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TAMARIKI**
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Takatāpui in Care

Literature Review

June 2024

EVIDENCE CENTRE
TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

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

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Executive Summary

This report is a response to the Making Ourselves Visible report recommendation, to:

“Undertake Kaupapa Māori research into being takatāpui in care to understand the additional challenges and harms faced by takatāpui rangatahi and how these are and can be mitigated”

This literature review summarises what we already know about the challenge and harms faced by takatāpui rangatahi in care in Aotearoa New Zealand and how these can be mitigated. This review includes both white and grey literature, and is guided by three main questions:

1. What do we know about the challenges faced by takatāpui rangatahi in care, and how do these differ from non-Māori?
2. What do we know about the harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care, and how do these differ from non-Māori?
3. What do we know about how the challenges and harms can be mitigated, and to what extent is this already happening?

Findings

A key theme that emerged from literature was the **challenges faced by takatāpui rangatahi in care**, with the emphasis on ***Western systems and frameworks, limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare and support services***, as well as ***social isolation and no sense of belonging***.

The second theme was the **harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care**. Takatāpui are experiencing ***physical harm, psychological harm, low self-esteem, and pride in identity***. They are also facing ***housing and material deprivation***.

The mitigation of challenges and harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care and the extent this is already happening is also a prominent theme, with literature outlining the importance of ***creating a safe and inclusive environment*** for takatāpui and having more ***Māori led support services and providers*** for takatāpui in care.

Background

In 2023, Oranga Tamariki commissioned the VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai team to conduct a qualitative research study on takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care. The *Making Ourselves Visible* report was then released by the Point and Associates and the Community Design team to give visibility to the lived experiences of care by takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi, including recommendations for Oranga Tamariki in the future.

This high-level literature review was conducted in response to recommendation 15 of the *Making Ourselves Visible* report, which is to:

“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”.

This report will summarise what we already know about the challenges and harm faced by takatāpui rangatahi in care in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) in contrast to non-Māori. Information on how we can mitigate these challenges and harms and to what extent has already occurred or being considered will be included as well.

Therefore, this report was guided by three main questions:

1. What do we know about the challenges faced by takatāpui rangatahi in care, and how do these differ from non-Māori?
2. What do we know about the harm experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care, and how do these differ from non-Māori?
3. What do we know about how the challenges and harms can be mitigated, and to what extent is this already happening?

Terminology

According to the Inside Out Rainbow terminology, the term ‘takatāpui’ is a Māori traditional word that means an ‘intimate friend of the same sex’ (1). However, it has since been embraced as the word to encompass all tangata Māori who identify as part of the rainbow community. The term ‘rainbow’ is *“an umbrella term, like LGBTQOIA+, describing people of diverse sexualities, genders, and variations of sex characteristics”* (1). Therefore, in this report we will refer to:

- **takatāpui rangatahi** as people who are of the rainbow community AND Māori, and are in care.
- **rainbow** as people who are of the rainbow community.

Methods

This is a high-level literature review that includes information on takatāpui in care from both white and grey literature; including, but not limited to:

- Reports and papers published online and in academic journals
- Unpublished reports from Oranga Tamariki
- Oranga Tamariki policy documents
- Oranga Tamariki practise guidelines and supports

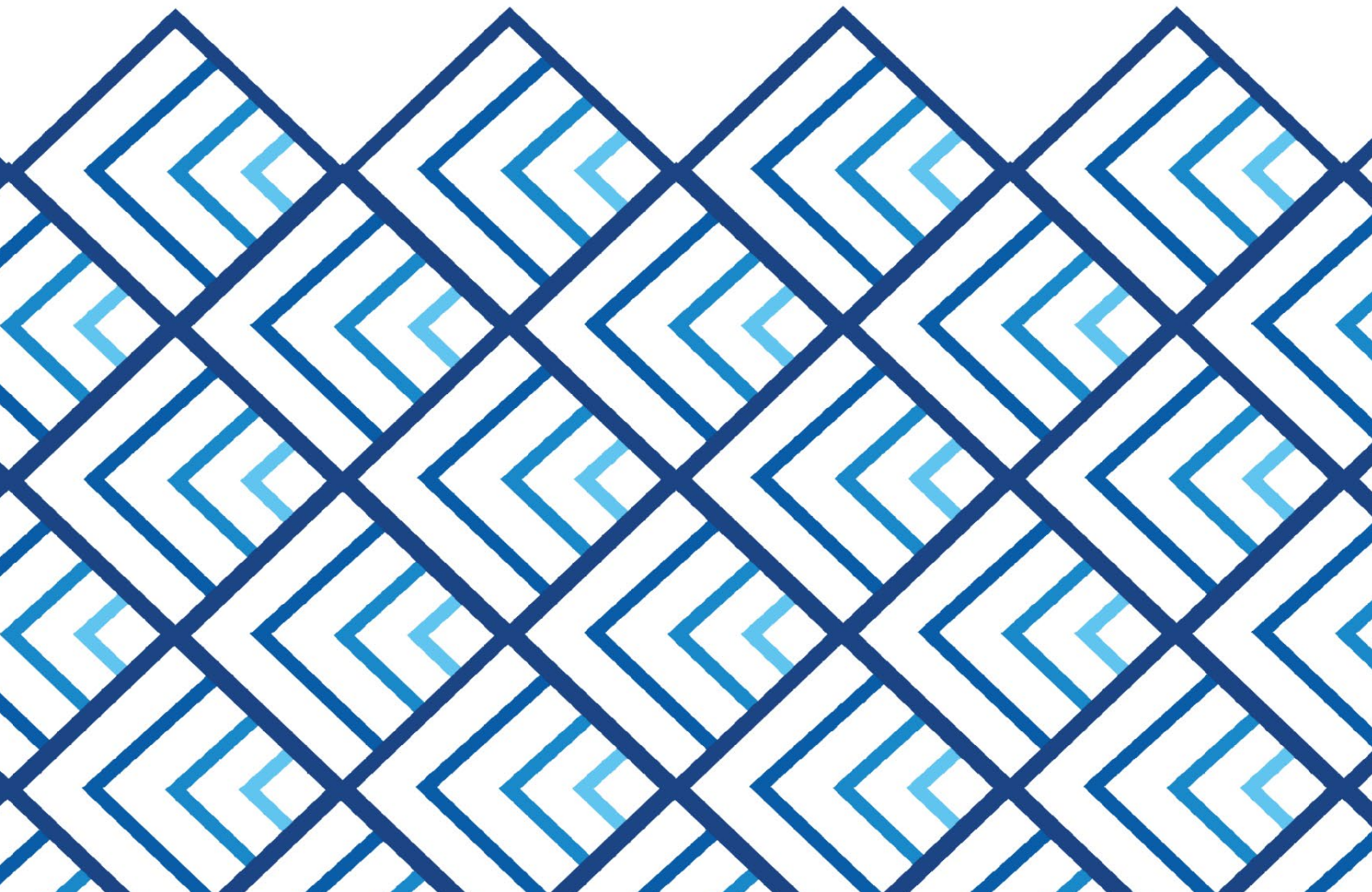
Due to the limited amount of literature on takatāpui in care in Aotearoa NZ, this review has included literature from other countries that include rainbow indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in care systems, state care or incarceration.

The main theme(s) of this review are based on the three questions that are used to guide this report, and the sub themes were identified similarly to a process of thematic analysis from the literature collected.

The three main themes of this review are:

1. The challenges faced by takatāpui rangatahi in care.
2. The harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care.
3. The mitigation of challenges and harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care and to the extent this is already happening.

Findings



The challenges faced by takatāpui rangatahi in care

Some of the overarching themes regarding the challenges that are commonly faced by takatāpui rangatahi in care are: Western systems and frameworks; limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare and support services; and social isolation and no sense of belonging in Aotearoa NZ.

Western systems and frameworks

Western systems and frameworks were one of the many challenges that takatāpui rangatahi are facing in care. It is important to understand the historical context of Aotearoa NZ and how the effects of colonisation contribute to the current disparities that many Māori and takatāpui are facing (2). Colonisation resulted in the current Western systems, frameworks, and ideologies in Aotearoa NZ, which heavily impacted Māoritanga (the Māori way of life), and therefore affected takatāpui and are still affecting them today.

Pre-colonisation, gender diversity and sexuality were valued and accepted within te ao Māori (the Māori world), and so through their whakapapa or genealogy, takatāpui were able to obtain their identity (2). However, the impact of colonisation by European settlers disrupted this as they brought their own Western ideologies about gender and sexuality that were founded in traditional Christian beliefs (2). These Western beliefs brought about the Western systems and frameworks that deny the basic human rights for rainbow people in Aotearoa NZ, further marginalising takatāpui.

From colonisation comes many isms, such as racism, sexism, and heterosexism, and the long-term effects of systemic racism have resulted in the negative outcomes and harms in which takatāpui in care are experiencing today (2). One example, of a discriminatory Western construct, is the expectation that people only marry members the opposite gender, and are expected to fit into binary gender roles, and that anything else is not considered “normal” (4). This type of thinking heavily impacts takatāpui in feeling safe and being able to freely express who they are. Because the current Western system and frameworks were founded on Western ideologies of gender roles and identity, it is obvious that this system doesn't cater to the needs of takatāpui.

Limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare and support services

Another challenge that takatāpui in care are facing is the limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare and support services. The 'Making Ourselves Visible' report found more than half of rangatahi that identified as takatāpui and were involved with Oranga Tamariki were unable to access healthcare when they needed it within the last year (5). This is consistent with the current Youth2000 Survey Series report, including the high rates of resource insecurity for takatāpui and rainbow young people overall (6).

One of the main reasons for takatāpui having limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare and support services was the lack of representation and cultural competency within care and other support services. The 'Making ourselves Visible' report explained the current lack of staff and caregiver competency which resulted from the distrust and disconnection between care experiences takatāpui rangatahi and their social workers (7). One study looking at rainbow experiences of accessing mental health support in Aotearoa NZ discussed how professionals lacked understanding of Māoritanga and had poor knowledge and use of appropriate vocabulary when referring to takatāpui (2). Moreover, a study of fifth year medical students in Aotearoa NZ found that they weren't getting enough education on health care for patients with diverse sexual orientation, characteristics, and identities (8). These results mirror the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIA individuals dealing with social and welfare services in Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIA people were being misgendered, and professionals and staff had no confidence or awareness of how to care for them due to the lack of competence training (9).

In addition, takatāpui in care are unable to access appropriate healthcare and support services due to policies not being implemented for these services. A study from the Netherlands found that although they are European leaders in the area of human right policies for LGBTQIA+ individuals, LGBTQIA+ individuals are still suffering many negative experiences (10). Therefore, the policies are not being implemented or translated well into practice to better support the LGBTQIA+ community. Similarly, Oranga Tamariki have policies and care standards that outline the importance of supporting rainbow tamariki and rangatahi to feel safe and to express their gender identity and sexuality freely (5). Despite these policies and standards, put in place to better support and care for takatāpui and rainbow young people, the results from current research consistently shows that the needs of takatāpui are not being met (2,3,5,6,7).

Social isolation and no sense of belonging

Social isolation and no sense of belonging is another challenge that takatāpui in care are facing. Takatāpui do not feel safe and supported in their identities by their friends, family, school and in care, and thus have no sense of belonging in society. There are also feelings of rejection by certain religious groups and other community groups.

Reports on takatāpui in care emphasised that they didn't feel safe and supported in their identities by their friends and family members. Current results show that takatāpui and rainbow young people that were involved with Oranga Tamariki stated that they: [1] had lower rates of important aspects of family support and safety, [2] had higher levels of connectedness with people other than their family compared to non-rainbow young people in care, and that [3] takatāpui have lower levels of resilience in terms of good wellbeing and support from friends compared to non-rainbow Māori and non-Māori in care (2,6). On top that, takatāpui and rainbow young people who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki reported facing more challenges in school than those that are non-rainbow Māori, which include: bullying, discrimination, as well as feelings of not belonging in school (6).

Not only are takatāpui struggling with the lack of support from their friends, family, and school; they often feel rejected by certain religious groups and other community groups. In Canada, the Indigenous Two-Spirit/LGBTQIA people also faced colonisation similar to Māori and explained the link between Christian religion and the acceptance of Two-Spirit people (11). The arrival of Christianity erased the history of the acceptance of alternative genders and sexual identities pre-colonisation and further social isolating their Indigenous Two-Spirit/LGBTQIA people in society (11,12). Also, before colonisation occurred in Canada, heterosexist Christian values regarding 'acceptable' gender identities were imposed on the indigenous population. The context of Canada is similar to that of Aotearoa New Zealand. This eventually led to the rejection of takatāpui and rainbow people by religious and community groups.

The harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care

The harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care that were particularly evident in literature were physical and psychological harm; housing and material deprivation; and low self-esteem and pride in identity.

Physical and psychological harm

Takatāpui and rainbow young people are experiencing both physical and psychological harm in care. Some examples of harms range from violence to neglect, trauma, physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse and alcohol misuse (2,5,6,7). Takatāpui and rainbow young people also have an increased risk of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and suicide compared to non-Māori rainbow and non-rainbow young people in care (2).

The 'Rainbow children in care' report stated that many rainbow young people experience violence and different types of abuse compared to non-rainbow young people. Results showed that, rainbow young people involved with Oranga Tamariki are 1.2 times more likely to experience physical abuse than non-rainbow young people in care (2,5). The Youth2000 Survey Series report emphasised that the levels of violence are also high for takatāpui and rainbow young people in Aotearoa NZ, but for those involved with Oranga Tamariki – the levels are much higher than those not involved, with a 25.9% difference [95% CI] (6). On top of that, rainbow young people involved with Oranga Tamariki are 3.8 times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse at the hands of a parent or caregiver (2,5). In the current Youth2000 Survey Series report, substance use has been a concern particularly for takatāpui and rainbow young people involved with Oranga Tamariki (6). The findings from this report showed that takatāpui and rainbow young people have higher substance use than cis heterosexual young people across many measures such as smoking cigarettes, vaping and drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana at least once a week whether they were in care or not (6). This is also a problem in the USA, where researchers explored the association between alcohol misuse and childhood maltreatment and out-of-home placement among urban two-spirit American Indian and Alaska Native people (AI/AN) (13). Results showed that urban two-spirit AI/AN that drink alcohol had higher percentages of experiencing childhood physical abuse, neglect, and out-of-home placements than non-AI/AN (13). Additionally, researchers concluded that negative experiences in out-of-home placement for AI/AN may also be linked to an increased vulnerability to stressors later in life (13).

Experiencing violence, physical and sexual abuse as well as substance abuse has long term impacts on takatāpui and rainbow young people in care, especially their

mental health. Poor mental health is a concerning issue for takatāpui and rainbow young people in care that needs immediate attention (2,4). The Youth2000 Survey Series report outlines that takatāpui and rainbow young people involved with Oranga Tamariki were significantly less likely to report good emotional wellbeing and more likely to report thoughts of suicide and suicide attempts (6). The Oranga Tamariki needs and experiences of takatāpui and rainbow young people insights support this as statistics show that approximately 1 in 3 takatāpui and rainbow young people attempted suicide in the last year (5). Moreover, takatāpui and rainbow young people involved with Oranga Tamariki reported higher levels of clinically significant symptoms of depression, including self-harm, suicidality, and suicide attempts compared to other groups in care (2,6).

Low self-esteem and pride in identity

Some takatāpui rangatahi in care have low self-esteem and pride in their identity due to their experiences of bullying and discrimination at home, their school and within Oranga Tamariki. The 'Just Sayin' report in 2023 reported that rainbow young people have lower rating about many aspects of their lives and an overall poorer quality of life compared to non-rainbow young people in care (14). In addition, rainbow young people had a substantially lower percentage of good wellbeing, secure identity, and overall pride in who they were in comparison to non-rainbow young people in care (14).

Takatāpui and rainbow young people find school particularly hard and have considerably higher school bullying rates than those who are non-rainbow Māori in care (7). One study found that 30% of rainbow young people have reported being bullied, physically threatened and/or harmed (2). Another study stated that 1 in 5 takatāpui and rainbow young people involved with Oranga Tamariki have been bullied weekly or more at school in the last year (5). And to make it worse, no support was provided from either social workers or caregivers in helping takatāpui and rainbow young people deal with bullying at school (7). Bullying has an immense impact on an individual's self-esteem and pride in who they are as a person, and so the effects of bullying can result in low self-esteem and pride in identity for takatāpui and rainbow young people in care.

Within Oranga Tamariki, current literature has outlined the discrimination which takatāpui and rainbow young people experience in care. The What About ME survey stated that on top of feeling less able to express their identity and having lower levels of pride in who they are, rainbow and disabled young people experience discrimination more often particularly for sexual identity than any other group of young people in Aotearoa NZ (15). Many caregivers, social workers and professionals discriminate against rainbow young people, and this continues to affect their self-esteem, identity and overall health and wellbeing (2). Research from the USA as reported that rainbow young people are told they are unadoptable because they identify as rainbow and are told that the bullying and abuse that they experience

is their fault, because they identify as rainbow (16). This can lead takatāpui to be ashamed of their identity and further cause them to hide their identity.

Housing and material deprivation

Housing and material deprivation is another harm in which takatāpui in care are facing. The Youth2000 Survey Series report show that takatāpui and rainbow young people who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki have very high rates of housing deprivation and housing stress (6). Likewise, a report from Oranga Tamariki showed that the needs and experiences of takatāpui rangatahi insights report supports this by stating that in the last year, 1 in 10 rainbow young people in care reported severe housing deprivation, and nearly half stated that their caregivers or parents often worry about money for food and other essential needs in the household for them (5).

A study that explores the experiences prior to becoming homeless in Aotearoa NZ among takatāpui and the rainbow community emphasised that there were many experiences the contributed to suffering from homelessness later in life (17). Some of these experiences included: pervasiveness of instability (particularly in family relationships, finances, and housing), having to grow up fast because of social and material conditions, and looking for housing in stressed markets (17). In addition, they stated that takatāpui and rainbow people are frequently forced to hide their sexuality simply to gain acceptance in housing markets, and so the choice to live openly in their gender identity and sexuality is not available to them without directly risking their housing conditions (17). This is consistent with the Oranga Tamariki 'Rainbow children in care' report where some of the rainbow young people in care would hide their identity to be adopted as they were told that they wouldn't get adopted because of their sexual identity (2).

The mitigation of challenges and harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care and the extent this is already happening

Creating a safe and inclusive environment and Māori led support services were two themes that were consistent throughout literature on how to mitigate the challenges and harms that takatāpui rangatahi in care are currently experiencing.

Creating a safe and inclusive environment

To mitigate some of the challenges and harms experienced by takatāpui rangatahi in care, creating a safe and inclusive environment is important for takatāpui and rainbow young people to express themselves freely without discrimination, and to participate fully in all aspects of society without fear. And we can achieve this through increasing rainbow-based training and practice in care and other support services, as well as building relationships between social workers and caregivers with takatāpui (8,10,12,18).

Having more rainbow-based training and practice in care and other support services is one way of creating a safer and more inclusive environment for takatāpui rangatahi in care. One study showed that many fifth-year medical students in Aotearoa NZ currently lack the confidence in consulting with LGBTQIA+ patients, and this is because there is a lack of education, particularly relating to transgender and intersex health care (8). Improved teaching about sexuality and gender identities in the medical curriculum could increase student knowledge, awareness, and comfort in providing care for LGBTQIA+ patients and therefore, creating a safe environment for takatāpui and rainbow young people to access healthcare when needed (8). A study from the USA (United States of America) on child welfare systems reported that many social workers don't feel equipped enough to help rainbow youth, and that agencies should implement more rainbow-based training and service provision for rainbow youth in care (18). This approach could create a culture of inclusiveness and safety for takatāpui and rainbow young people in care.

Another way of creating a safe and inclusive environment for takatāpui and rainbow young people in care is building relationships between social workers and caregivers with takatāpui. A study in the Netherlands that interviewed LGBTQIA+ young people in care identified that rainbow youth feel more supported and empowered when they have caring and loving relationships with people (10). There is a disconnection between social workers and takatāpui in care, and studies show that building

relationships with takatāpui and rainbow young people empowers them to express themselves freely because they feel safe (12).

Māori led support services and providers

Having Māori led support services and providers is essential in mitigating the challenges and harms that takatāpui are experiencing in care. An evaluation of transitional services in Oranga Tamariki identified that as well as the need for ongoing support and professional development, Māori needed to be at the forefront of these services (2). It is important that these support services are Māori led to better support and meet the needs of takatāpui in care.

Identity and whakapapa are important for takatāpui as it can be a source of strength and resilience (2). A study from the Netherlands explored different pathways of resilience for LGBTQIA+ youth in out-of-home care found that building a positive identity around sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) is an important factor for resilience among rainbow youth (10). According to a study exploring the mental health of takatāpui in Aotearoa NZ, the use of the word 'takatāpui' is connected to a person's identity as Māori to their sex, gender, and/or sexuality (Oranga Tamariki, 2023). Takatāpui has always been a valued part of Māori communities, and the Māori cultural traditions provide takatāpui with identity and connections to their cultural ancestry (2,3). The history of Māori state that the stories of takatāpui identities and relationships are told through waiata (songs), whaktauikī (proverbs), and pūrākau (stories) (Oranga Tamariki, 2023). These findings were consistent with indigenous people from other countries such as Australia and Canada. In Australia, a study investigating the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal rainbow youth discussed how support services should be culturally centred to promote and prioritise their overall wellbeing as indigenous people (19). And in Canada, two-spirit AI/AN people emphasised the importance of reawakening their connection to their culture and how services should be supporting this process. (20) From the perspective of AI/AN people, their culture links to the spirituality of their land as both a place and space for them to freely be themselves and express their identity. Hence why it is important for them to be grounded and to reconnect to their culture (20).

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