, they had engaged with kaimahi within Oranga Tamariki and its predecessor, relaying their concerns about takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care and giving advice about how Oranga Tamariki could facilitate and support making their voices visible.

The project was done in two stages. The community design team developed the project plan and engagement approach in the first phase. The phase one project approach and ethics were externally peer reviewed by Tycho Vandenburg[5], who recommended the project be approved. Phase two captured in this report involved engaging with rangatahi and sharing their insights and recommendations.

At the time of commissioning this project, Oranga Tamariki had no systematic way to identify the number of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in contact with, or in the care of, Oranga Tamariki. This project is the first to ask takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi about their care experiences.

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[4] Permission being sought to share their names.

[5] Tycho Vandenburg's lectures on photo elicitation and their current PhD research 'Beyond Four Walls: Trans and Gender Diverse Homelessness in Aotearoa' uses this methodology.

Since the commissioning of this project, research published in 2022 from the Youth2000 Survey Series, *The health and wellbeing of takatāpui and rainbow young people who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki*[6] estimates 15% of high school and kura-aged young people involved in Oranga Tamariki are takatāpui or rainbow. The research confirmed that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi have high rates of involvement with Oranga Tamariki, with "*takatāpui Māori approximately twice as likely to be involved with Oranga Tamariki as rainbow young people from other ethnicities*". The *Identify Survey, Community and Advocacy Report*[7] also found that takatāpui and Māori rainbow young people were more likely to have been involved with Oranga Tamariki.

The Youth2000 survey found that takatāpui and rainbow young people involved with Oranga Tamariki faced greater challenges than cis-heterosexual rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki. These challenges included higher housing deprivation, low rates of feeling safe at home, low rates of feeling cared for by parents, insufficient healthcare access, very high mental health needs and considerably higher school bullying rates.

Oranga Tamariki intends to use these insights from this report to enhance existing policies, guidance and services, and develop new policy and guidance to strengthen its response to takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care.

This project centres on what takatāpui and rainbow care-experienced rangatahi want Oranga Tamariki to know about them and their experiences of care. This is important for raising awareness about the aspirations and needs of diverse takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, and to provide Oranga Tamariki with insights from those who are care experienced. In presenting these findings, the community design team want to again acknowledge the courage and commitment of those from the care-experienced takatāpui and rainbow communities who contributed to this project.

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[6] King-Finau, T., Archer, D., Fenaughty, J., Sutcliffe, K., Clark, T., & Fleming, T. (2022). The health and wellbeing of takatāpui and rainbow young people who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki. The Youth19 Research Group, The University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. 2022. https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Research/Latest-research/Youth19-Rangatahi-Smart-Survey/Takatapui-and-Rainbow-young-people-involved-with-Oranga-Tamariki_Youth19-.pdf

[7] Fenaughty, J., Ker, A., Alansari, M., Besley, T., Kerekere, E., Pasley, A., Saxton, P., Subramanian, P., Thomsen, P. & Veale, J. (2022). Identify survey: Community and advocacy report. Identify Survey Team. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60187146e9f9034475dea113/t/6390e802bd4e535d10b72a17/1670440980159/community_advocacy_report.pdf

Project approach

Principles

The principles that uphold this project were developed in consultation with the project kaitiaki, Tīwhanawhana Trust, and members of the community design team.

The principles are:

- The project is Māori-centred and has a tikanga-led approach grounded in;
    - Kaitiakitanga. Tamariki and rangatahi feel safe and protected; a process is in place for dealing with disclosure, trauma, identity disclosure and their ongoing wellbeing.
    - Manaakitanga. Interactions are mana-enhancing; karakia, mihi, whakawhanaungatanga are used where appropriate; every voice of tamariki and rangatahi is important and heard; people are engaged in spaces of their choosing.
    - Whanaungatanga. Tamariki and rangatahi are valued; relationships are valued; reciprocity and empowerment is promoted.
    - Rangatiratanga. The community design team acknowledge and recognise mana whenua, colonisation and social, health and economic disparities; solutions are tamariki, rangatahi and whānau-centred, and responsive to their needs, priorities and aspirations.
- The lived experiences of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are prominent, especially takatāpui and Māori rainbow experiences.
- Care-experienced rangatahi were involved in all aspects of the research, on the community design team, as interviewers and sense-makers, and sharing the insights with Oranga Tamariki, and takatāpui and rainbow communities.
- The project had a strengths-based, mana-enhancing approach, identifying factors that protect tamariki and rangatahi, and sharing their strengths. Rangatahi are knowledge generators in this project.
- The project was guided by a trauma-informed approach and focused on the empowerment of participants whilst maintaining their safety. Methods and approaches emphasised their autonomy and wellbeing.

Building a relationship

During early design sessions in 2021, the community design team shared with Oranga Tamariki that there was a lack of relationships and trust between Oranga Tamariki and takatāpui and rainbow communities, and insufficient resources and time to develop the project. Oranga Tamariki responded to these concerns with more resources and a new timeframe. Te Tumu Whakarae ō Oranga Tamariki, the Secretary for Children, appointed Deputy Chief Executive sponsorship for this project with the Chief Social Worker, having responsibility for wider work across the organisation that supports takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care.

It was also agreed by Oranga Tamariki that the community design team will publish this report.

Safety

Considering the safety of rangatahi taking part in the project was a constant and critical lens for the community design team and a dedicated safety plan was developed.

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai was available to provide pastoral care for the rangatahi they were connected with and to advocate for all rangatahi (e.g., to lay a complaint). The project also had a pastoral care team of one therapist and two psychologists who were available to provide triage services for rangatahi. Photos and a bio of the pastoral team were shared with all rangatahi. If rangatahi required ongoing support, OutLine had agreed to provide counselling support. Point's principal researcher also checked in with rangatahi before interviews, the day after interviews, and again a few weeks later.

Rangatahi were invited to take part in the project via VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, takatāpui and rainbow organisations, care-home partners, transition workers and Oranga Tamariki social workers. This approach meant rangatahi who chose to participate in the project could access existing support if needed.

Oranga Tamariki provided advice on the disclosure and response approach to be used in interviews to uphold the duty of care by Oranga Tamariki. Point was connected with a National Practice Advisor within Oranga Tamariki who offered support and guidance for disclosures and concerns raised by rangatahi in interviews. No rangatahi made disclosures during interviews that posed any immediate risk to them or others. The principal researcher met with rangatahi, who had shared worrying or concerning information, after the interview. Rangatahi were offered support (pastoral care from the project and/or therapy provided by Oranga Tamariki) and asked if they would like to make a complaint with the support of VOYCE Whakarongo Mai. None of the rangatahi wanted to make a complaint, and most were already doing therapy.

The safety of the peer researchers was also paramount, and it was at times triggering and distressing for them to hear the experiences of other rangatahi. Peer researchers met with Point's principal researcher before and after each interview and the principal researcher checked in a few days later. Peer researchers also took breaks, as needed, from being involved in the research.

A koha was given to VOYCE Whakarongo Mai and the pastoral care team, who generously supported the project and rangatahi.

Research methodology

The project sought twelve participants aged between 15 and 27 years old who were currently or recently in the custody of the Chief Executive under a Care or Protection or Youth Justice order.

About the rangatahi who joined the project

Nine rangatahi shared their experiences of being takatāpui and rainbow in care.

They were a diverse group of rangatahi aged between 14 and 23 years old and were currently or recently in the custody of the Chief Executive under a Care or Protection or Youth Justice order.

Five rangatahi are Māori, one Sāmoan and three Pākehā. We asked rangatahi about their takatāpui and rainbow identities. Seven rangatahi are trans (four men and three women), one is non-binary, and one is cis-gender. Four rangatahi identify as pansexual, one as bisexual and one as queer. The other rangatahi didn't share their sexuality identities. We didn't explicitly ask people whether they were intersex/had a variation of sex characteristic.

The rangatahi live in communities across the North and South islands of Aotearoa and describe various geographical locations throughout their care experience ranging from cities through to rural locations.

They have experienced a range of care across youth justice and care and protection systems. This included residing with caregivers, in residences, group homes and emergency housing. They also had/have social workers, transition support workers and engaged with transition support services.

Recruitment

Initially, rangatahi under 15 years old were not included in the research population as the community design team deemed more resource was needed to engage with tamariki safely. However, during recruitment, we were approached by care partners who had two 14-year-old rangatahi interested in taking part. These two rangatahi were included in the research with their consent and the consent of their social worker and caregiver.

Project recruitment was planned over a four-week period. At the outset, recruitment was done through VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, and takatāpui, rainbow and youth organisations. RainbowYOUTH was on an unplanned hiatus during the recruitment period and support groups weren't operating, which may have contributed to only a few rangatahi initially engaging in the research. Consequently, the Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People team reached out to the Māori, Partnerships and Communities team, transition support services, care support partners, and individual youth workers and social workers to invite rangatahi to be part of the project and numbers increased.

We heard that several rangatahi chose not to take part for two main reasons. Firstly, some takatāpui rangatahi felt alienated and displaced after involvement in previous advocacy projects with Oranga Tamariki and didn't trust that putting themselves in these spaces again would lead to change. Other rangatahi shared they were working through their sexuality and gender identities and weren't ready to engage in conversations about the intersection of their identities and their care experiences.

Consent

Two information sheets were provided to rangatahi. One was two pages and illustrated (see appendix B), and the second was a more comprehensive research overview with the consent form. Most rangatahi talked through the information sheet with the principal researcher before giving their consent. A peer researcher also recorded a video of themselves talking about the research and how to get involved.

Another information sheet was available for whānau, carers and kaimahi, which shared information about the project.

The rangatahi who didn’t meet the criteria of recently being in care, gave their consent for their contact details to be shared with VOYCE Whakarongo Mai for future research opportunities.

Photo elicitation and interviews

The community design team chose photo elicitation interviews as the data collection method. This visual methodology uses photos taken or chosen by the participant to generate conversations in interviews. In addition to being data collection, photo elicitation is also data analysis as participants “produce narratives to make and share the meaning of their photographs”.[8] Point and the peer researchers workshopped photo elicitation, including questions and prompts, with Tycho Vandenburg[9].

In the interviews rangatahi shared between four and ten photos that represented what they wanted Oranga Tamariki to know about being takatāpui and rainbow in care. Interviews were around an hour long, six online and three face-to-face.

The peer researchers facilitated conversational interviews with collaborative dialogue. The questions and prompts below were shared with all participants in the information sheet before their interviews. Often the prompts weren’t needed.

General comment on the photo: “This photo looks interesting/cool”. “I love the yellow in this photo”.

Broad question: “Can you describe what is in this photo?” “What’s happening in this photo?”

Prompts:

What made you want to take this photo?

What do you like about the photo? What don’t you like about it?

Does the photo make you feel a certain way?

Is there anything missing from the photo that you wanted to capture? What?

The interviews were peer to peer, two members of the community design team, with

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[8] Glaw, X., Inder, K., Kable, A., & Hazelton, M. (2017). Visual Methodologies in Qualitative Research: Autophotography and Photo Elicitation Applied to Mental Health Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. *I6*, 1-8. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1609406917748215

[9] Tycho Vandenburg's lectures on photo elicitation and their current PhD research 'Beyond Four Walls: Trans and Gender Diverse Homelessness in Aotearoa' uses this methodology.

lived care experience, conducted the interviews. The principal researcher was present in the background to offer support to the peer researchers and rangatahi, and to respond to any disclosures of abuse, neglect or harm.

Data analysis

Data analysis began during the interviews with the collaboration between the rangatahi and peer researchers. The interviews were transcribed, and all data was de-identified. Point and the community design team met for a day to undertake reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006)[10] . This involved coding and analysing the interviews and photographs, examining the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas and patterns of meaning.

Point drafted these themes into a report and the community design team reviewed the draft. The Voices of Children and Young People team, and other key Oranga Tamariki stakeholders, also shared feedback on the draft report.

Limitations

Ideally this research would have included tamariki (children under the age of 14). Most of the community design team believe tamariki could be engaged in a similar project in the future with more resources and wrap-around care.

A limitation of qualitative research is that participants are not representative of the population as a whole. For this research, the project team instead actively sought an inclusive sample.

Māori and Pasifika rangatahi are over-represented in care. Five rangatahi in this project are Māori, and only one is Pasifika. More Pasifika rainbow and MVPFAFF+ rangatahi voices are needed, and the voices of rainbow asylum seekers, former refugees and migrants are missing.[11] While this research is Māori-centred and tikanga-led, there is potential for kaupapa Māori research with takatāpui and MVPFAFF+ rangatahi to go above and beyond what has been achieved in this research project. There is also a

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[10] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*:2, 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

[11] We were advised by Rainbow Path that it could be unsafe for rainbow asylum seekers currently in the care of Oranga Tamariki to engage in research. We were advised that Oranga Tamariki could engage directly with Rainbow Path, social workers and refugee lawyers who have worked with rainbow asylum seekers to gain insight into their care experiences.

dearth of data on tamariki and rangatahi in care with disabilities and neurodivergence.

It would have been good to hear from more takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to understand a more extensive variety of experiences. However, recruitment was difficult. VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, takatāpui and rainbow researchers and organisations shared their experiences engaging with takatāpui and rainbow populations and care-experienced rangatahi with other research projects. They said it had taken time to build trust with these communities, and the first time they reached out with surveys and interview opportunities, uptake was slow, taking several months to recruit people. However, when people saw that the research insights had resulted in positive change, subsequent participation in research was higher, and recruitment was far faster.

We asked rangatahi to share their takatāpui and rainbow identities. We did not specifically ask people whether they were intersex/had a variation of sex characteristics. It is important not to define rainbow as only sexuality and gender. This is an unintentional gap in the research that people with intersex traits are not represented in the project.

We may be painting an incomplete and potentially a more positive picture of being takatāpui and rainbow in care. Rangatahi who took part in this project were most likely ‘out’ about their takatāpui and rainbow identities in order to receive the invitation. Potentially, the rangatahi participating in this study also have more support available than others.

Findings

Tamariki and rangatahi in care have rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child[12], Te Tiriti o Waitangi[13], the Oranga Tamariki Act[14] and the National Care Standards.[15]

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines the right of tamariki and rangatahi to express their views and be heard. The Oranga Tamariki Act and the National Care Standards also includes this expectation.

Section 7AA[16] of the Oranga Tamariki Act sets out the duties of the chief executive in order to recognise and provide a practical commitment to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Identified duties include that Oranga Tamariki must:

- reduce disparities by setting measurable outcomes for Māori children and young persons
- the policies, practices, and services of the department have regard to mana tamaiti (tamariki) and the whakapapa of Māori children and young persons and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their whānau, hapū, and iwi.

The National Care Standards also sets out that tamariki and rangatahi in care must be supported to address their cultural and identity needs in a manner that promotes mana tamaiti.

The importance of connection to culture, language, beliefs and identity, to the wellbeing of children and young people, is also outlined in the 2019 Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

The findings of this project highlight the significant challenges that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care experience and how these challenges directly contravene their rights enshrined in the above legislation and convention. The findings also illustrate that when these rights are upheld takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care can thrive.

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[12] https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

[13] https://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/treaty-of-waitangi/meaning-of-the-treaty/

[14] https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/whole.html

[15] https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/children-in-our-care/national-care-standards/

[16] https://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0024/latest/whole.html?search=ta_act_O_ac%40ainf%40anif_an%40bn%40rn_25_a&p=2#LMS216331

Challenges

Most of the rangatahi who talked to us had faced significant challenges around their physical and mental safety while in care and detailed abusive incidents related to their sexuality and gender identities.

Being takatāpui in care

Prior to colonisation, practices other than heterosexuality and being cisgender were accepted in traditional Māori society, and takatāpui historically means 'intimate companion of the same sex'. The term was reclaimed in the 1980s and used by individuals who were gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex or part of the rainbow community.

Takatāpui rangatahi want Oranga Tamariki to know that being takatāpui is different from being non-Māori and rainbow. Being takatāpui is about *"whakapapa (descent from ancestors with sexual and gender fluidity); mana (authority and power to be who we are); identity (claiming all of who we are – culture, gender, sexuality, ability); and inclusion (unity across all iwi, sexes, genders and sexualities)"*.[17]

Māori are over-represented in the care system, 57% of tamariki and rangatahi are Māori and 11% are Māori and Pacific.[18] The takatāpui rangatahi in this project were almost exclusively cared for by non-Māori carers. They told us the alienation and disconnection they felt from their culture also impacted their takatāpui identities.

> *"Being Māori and queer was a whole different thing. I have had white friends all my life, and they find it a lot easier coming out to their whānau and peers because they don't have this entire expectation that people of colour already feel isolated and not wanting to stand out so being queer on top of that is just another point to hide."* **Participant I**

> *"Support Māori youth in care with more Māori people and making sure they aren't alone in their lives. Giving them the opportunity to feel pride in their culture."* **Participant D**

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[17] Kerekere, E. *Growing up Takatāpui: Whānau Journeys*. https://takatapui.nz/growing-up-takatapui#resource-intro

[18] Care and protection statistics 12 months to 31 March 2022. https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/performance-and-monitoring/quarterly-report/text-only/

> *"I have never been with a Māori foster family and it caused me to hate that Māori side of me to the point where I tried buying online soap that had bleach in it so I could bleach my skin to be whiter so I could fit into the families I was living with."*
> **Participant D**

Recommendations:

- Acknowledge the significant challenges and disparities takatāpui rangatahi in care experience and prioritise action to address the obligations of Oranga Tamariki under Te Tiriti o Waitangi through the approach outlined in Section 7AA Quality Assurance Oranga Tamariki Standards.
- Uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations by ensuring that the external advisory body (resourced to support Oranga Tamariki to meet its Te Tiriti obligations) is led by Māori and takatāpui whānau.
- Develop relationships and processes by which takatāpui rangatahi are supported to safely connect with their hapū and iwi.
- Support whānau/hapū/iwi led activity to uplift takatāpuitanga and address the impacts of colonisation that produced homo/trans/bi/inter-phobia.

Abuse experienced in care

Five of the nine young people detailed varying experiences of abuse in care, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse. All but two of the rangatahi shared experiences of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and self-harm.

Several interviewees identified abusive incidents, or ongoing physical and emotional abuse in care, related to their sexuality and gender identities. We heard that interviewees were confined to their rooms [in a youth residence] when they tried to discuss sexuality and gender identity.

One interviewee said they dissociated from their body because of the physical abuse they suffered from their caregiver.

> *"If I dissociated from everything in my world, then nothing could hurt me. Sure*

> *they could hurt the body I was living in. They could beat it or do whatever they wanted to it but as long as I was not connected wholly to it they could not hurt me."* **Participant A**

Absence of trust and connection with social workers, a lack of training and experience for carers and kaimahi working with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, alongside a failure to uphold rights in care, were identified by the project team as all contributing factors to the abuse.

Absence of trust and connection with social workers

Most of the young people we talked to had multiple social workers during their time in care. It took time to build safe and affirming connections with their social worker and those who experienced an absence of trust and connection, or who had limited or sporadic contact with their social workers, were left vulnerable to abuse.

> *"I lived with this family for [more than a decade]. From when I moved in to when I moved out it was intense abuse, not just because I was trans but because they thought they could get away with it. My social workers never checked in and never came. There was a lot of physical abuse and sexual abuse, verbal, emotional, a whole lot. When I came out it doubled down because they were shocked at how someone that they had raised could be in their words, 'such a disgusting sinner in the world'."* **Participant A**

> *"My social worker never visited me, and [they] just cut me off out of the blue and never came back...I felt like I was not safe but couldn't say it out loud because of what would happen to me."* **Participant F**

> *"[When I came to the group home] I was put in a room where I couldn't breathe. It took about a year [after that] for my social worker to see me."* **Participant G**

Others felt that that they had a very fragile connection to their social worker, which meant they didn't feel they could disclose things that were negatively impacting their wellbeing.

> *"If the social worker had time to build a relationship, I would have had the safety to tell her about the experiences I was going through at the time which would have helped me to leave...instead of admitting to the foster family that I didn't want to live with them."* **Participant D**

> *"I wasn't open to my social worker [about being trans/queer] because I had changed my social worker a few times. I think I have had three or four now. It was quite difficult considering I was between the ages of 13 and 18."* **Participant I**

Continual changes in care placements amplified the struggles with their gender identity and sexuality for at least three of the rangatahi, particularly in building trust and connection with adults.

> *"I used to move every two weeks because nobody wanted me."* **Participant B**

> *"Being in the care system we were in a few foster homes, that made it even more difficult because the adults in my life were changing…It was very lonely."* **Participant I**

Recommendations:

- Introduce policy and practice guidance that reduces the frequency of change of social workers working with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Develop policies and procedures to foster the wellbeing of rangatahi who experience changes to social workers and/or care placements (e.g., develop best practice handover requirements and processes between practitioners; enable rangatahi to meet caregiving whānau prior to moving, etc.).

Lack of staff and caregiver competency

Social workers, care home and residences staff, other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi and carers appeared to have very little training or experience working with trans, non-binary and queer rangatahi. Specifically, we heard that social workers and group-home staff struggled with pronouns, names and misgendering. Rangatahi shared that several staff actively refused to use the young person's correct names and pronouns.

> *"Anytime I tried to tell them [residence staff] hey you are using the wrong pronouns, or you are using the wrong name they would get really angry and say you weren't born with those pronouns, or you weren't born with that name."* **Participant C**

> *"A lot of time [other transgender young people] were getting misgendered or they would leave a room and there would be weird looks and whispering and unnecessary immature behaviour from these adults [carers in a group home]."* **Participant D**

> *"I have met a few social workers and people that work with OT that have zero respect for people that are in the queer community."* **Participant C**

> *"They [caregivers] said we are not going to use your pronouns [they/them] because we don't understand it and don't think it is logical."* **Participant B**

Recommendations:

- Design compulsory, ongoing, culturally appropriate training around creating safe and affirming environments for takatāpui and rainbow young people for all social workers, group-home staff and other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi. The training should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.
- Provide an internal takatāpui and rainbow practice role or group that social workers, group-home staff and other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi can connect to for information, advice and support.
- Develop processes and systems so that takatāpui and rainbow social workers can be prioritised to work with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.

Failure to uphold the rights and dignity of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi

Most interviewees were unaware of their rights in care, and because of this did not bring up what was going on for them with their social worker. One young person, who was told every Sunday in church that they were going to hell for being attracted to the same sex, didn't think they could ask to leave as this wasn't "technically" abuse. There were also two examples of social workers not knowing care standards, including the right to remain or return to care.

> *"My social worker was like we can't let you just move out, you can't go into another foster home unless they kick you out."* **Participant D**

> *"[My social worker] didn't even know that the right to remain or return to care was a thing. She accused my caregiver of using me to keep getting money from them. She said you can't do that, when the kid turns 18 years you can't get any more money."* **Participant A**

Recommendations:

- Resource an external advisory body to support Oranga Tamariki to continue developing their capacity so that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi can receive appropriate responses within Oranga Tamariki that align with care standards and human rights expectations.
- Ensure the external advisory body includes perspectives from people with lived experience of being in care, as well as a range of intersecting identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.).
- Update care standards to include specific reference to the rights of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi, especially transgender, non-binary and intersex tamariki and rangatahi, to be heard and participate in decisions that are important to them and affect their lives.
- Ensure all tamariki, rangatahi, carers, social workers and other kaimahi are aware of rights of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care and the impact of not upholding these rights.

Long term impacts of abuse, discrimination and stigma

For at least six of the rangatahi we spoke to, the impact of feeling unsafe, unheard and rejected is ongoing including a sense of internalised shame, self-sabotage, poor self-image, difficulty making friends, and a harsh inner dialogue of blame and guilt.

> *"The [mental abuse] affected me quite deeply with the way I perceive my sexual orientation. I sort of went back into the closet because I was afraid of what other people might think of me."* **Participant F**

This sense of shame is expressed through hiding themselves and their bodies, self-sabotaging with alcohol and self-harming. Some have difficulty with toxic friendships and understanding what a supportive friendship looks and feels like.

> *"I never think someone just wants to be my friend because they like me."*
> **Participant D**

> *"I used to walk around in hoodies and long baggy pants because I didn't want anyone to see [my trans body]."* **Participant A**

Recommendations:

- Update internal guidance and training on preventing suicide and self-harm to include advice about understanding risk and protective factors specific to takatāpui and rainbow young people.
- Link takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to appropriate takatāpui and rainbow services and provide advocacy and support to ensure that any specialist mental health services they access are rainbow-affirming and safe.
- Extend mental health access and entitlement to all care-experienced takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi regardless of whether they are still in care.

Poor and inconsistent access to gender-affirming and rainbow-responsive healthcare

Having access to gender-affirming and rainbow-responsive healthcare whilst in the care of Oranga Tamariki varied from person to person and was largely dependent on the skills and knowledge of their social worker. Some were lucky enough to have a social worker assigned who understood how to care for them in safe and affirming ways (for an example see page 37), however this was not routine. Lack of access to gender-affirming care can have a particularly significant impact on the mental health of trans takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care. Many young people used their own emotional labour and advocacy skills to get their basic health needs met.

Whilst most rangatahi detailed issues with individual social workers and their access to gender-affirming and rainbow-responsive healthcare, they also spoke about systemic issues with Oranga Tamariki and the wider care system. Examples of wider systemic issues included access to gender affirming healthcare being very difficult and one person waiting over a year to be seen by a psychologist so they could begin hormone therapy. Access to medications such as puberty blockers[19] and hormones varied, and we heard from two young people who said that social workers or group-home staff did not allow them access to these medications, despite them being eligible.

> *"I am eligible for hormone blocker for this [hair on the lip] and everything else. I have done the consultation but [my social worker is] not releasing the pills for me. I have been to every session there is. Some days I don't go out because of my face."* **Participant H**

Another needed access to binders, however when they spoke to their social worker about buying gender-affirming products the social worker said they "didn't have the right account to buy that sort of stuff." Several young people who required gender-affirming mental health support did not receive it.

> *"OT are not supportive and that is needed especially for rainbow kids. We already deal with emotional stuff with being in foster care in the first place and being removed from our families. We are figuring out our sexual orientation, gender identities or other stuff that come from being queer and*

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[19] Puberty blockers or hormone blockers help delay unwanted physical changes that don't match someone's gender identity. Delaying these changes can be an important step in a young person's transition and can also give them more time to explore their options before deciding whether or how to transition.

there needs to be more support." **Participant F**

"They [OT] didn't really do anything about my mental health after coming out as trans. So it was kind of shitty but at the same time they probably didn't know what they were supposed to do. There are a lot of things they need to do." **Participant C**

Recommendations:

- Create guidelines, resources and training for kaimahi and caregivers about rainbow inclusive healthcare, including health care for tamariki and rangatahi with variations in sex characteristics.
- Ensure kaimahi know that access to gender-affirming clothing, including binders, is an immediate need and can be purchased by social workers.
- Leverage Oranga Tamariki systems influence to enhance awareness within the health system of the rights to gender-affirming, appropriate and confidential healthcare for takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care.
- Fully fund and ensure access to gender-affirming healthcare and wellbeing resources for tamariki and rangatahi in care who need it, such as counselling, clothing, hormone blockers and therapies and other resources such as binders.
- Ensure that intersex young people are not involved in medical procedures without their full knowledge and informed consent, including delaying non-lifesaving procedures until young people can make their own decisions.
- Ensure that young people in care can access sexual health and relationships education that is relevant to takatāpui and rainbow young people.
- Ensure that young people have access to sexual health services, contraception, condoms, dental dams, and PrEP therapies (etc.) as required.
- Recognise that access to gender-affirming care improves mental health for trans takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care.

Not feeling safe and supported in their identities

Several rangatahi detailed the failure of their support systems, such as social workers, kaimahi, caregivers, whānau/family and school, to keep them safe and supported. Moreover, takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi believe they were vulnerable because caregivers, foster families, whānau and social, transition and youth workers tended to fixate on their sexuality and gender identities, which were mostly framed negatively and were seen as bad, abnormal and wrong.

> *"We are not bad, we are not anything like that. We are just young kids wanting to be who we are."* **Participant F**

> *"I am not just a transgender girl. That is something I want [Oranga Tamariki] to understand. I am a normal person and have normal thoughts. I have normal feelings."* **Participant D**

Several felt unsafe because of the reaction of their caregivers to their sexuality and gender identity. One was told not to tell their social worker that they were questioning their gender identity because "OT will put you in a mental hospital". Another, who has since left care, is still dealing with "mental struggles" due to the poor treatment and alienation that they experienced during their gender transition. Another, when they came out, had been further isolated from other young people in the house "in case I do something to them".

Two young people spoke of being disowned by their whānau and family because of their sexuality and gender identity. Both feel this rejection deeply and it has ongoing impacts on their mental health.

For four young people, school was particularly hard. One was bullied and attempted suicide. None had support from either caregivers or social workers to deal with school issues and the bullying.

> *"I dropped out of school early because I couldn't deal with it anymore. The last thing [the bullies] said to me was that I should have succeeded at my last suicide attempt because the world didn't need me...The school did nothing when I told them. They said, 'teenagers will be teenagers'."* **Participant A**

> *"I think I started dressing gender neutral from a young age and I got bullied for it. It happened at every school I went to, so it made it difficult to make friends especially because I moved so much".* **Participant I**

Recommendations:

- Provide respectful whānau support to help whānau and families understand what being takatāpui or rainbow means and what takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care need to thrive and be secure in their identities.
- Update caregiver handbooks to include takatāpui and rainbow content. The content should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.
- Develop culturally appropriate training around creating safe and affirming environments for takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi for all caregivers, including foster parents, residence and group-home staff. The training should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience, and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.
- Work with schools to improve safety and reduce bullying of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Work with schools, in partnership with tamariki and rangatahi, to provide better support and resource for neurodivergent and disabled tamariki and rangatahi.
- Ensure takatāpui or rainbow rangatahi in smaller, rural communities who want peer support have access (e.g., remote access) to takatāpui and rainbow support groups or networks.
- Look at opportunities to facilitate activities for takatāpui and rainbow care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi.

Transphobia, biphobia, homophobia and interphobia in care

Alongside specific abusive incidents (as detailed from page 23), most rangatahi experienced ongoing and normalised transphobic, biphobic, homophobic or interphobic microaggressions while in care. Collectively, these microaggressions were experienced as discrimination or stigma related to their takatāpui and rainbow identities. For example, several said that caregivers or staff struggled with their pronouns, which they would sometimes get wrong or refuse to use. Others would have caregivers or group-home staff tell them they were "definitely straight", or would say things like "really? I thought you were a girl?". One was told by their caregivers that they might become a paedophile because of their sexuality. Others had to explain, ad nauseum, what transgender meant and often found themselves educating people (carers, social workers, care-home staff) about the things they should and shouldn't say to a trans person.

Recommendations:

- Screen all caregivers for their attitudes and skills to support tamariki and rangatahi with minority sexuality, gender and sex characteristic identities.
- Check that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are supported in their placement and moved to a more appropriate placement if they request this.
- Develop the policies and practice guidelines for placement and care of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi.
- Use gender-neutral clothing, sleepwear, bags etc for young people in emergency care.

Religious doctrine

Four interviewees were subject to religious doctrine in their foster homes where they were told that their sexuality or gender identity was wrong.

> *"The only time queerness was discussed was during church to tell us that homosexuality is bad and that transness was bad or if I was getting in trouble for something I was reading or watching that had trans and queer people in it."* **Participant E**

> *"The minute I came out [I was told] that God was disappointed in me…"* **Participant A**

> *"Every Sunday night you are told 'you are going to hell for this'".* **Participant D**

One rangatahi described living in two faith based foster homes. They described having both religions "pushed onto them". While they explored both religions, they found them "restricting for being queer", making it difficult to relate to and talk with their foster families.

Two interviewees were not permitted to associate with carers' children, grandchildren or family/whānau outside of the home because of their "disgusting behaviour".

> *"You weren't allowed to hang out with [carers'] kids at all, at school, for example, some of the helpers in the foster home I went to school with some of their kids and we [foster kids] weren't allowed to talk to their kids. We weren't allowed to talk with [main carers] children or grandchildren even if we saw them at church or bible study. It was kind of like they were going to catch the foster kid off us or the bad parent germs."* **Participant E**

One interviewee was particularly isolated within a home that held strict religious beliefs. They were not permitted to have any school library books or material that the caregiver deemed inappropriate (queer or trans content).

Recommendations:

- Ensure takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are not placed with caregivers who require religious participation in activities that go against the young person's belief system.
- Update approval and monitoring processes for service contracting of partner homes, especially faith-based services, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of rainbow and takatāpui rangatahi.

Neurodivergence and disability

In the recent Youth2000 survey series, more than half of the takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience report having a disability, chronic health condition, or chronic pain that impacted their daily lives.[20] Hwang (2018) notes that tamariki and rangatahi whaikaha (disabled children and young people) have found to be significantly disadvantaged in the care they experience and support they receive. They also are consistently underrepresented within research, policy, and practice.[21] Given the high numbers of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi also identifying as tamariki and rangatahi whaikaha, research focused on understanding more about these intersecting identities is critical.

In this project one rangatahi wasn't supported by their social worker to get assessments for their learning difficulties and describes the impacts.

> *"I am dyslexic as well and that has not been diagnosed until quite recently so I could not read. I wasn't very good at my studies, so a lot of people were like you are so stupid."* **Participant A**

Recommendation:

Support more research into the experiences of tamariki and rangatahi whaikaha in care with a particular focus on those who also identify as takatāpui and rainbow.

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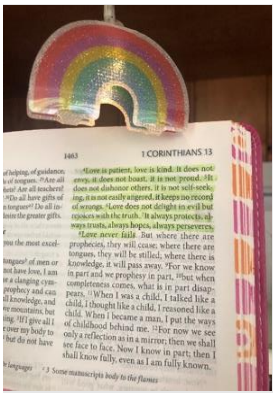
[20] King-Finau, T., Archer, D., Fenaughty, J., Sutcliffe, K., Clark, T., & Fleming, T. (2022). The health and wellbeing of takatāpui and rainbow young people who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki. The Youth19 Research Group, The University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. 2022. https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Research/Latest-research/Youth19-Rangatahi-Smart-Survey/Takatapui-and-Rainbow-young-people-involved-with-Oranga-Tamariki_Youth19-.pdf

[21] Donald Beasley Institute (2022). Good practice for disabled tamariki and rangatahi in care: Literature review. Wellington, New Zealand: Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children.

"I am more than just my identity"

"I shouldn't be subjected to something just because I am part of the LGBT community. Like, I know it is a massive factor as to who I am today, but I am not just a transgender girl. That is something I want them to understand. I am a normal person and have normal thoughts. I have normal feelings. I am not this alien that decides to be something else and should be questioned and poked, prodded at and probed. I have feelings." Participant D



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[4]Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. [5]It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. [6]Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. [7]It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

[8]Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. [9]For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [10]but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. [11]When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. [12]For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

[c] 3 Some manuscripts *body to the flames*

"Love is patient, love is kind"

"Love is patient, love is kind, whatever. Which I think is just really fitting, because love is patient and love is kind if it's biblical and if it's heteronormative and if it's cisgendered, right? I think that was probably one of the biggest issues with living in the [Christian based care] foster homes." Participant E

"Loneliness I felt"

"This is a photo of a chair I took a few days ago and it kind of represents the loneliness I felt in that home where I was quite alone mentally, and I just struggled quite a bit obviously with the emotional abuse I suffered with mental health and anxiety. This photo I feel represents this quite a bit more. I just felt very isolated because of who I was [sexuality and gender identity] and some other stuff." Participant F

"Don't be a cow about it"

"The older generation at Oranga Tamariki were, 'Yes, but it is obvious that you are a girl, you are she/her.' It is obvious look at you, and that is just not what it is about. You may look one way but how you want to present yourself on the inside doesn't have to show how you look on the outside…I feel that Oranga Tamariki need to have classes or sit down with their social workers or all of their staff and teach them about this stuff [sexuality and gender identity], so they are not cows about it or obnoxious in their old ways." Participant D

"I have to accommodate myself"

"How I am perceived by other people dictates how they treat me in public. Even if they are random strangers, they treat me differently depending on what gender they think I am at the time. It also makes it more difficult to interact with people in a heteronormative society and just general use of public spaces. It makes me feel not fully unsafe but appreciated, so like society isn't forgiving towards my identity at all and not accommodating at all, I have to accommodate myself". Participant I

Findings: What worked well

Supportive, affirming connections

The rangatahi who took part in this project are described feeling safe in their current living situations` – in and out of care. They have people around them who affirm their sexuality and gender identity. These positive experiences, with carers, foster whānau, whānau, social workers, peers, and other supports, have been life changing. They talked about being understood, respected, and loved for who they are. Many were also either getting or starting to get the support they needed to affirm their sexuality and gender identities.

For all the rangatahi we spoke to, the journey to this point has been a long one. They are mostly in safe spaces because they were lucky enough or fortunate enough to be assigned to social workers ,who understand how to work with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, and to find caregivers, foster whānau or care-home kaimahi who are supporters and advocates.

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi want to see stronger personal connections with social, transition, youth workers and other kaimahi. Connection to social, transition, youth workers and other kaimahi is very important to takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, particularly those who may be isolated or not have many other supports. They believe that a greater connection encourages rangatahi to communicate to their social worker what they need and don't need, allowing them to further develop their own independence and identity.

> *"I think if there was a lot more trust, I would have been more open to talking about [my trans identity]."* **Participant I**

Social, transition and youth workers

Five young people said they had good relationships with their social, transition or youth worker at some point in their care experience and felt connected to, and supported by, them. Three of these young people said their social workers supported them to speak to caregivers about their identity, access counselling and gender-affirming healthcare and resources, such as binders.

One young person spoke about how their experience with Oranga Tamariki changed when they got a new social worker who was rainbow-identified:

> *"She is an ally and she goes out of her way to make sure the kids are being taken care of and supported. To have that kind of support from Oranga Tamariki really changed my mindset. I felt like they were there to make my life better not just there to take over the parental role."* **Participant D**

Another interviewee spoke about the impact of having a social worker who actively supported them:

> *"I know that whatever I say about my gender identity or sexual identity I am not going to be judged in any way [by social worker]. So, it just makes me feel like I have had that parent for the first time."* **Participant C**

For three young people, having adults, such as carers or social workers, who researched or educated themselves around sexuality and gender identity, who used their correct names and pronouns, and who proactively sought help or support for the young person was a powerful and affirming experience:

> *"Usually, my permanent staff member will talk to the new staff [about being trans] before they come to me."* **Participant C**

> *"She educated herself about what I was going through…she was able to understand my dysphoria and she knew the signs of when I got dysphoria and struggled [social worker]."* **Participant F**

Caregivers, foster whānau and families

Strong connections with caregivers and foster whānau were an important source of support. Three interviewees described their caregivers as a person who "had their back" or were a "safe rock". Four interviewees talked about foster whānau (siblings or cousins), who provided a safe space to talk and unconditional love. Two of these spoke about how affirmed they felt when their decisions around their gender identity were actively supported.

> *"I took my first testosterone pill with my family around."* **Participant F**

> *"My family 100% supported me with accessing gender-affirming care."* **Participant A**

Peers

Six rangatahi found peer support through rainbow support groups, interest-based community groups, VOYCE Whakarongo Mai or simply built their own peer support network from friends. Community-based groups (e.g. church, youth service, sports and drama) were an important source of connection, however they weren't necessarily a source of support around sexuality and gender identity issues. Nonetheless, they played an important role for some of the rangatahi. For one rangatahi, a youth service group had been the most consistent organisation and group of people throughout their life. Participation in a queer support group was important to helping two young people feel that there was a safe space where they could be themselves.

> *"[I used to self harm]. I felt unlovable and [sport] just took all of that away. It is my happy place. I like being active."* **Participant H**
>
> *"I met my gay bestie at [youth service group], very important to my wellbeing and contribution."* **Participant B**
>
> *"I started [transitioning] with my peers at school, and it was in my last year...It started in high school and my peers were really supportive."* **Participant I**

Two rangatahi described the support they received from VOYCE Whakarongo Mai as "the best experience". For them it was the only place where they encountered people who not only understood what they were going through, in terms of their identity, but who also knew what it was like to be a rainbow care-experienced young person. Talking to young people who had similar experiences gave them hope for the future.

> *"I got connected with them [Kaiwhakamana from VOYCE] about two weeks after my admission into x [Youth residence]. They are amazing...[they took me to an event where] I met a lot of other rainbow care-experienced kids."*
> **Participant C**

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi want to see more opportunities for young takatāpui and rainbow care-experienced people to come together.

- Several acknowledged the support of VOYCE Whakarongo Mai in this space and requested more opportunities for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to come together.

> *"I would also hope that Oranga Tamariki would see the importance of queer youth getting together to know each other to create friendships and have those relationships by getting out into the community, offering kids resources like rainbow youth groups."*
> **Participant I**

Counsellors

Four rangatahi said that counselling was an important source of support and affirmation. For two of the rangatahi, counselling was arranged by their social workers. One social worker reached out to a rainbow support organisation for advice; it is unclear how the other rangatahi accessed counselling.

> *"I have spoken to [counsellor] for a couple of years, and they helped me figure out my gender identity which is great...they taught me quite a bit about socially transitioning and medically transitioning...they are also trans which helped a lot more. They have actually been through a lot of the stuff I am going through right now."* **Participant F**

Care partner kaimahi

Four rangatahi shared their positive experiences of being with care providers contracted by Oranga Tamariki. They said these care providers played supportive and affirming roles with their sexuality and gender identities, with one person sharing that they "first came out" with their current care provider.

> *"There were more processes and procedures to make sure I was comfortable in the home I was living which definitely helped and made me feel safer than I have felt in OT's homes [with care provider]."* **Participant E**

> *"I can tell you it has been a really big journey to get here in [care home] I wasn't really getting this help before with the organisation I was in. Here I am also going to be starting counselling with a takatāpui."* **Participant H**

> *"Oranga Tamariki was not involved [in transition]. My transition worker from [iwi care provider] has been very involved."* **Participant I**

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi want to see the learnings from this project used to help and educate others who are caring for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.

- They want others to learn from practice and processes in partner care homes that have been identified by rangatahi as being supportive.

Other supporters

One rangatahi found support from a teacher around their gender identity, which they said made them feel less alone:

> *"[My teacher] helped me to be who I wanted to be."* **Participant C**

Another teacher has inspired a rangatahi to study to become a teacher.

Feeling secure, loved, and celebrated in their identities

Whilst connection and support from others contributed to rangatahi feeling accepted for who they were, several talked about what it felt like to be not just accepted but also celebrated. One young person talked about how it felt being able to display a trans flag in their foster home and knowing that they no longer had to hide their identity. Another talked about being given some rolls of binding tape by another care-experienced young person, and the feeling of finally "feeling like myself."

> *"I don't expect people to adapt, that is the thing. They should already know: she is takatāpui, don't adapt to that, just love them."* **Participant H**

> *"Love. That was a big thing. I have never felt as much love as I did in that moment [photo with all the foster family]...it's nice to have a family and it has been so long since I have felt like that."* **Participant A**

> *"If it wasn't for being in the home [foster home] I am in now I may not have taken the step to fully admit to myself I am trans and medically transitioned. If I was medically transitioning and still with OT and how they moved us around quite a bit I would have really struggled with that."* **Participant F**

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi want every takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care to feel secure, loved and celebrated in their identity.

- They ask those who work with takatāpui and rangatahi in care to create space for tamariki and rangatahi to tell Oranga Tamariki how they identify by proactively asking about their name/s and pronouns and how they would like to be identified or referred to.
- They want takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to have access to the social, legal and medical support they need.

Advocacy

Three young people shared how they used what they have learned through their own experiences to help others. Their lived experience leading them to volunteering because they wanted to help others going through similar things.

One had their advocacy efforts recognised by their community with a community service award:

> *"[I had a] meeting with the mayor to talk about the award. He said a lot of people can volunteer but it is when you take things you have lived through and try to change the system to make sure other people don't have to have the same life experience you did is when it becomes worthy of an award...it felt like recognition for the fight I have gone through to get here and the fight I am still putting up to make sure other people have a much better experience. It was amazing."* **Participant A**

> *"It's probably why I do [volunteer with a youth service]. I do it because I want to help people and I don't want to suffer. I would die inside if I saw somebody hurt and I couldn't help them. I always want those skills that can help me and everybody."* **Participant B**

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi want to see real change because of this project. Several rangatahi talked about participating in the project because they want things to change to help them feel safe and supported in care, and for their rangatiratanga to be upheld; where takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are accepted and recognised in their entirety.

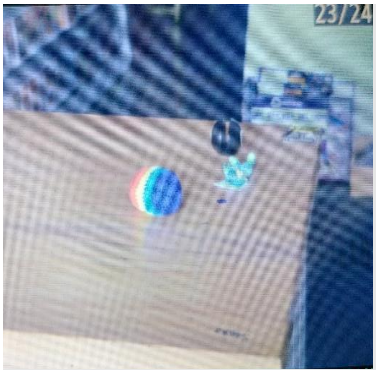
> *"There is a part of me that doesn't want to be part of advocacy [this project] because it is triggering and traumatising. Why should we have to put in the hard work, but the reason is that nobody else will. Or they will, but will it be misplaced because they don't know what is going on where we know what is, specifically what is going on."* **Participant E**

"Advocacy"

"I channel a lot of my anger from everything like OT being dicks and letting me down along with my caregivers. I channel that into the energy to fight it, I guess. I always am looking for opportunities to stand up to talk about what is wrong with the system and what they can do to fix it along with what they can do to be better." Participant A

"Into the light"

"This is like I am going into the light and becoming who I am. I feel supported. I feel happy. I am being welcomed and supported [by my foster family] with open arms." Participant F



"Queer friendly shops"

"I was hoping X [small city in Bay of Plenty] would have more queer friendly shops like in Auckland but unfortunately X does not have that. We found this little rainbow hacky sack sitting in a door frame on a vinyl shop."

"First trans flag"

"[At previous caregivers] I had this really cheap rainbow flag that my sister had got me because I asked for it for Christmas. Every time, I put it up she [caregiver] would tear it down and threaten to cut it up. So, moving into a place where I was able to be myself, one of the first things I did was put up my pride flag and I just slowly built up my array of pride flags and now I have too many to put up on the wall." Participant A

"Binding tape"

"I tried and absolutely fell in love with it. It made me feel like myself."
Participant C

Recommendations

> *"It is their [Oranga Tamariki] responsibility to take care of kids and all aspects of their wellbeing including their identity. I think it should be their responsibility before anyone else."* **Participant I**

The findings of this project highlight both the significant challenges faced by takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care, as well as what worked well. Most of the rangatahi we spoke to chose to take part in this project to make the journey for others faster, simpler and less traumatic.

These recommendations have been developed for Oranga Tamariki by the project team in response to the project findings. The project team hopes that this work can support the considerable work, by many individuals and organisations, to positively change the experiences of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care. The project team also hopes that these recommendations can support Oranga Tamariki to fulfil their obligations as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Oranga Tamariki Act and the National Care Standards.

Develop culture and systems to ensure Oranga Tamariki is a safe organisation for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi highlighted a number of systemic and organisational culture issues that underpin many of the challenges they experience while in care.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Acknowledge the significant challenges and disparities takatāpui rangatahi in care experience and prioritise action to address the obligations of Oranga Tamariki under Te Tiriti o Waitangi through the approach outlined in Section 7AA Quality Assurance Oranga Tamariki Standards.
- Resource an external advisory body to support Oranga Tamariki to continue developing their capacity so that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi can receive appropriate responses within Oranga Tamariki that align with care standards and human rights expectations.
- Ensure the external advisory body includes perspectives from people with lived experience of being in care, as well as a range of intersecting identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.).
- Uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations by ensuring that the external advisory

body is led by Māori and takatāpui whānau.
- Work across government and with communities to identify and address structural barriers (policy, practice, legislation, mindsets) that impact on takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Use Oranga Tamariki influence as a major employer of youth and social workers to advocate for inclusion of takatāpui and rainbow content in all tertiary youth work and social work programmes, as well as health practitioner workforce training and ongoing professional development.
- Ensure the needs of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are visible to decision makers, and they have the opportunity to participate in all policy and programme development relevant to them (e.g. the re-designed feedback and complaints service).
- Continue to partner with and resource takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, organisations and communities (e.g. community design team) to develop and implement the recommendations of this report, further research to extend knowledge in particular areas and to support Oranga Tamariki to strengthen their relationships and trust with takatāpui and rainbow communities.

Work safely and confidently with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to create trusting and supportive connections.

Social workers and other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi need information, knowledge and resources to confidently and safely work with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Design compulsory, ongoing, culturally appropriate training around creating safe and affirming environments for takatāpui and rainbow young people for all social workers, group-home staff and other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi. The training should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.
- Provide an internal takatāpui and rainbow practice role or group that social workers, group-home staff and other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi can connect to for information, advice and support.
- Develop processes and systems so that takatāpui and rainbow social workers can be prioritised to work with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Introduce policy and practice guidance that reduces the frequency of change of social workers working with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.

- Develop policies and procedures to foster the wellbeing of rangatahi who experience changes to social workers and/or care placements (e.g., develop best practice handover requirements and processes between practitioners; enable rangatahi to meet caregiving whānau prior to moving, etc.).

Uphold the rights and dignity of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi

All tamariki, rangatahi, carers, social workers and other kaimahi should be aware of rights of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care, including the right to gender-affirming care and the right to remain or return to care.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Update care standards to include specific reference to the rights of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi, especially transgender, non-binary and intersex tamariki and rangatahi, to be heard and participate in decisions that are important to them and affect their lives.

Improve mental health supports

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care face specific challenges including high mental health needs. Ensuring that social workers, caregivers and other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi understand risk and protective factors specific to takatāpui and rainbow tamariki alongside rapid access to appropriate and safe takatāpui and rainbow mental health services is essential to the ongoing safety of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care. The impacts of harmful care experiences may mean this support is required well into adulthood.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Update internal guidance and training on preventing suicide and self-harm to include advice about understanding risk and protective factors specific to takatāpui and rainbow young people.
- Link takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi to appropriate takatāpui and rainbow services and provide advocacy and support to ensure that any specialist mental health services they access are rainbow-affirming and safe.
- Extend mental health access and entitlement to all care-experienced takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi regardless of whether they are still in care.
- Recognise that access to gender-affirming care improves mental health for trans

takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care.

Improve access to gender-affirming healthcare and other forms of rainbow-responsive healthcare, including for intersex tamariki and rangatahi

Broad and rapid access to gender-affirming and rainbow-responsive healthcare is essential for the physical and mental wellbeing of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, including intersex tamariki and rangatahi, in care.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Create guidelines, resources and training for kaimahi and caregivers about rainbow inclusive healthcare, including health care for tamariki and rangatahi with variations in sex characteristics.
- Ensure kaimahi know that access to gender-affirming clothing, including binders, is an immediate need and can be purchased by social workers.
- Leverage Oranga Tamariki systems influence to enhance awareness within the health system of the rights to gender-affirming, appropriate and confidental healthcare for takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care.
- Fully fund and ensure access to gender-affirming healthcare and wellbeing resources for tamariki and rangatahi in care who need it, such as counselling, clothing, hormone blockers and therapies and other resources such as binders.
- Use gender-neutral clothing, sleepwear, bags etc for young people in emergency care.
- Ensure that intersex young people are not involved in medical procedures without their full knowledge and informed consent, including delaying non-lifesaving procedures until young people can make their own decisions.
- Ensure that young people in care can access sexual health and relationships education that is relevant to takatāpui and rainbow young people.
- Ensure that young people have access to sexual health services, contraception, condoms, dental dams, and PrEP therapies (etc.) as required.

Support caregivers and whānau

Caregivers and whānau need information, support, and resources to care for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care confidently and safely.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Provide respectful whānau support to help whānau and families understand what being takatāpui or rainbow means and what takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care need to thrive and be secure in their identities.
- Update caregiver handbooks to include takatāpui and rainbow content. The content should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.
- Develop culturally appropriate training around creating safe and affirming environments for takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi for all caregivers, including foster parents, residence and group-home staff. The training should be specific to the cultural context of Aotearoa and co-designed with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi with care experience, and takatāpui and rainbow organisations.

Ensure safe caregivers for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care must be placed with caregivers who accept and uphold takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi identities.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Screen all caregivers for their attitudes and skills to support tamariki and rangatahi with minority sexuality, gender and sex characteristic identities.
- Check that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are supported in their placement and moved to a more appropriate placement if they request this.
- Develop the policies and practice guidelines for placement and care of takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi.
- Ensure takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are not placed with caregivers who require religious participation in activities that go against the young person's belief system.
- Update approval and monitoring processes for service contracting of partner homes, especially faith-based services, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of rainbow and takatāpui rangatahi.

Wider support systems

Wider support systems need to be recognised, enabled and drawn on to ensure that takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care can thrive in all their worlds.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Develop relationships and processes by which takatāpui rangatahi are supported to safely connect with their hapū and iwi.
- Support whānau/hapū/iwi led activity to uplift takatāpuitanga and address the impacts of colonisation that produced homo/trans/bi/inter-phobia.
- Work with schools to improve safety and reduce bullying of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi.
- Work with schools, in partnership with tamariki and rangatahi, to provide better support and resource for neurodivergent and disabled tamariki and rangatahi.
- Ensure takatāpui or rainbow rangatahi in smaller, rural communities who want peer support, have access (e.g., remote access) to takatāpui and rainbow support groups or networks.
- Look at opportunities to facilitate activities for takatāpui and rainbow care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi.
- Resource an ongoing community-led takatāpui and rainbow advisory leadership group to support Oranga Tamariki to develop and implement recommendations and research in response to this work. This group could support Oranga Tamariki to strengthen their relationships and trust with takatāpui and rainbow communities and facilitate feeding back to the rangatahi who took part in the project the actions and changes that have taken place.

Further research and data collection

The project team acknowledges this report as an important starting point towards positively changing the experiences of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care. They believe, however, that there is scope for further research and data collection that centres takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi.

We recommend that Oranga Tamariki:

- Co-design and develop metrics with takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care to monitor and audit the effectiveness of guidelines and practices recommended in this report.
- Undertake further research to understand how well-equipped social workers,

other kaimahi, carers and group and residence staff are to support takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi and their whānau.

- Undertake further research into youth justice facilities and systems, especially with takatāpui, whakawāhine, tangata ira tāne, Pasifika rainbow and MVPFAFF+ and trans and intersex rangatahi.
- Work with care partner homes (who rangatahi identified as being supportive) to learn from practices and processes so these can be replicated across the system.
- Undertake kaupapa Māori research into being takatāpui in care to understand the additional challenges and harm faced by takatāpui rangatahi and how these are and can be mitigated.
- Support more research into the experiences of tamariki and rangatahi whaikaha in care with a particular focus on those who also identify as takatāpui and rainbow.

Oranga Tamariki and the community design team continue to whakawhanaungatanga and share insights from the project, design members' lived experiences and organisation's experiences of supporting care-experienced rangatahi in the community.

The way forward

Oranga Tamariki and the community design team will meet to workshop the report and the recommendations and discuss key actions to take forward.

Appendix One

The following supports are free and confidential

Call or free text 1737 any time to talk to a trained counsellor.

Call LIFELINE (0800 54 33 54) or free text HELP (4357) any time to talk to a trained counsellor.

Text Youthline free between 8am and midnight at: 234 (it may take 5-10 minutes to receive a message back) or call free 0800 37 66 33

Youth One Stop Shops (YOSS) around Aotearoa offer health and support services and some centres have drop-in times. For a list of YOSS go to https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/y/youth-one-stop-shops/

Call OutLine Aotearoa (0800 688 5463) or access online chat support https://outline.org.nz/chat/ any evening from 6-9 pm. OutLine offers a confidential, free support line, rainbow specialist counselling and trans peer support.

RainbowYOUTH is a national youth-led organisation. RainbowYOUTH runs drop-in centres and peer support groups and one-to-one rainbow support.

Gender Minorities Aotearoa is a nationwide organisation, run by and for transgender people, including binary and non-binary, intersex, and irawhiti takatāpui. They offer support and provide one-to-one support and information.

Tiwhanawhana is a takatāpui community group based in Wellington that welcomes people of diverse sexualities and gender identities.

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai are an organisation that helps advocate for children and young people with care experience. VOYCE are partners in this research and if you would like support to provide Oranga Tamariki with feedback or a complaint, they can support you. Call 08004VOYCE (0800 486 923).

Appendix Two

Information sheets and consent forms

TAKATĀPUI AND RAINBOW STATE-CARE PROJECT

The project is about looking at what takatāpui and rainbow young people want Oranga Tamariki to know about their experiences in state care.

We will share what we learn with Oranga Tamariki to improve practice.

If you are aged between 15 and 27 and have experience of state care we'd love you to take part in the project.

The community research team are made up of researchers from Point, takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi who are state-care experienced and members of takatāpui and rainbow communities.

https://www.point.co.nz/mahi/rainbow

If you take part you will be invited to take around 5 photos (or choose some you already have) about your experiences and you will share these with a peer researcher in an online or face to face interview

We have a consent form we can share with you if you want more info

If you want more info about the project or would like to join, please call/text Jules at 021 989 745 or email julie@point.co.nz

TAKATĀPUI AND RAINBOW STATE-CARE PROJECT: YOUR RIGHTS

The project is about looking at what takatāpui and rainbow young people want Oranga Tamariki to know about their experiences in state care.

We will share what we learn with Oranga Tamariki to improve practice.

It's OK to say "NO" to taking part.
If you do take part, you don't have to answer anything you don't want to.

We can pause, or stop, any time you want

You are welcome to bring a friend or support person along to the interview

What you share in the interview will be private

This means no one will know your name

If you tell the interviewer something that makes us worried about your safety, then we need to help you keep safe.

We will work out what to do, together.

We have a pastoral care team and a list of supports available for people in the project.

Kia ora, Mālō e lelei, Talofa lava, Namaste, Kia orana, Ni sa bula Vinaka, Nín hǎo, Hello!

Thanks for your interest in this study. The information here may help you decide if you'd like to take part.

Who are the study team?

We are a **team made up of researchers from Point, Takatāpui and Rainbow* community members, and Takatāpui Rainbow rangatahi** with their own experiences of being in care. Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People have hired Point to design and facilitate the study.

If you would like to be involved and have any questions about the study , please text/call Jules on 021 989 745 or julie@point.co.nz

*We use Rainbow as an umbrella term to describe sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics. Not everyone likes or relates to 'rainbow'. You may use MVPFAFF, LGBTQI+, queer, trans, non-binary, pansexual, lesbian, bi, and many other identities or not use any specific words for your identity.

What is the study about?

This study is focused on understating **what Takatāpui and Rainbow rangatahi would like Oranga Tamariki to know about being in care**.

You are invited to share your thoughts and experience in an interview, either face to face or online. The **interview will be with a Takatāpui or Rainbow peer researcher (someone who has experience of being in care)** and a Point researcher.

We are using a method called photo-elicitation. Before the interview you will **be asked to take between 5 and 10 photos**, and/or you may **like to share photos you have taken in the past**. These photos **do not need to be amazing or artistic**. They are photos that **speak to your experiences of being Takatāpui or Rainbow in care**. In the interview, you and the peer researcher will talk about the photos.

We will be interviewing 12 people and the team will work together to analyse the interviews for themes. We will produce actionable insights. The insights will **help the**

community and learn more about being Takatāpui and Rainbow in care, and the recommendations will be the follow-up action to the insights.

Who is invited to take part in the study?

The study is for Takatāpui and Rainbow rangatahi who are aged **15-27 years old**.

Examples of the **kinds of care for this study** include,
- Having/had a social worker from Oranga Tamariki or Child, Youth and Family (CYF)
- Living/lived with a caregiver
- Living/lived in a residence
- Living/lived in a group home
- Been in/in emergency housing arranged by Oranga Tamariki
- Have/had a care & protection order status
- Have/had a youth justice status
- Have a transition support worker and/or used transition support services

We are **seeking 12 people**. We would like to **include diverse Takatāpui and Rainbow experiences**, especially MVPFAFF+, refugee and asylum seekers, trans and non-binary, intersex, and rangatahi with disabilities and neurodivergence, and people living outside of main centres.

If you are keen to be part of the study, please fill in this **short form online** https://forms.office.com/r/n857jMYJXd and Jules will be in touch.

In this form, we ask your age, ethnicity, Rainbow identity, and care experience (tick-box of the examples above). **If you would rather talk with Jules (researcher)** than fill out the form, you are welcome to text/call Jules on 021 989 745 or email julie@point.co.nz

We will ask your permission to record the interview.

We will **ask your permission to either video or audio record your interview**. We ask to record interviews, so we have an accurate record of what you shared. Jules (Point researcher) may also take notes. We will seek your consent to either video, record, or take notes before we start. **You can ask for the video, audio, or note-taking to be stopped at any time** during the interview if you do not want something recorded.

How long will the study take & what questions will be asked?

It will take **about an hour to take your photos and/or choose photos** you have already taken. The **interview will also be around an hour**. You are welcome to bring notes to the interview and take notes during the interview and **you can take breaks** whenever you need. W**e will provide snacks and water**. You are **welcome to bring and use fidget objects** and anything that supports your comfort.
The interview can be done **online or face-to-face**, and we can set up an accessible and private space to do the interview. We can **cover transport costs** to and from the interview.

During the interview you will choose which photos you want to talk about, and you will be **asked to describe what is in the photo**. You and the peer researcher will have a conversation about the photos. The peer researcher **will check in with you often** to make sure you are **comfortable with the questions and that they understand clearly what you saying**. If there are any questions you prefer not to answer just let the interviewer know. They may ask **prompting questions** like,

- What made you want to take this photo?
- What do you like about the photo? What don't you like?
- Does the photo make you feel a certain way?
- Is there anything missing from this photo that you wanted to capture? What?

What are the benefits of taking part in the study?

By taking part in the study, you are **helping the wider public and Oranga Tamariki understand what it's like being Rainbow in care**. Your experiences are important and are often missing.

The **study team is publishing the results** and will share the insights widely. The community study team intends to use the research findings to advocate for Takatāpui and Rainbow rangatahi to be safe and able to flourish in care.

Oranga Tamariki will use the insights to raise awareness about Takatāpui and Rainbow rangatahi needs and aspirations and to **enhance policy and services in Oranga Tamariki**.

To say thanks for participating in the study, **you will receive a koha of $100.00**.

Risks of taking part in the study.

There is a risk that talking about your experiences of being Takatāpui and Rainbow in care **may be upsetting**. You may like to bring a **support person** to the interview.

You can **take breaks** during the interview, and stop discussing a photo, question, or topic at any time. You can also **stop the interview at any time.** If you stop the interview or withdraw from the research, you will receive the full koha.

If something causes you distress while you are taking photos, during, or after the interview, you can get support. You can also call/text Jules, the Point researcher, on 021 989 745 at any time. The project also has a **pastoral care team.** They are a group of Rainbow and allies who are counsellors, peer workers, and therapists. Point can connect you to a team member at any time during or after the project finishes.

With your permission, the research team would like to **check in with you a couple of weeks after the interview.**

The following supports are **free and confidential**.

- Call or free text 1737 any time to talk to a trained counsellor.
- Call LIFELINE (0800 54 33 54) or free text HELP (4357) any time to talk to a trained counsellor.
- Text Youthline free between 8am and midnight at : 234 (it may take 5-10 minutes to receive a message back) or call free 0800 37 66 33 for
- Youth One Stop Shops (YOSS) around Aotearoa offer health and support services and some centres have drop in times. For a list of YOSS go to https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/y/youth-one-stop-shops/
- Call OutLine Aotearoa (0800 688 5463) or access online chat support https://outline.org.nz/chat/ any evening from 6-9 pm. OutLine offers a confidential, free support line, rainbow specialist counselling and trans peer support.
- RainbowYOUTH is a national youth-led organisation. RainbowYOUTH runs drop-in centres and peer support groups and one-to-one rainbow support.
- Gender Minorities Aotearoa is a nationwide organisation, run by and for transgender people, including binary and non-binary, intersex, and irawhiti takatāpui. They offer support and provide one-to-one support and information.
- Tiwhanawhana is a takatāpui community group based in Wellington that welcomes people of diverse sexualities and gender identities.
- VOYCE Whakarongo Mai are an organisation that helps advocate for children and young people with care experience. VOYCE are partners in this research and if you would like support to provide Oranga Tamariki with feedback or a complaint, they can support you. Call 08004VOYCE (0800 486 923).

What happens if I disclose serious immediate harm?

If you share experiences of abuse or neglect that are currently happening to you or others, we **will guide you to get support**. This could include contacting the study pastoral care team, VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, the Police, Oranga Tamariki, or another support person. Point has a **duty in law to act on any disclosures**, and **we will do this with you**. If you **talk about something concerning or worrying**, we will **check in with you** to see if you **would like to get support** from VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, the pastoral care team, or other support workers. VOYCE Whakarongo Mai can also support you to give Oranga Tamariki feedback or make a complaint.

Māori data sovereignty

We will uphold the principles of Māori data sovereignty in this study. This means we **treat your personal and health information as tāonga**. You may wish to discuss the project and data sovereignty with pakeke within your whānau, hapū or iwi.

What are your rights?

Your taking part in this study is **completely voluntary**. You do not have to take part in this study, and if you choose to take part, you can stop at any time. You can do this without any disadvantage. Should you choose to exit the study we will remove all your contributions up until mid-October, when the study team will be analysing the interviews, and we can remove any direct quotes and photos up until the final report is published in early December.

What you share (including your photos) is **kept confidential**. To make sure your personal information is safe, you will **only be identified by a code**. Point will keep the only list that links your code with your name. Only Point Directors can access the list linking your code with your name. This means when the study team looks at the transcripts for analysis, your name and identifying details will have been changed.

We may use quotes, things you talked about, and your photos in the report. We will not use photos with people in them or photos that could identify you. We will also **not publish any information where someone could guess your identity** (e.g., we might change the name of a small town).

All your information, including transcripts, are **kept in our secure cloud-based storage**. Oranga Tamariki is currently under moratorium on the destruction of any information that could be of potential interest to the Royal Inquiry into Historic Abuse in State Care.

This means we **will keep this information at least five years or until the moratorium is lifted.**

We will only use what you share for this study. No one else can access what you have shared (e.g., the transcripts of your interviews) for other studies.

Point will comply with privacy interests, and any information you share will be protected by the Privacy Act 2020.

Please let us know **if you want a copy of your transcript**. We will send you a copy of the report before we publish it and keep you up to date on where and with who we are sharing the report.

You will be **asked to sign a consent form** before you join the study. Point will talk through the consent form with you and answer any questions.

Contact details

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study at any stage you can contact **Jules Radford-Poupard (Principal Researcher)**
Phone 021 989 745
Email julie@point.co.nz

Tiwhanawhana, is a **takatāpui community group** who are kaitiaki and partners for the research. You can contact Kevin Haunui if you have questions or would like support.
Phone 021 626 065
Email kevinaunui@gmail.com

If you want to talk with someone at **Oranga Tamariki**, you can contact the Voices for Children and Young People.

Email voices@ot.govt.nz

Interview Consent Form

We do not need consent from your whānau/carer/social worker to take part in this study. We only require your consent.

Please tick to indicate you consent to the following. You can also consent to this study verbally.

I understand, have read or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet.	☐
I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study and ask questions.	☐
I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the study and I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet.	☐
I am between 15 and 27 years old	☐
I identify as takatāpui/ MVPFAFF/ Rainbow/LGBTQI+ (or another queer/Rainbow identity)	☐
I have care experience e.g. (have/had a social worker from Oranga Tamariki or CYF; live/d with a caregiver; live/d in a residence; live/d in a group home; emergency housing; have/had youth justice status; have/had a transition support worker; used transition services)	☐
I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage. Up until the report is published any direct quotes and photos can be removed if I withdraw from the study.	☐
I understand that my participation in this study is anonymous and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports for this study.	☐
I know who to contact if I have any questions about the study in general.	☐
I consent to the interview being videoed or audio recorded, and notes taken during my interview (please circle your preference of video or audio recording)	☐

I consent to my photo’s being used in the report. I know I can ask for some or all photos not to be shared.	☐
I consent to the research team interviewing me.	☐

Please tick yes or no for the following two questions.

I would like the research team to make contact to check-in a few weeks after my interview at a time that suits me.	Yes ☐ No ☐
I would like a copy of the report before it is published and shared widely with the community.	Yes ☐ No ☐

Declaration by participant:

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Participant’s preferred name:

Signature: Date:

Please share the name of a contact we could call in the unlikely event of an emergency.

Emergency contact name:

Contact phone number:

Declaration by member of research team:

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant and have answered the participant’s questions about it.

I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher’s name:

Signature: Date:

"I took [this photo] when I lived with my old caregiver who was a transphobic b***h... Trans lives do matter and the amount of people that dismiss our rights and lives is horrendous. People need to be aware; our lives do matter, and we just want to live. I really wanted to include this [photo] because this makes me feel seen". Participant A