

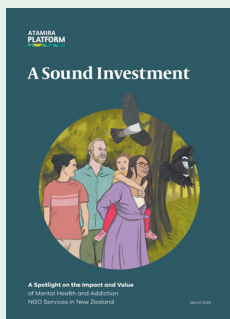
# A Sound Investment

## *Addendum | Practice Examples*



**A Spotlight on the Impact and Value**  
of Mental Health and Addiction  
NGO Services in New Zealand

March 2025



This addendum serves as an extension to the main report titled **A Sound Investment: A Spotlight on the Impact and Value of Mental Health and Addiction NGO Services in New Zealand** (Platform Trust, 2025).

It provides additional information about each of the practice examples that are included in the main report with the aim of making information about mental health and addiction NGO services more accessible to a wide audience.

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# 1. ADL

[www.adlnz.org.nz](http://www.adlnz.org.nz)

**ADL has been delivering mental health and addiction services for rangatahi in urban and rural communities across the lower South Island for over 30 years.**

The service provides a range of evidence-based therapies that incorporate Te Whare Tapa Whā principles and cultural and experiential practices. It is targeted at rangatahi aged 13–22 (and their whānau) who are experiencing complex issues ranging from mental health and/or substance use and criminal offending.

One of its standout programmes, Adventure Development Counselling (ADC), includes innovative approaches such as The Journey – a multi-day outdoor group therapy experience. In 2024, approximately 40% of The Journey participants identified as Māori. This cohort in particular benefited from the programme’s integration of Māori cultural practices, community connection and experiential learning.

Over 2023/24, ADL achieved on average a 7-point reduction in psychological distress among participants as measured by the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10).

Participant feedback highlights the programme’s impact.

**“The Journey helped me stay drug-free while doing awesome activities like mountain biking and sea kayaking. ADL gave me hope when I didn’t have any and helped me achieve my goals.”**

ADL’s services blend therapy, personal growth and outdoor challenges to foster resilience and positive change in rangatahi. By supporting rangatahi to push their boundaries in safe, collaborative settings, ADL supports them and their whānau to achieve meaningful, lasting outcomes.



## 2. Arataki Peer Support

### Empowering recovery in Northland

[www.aratakimin.co.nz/services/peer-support](http://www.aratakimin.co.nz/services/peer-support)

**The Arataki Peer Support Service was launched in Whangārei in April 2023 and has expanded rapidly across Northland to include Kaikohe and Kaipara, with plans to extend the service to Kaitiāia at some time in the future.**

The peer support service emphasises mutuality, validation and non-judgemental engagement as outlined in the national competencies for the peer workforce<sup>1</sup> and in accordance with Arataki's organisational values – aroha, mana, manaakitanga, kotahitanga and whanaungatanga.

Each specialist peer support worker has their own lived experience with mental health and/or addiction challenges. They work within each of Te Whatu Ora's specialist community mental health teams to support tangata whaiora on their recovery journey. Recovery is defined as creating a meaningful self-directed life that includes building resilience, having aspirations and achieving personal goals. The process is client-driven, with tangata whaiora determining their own journey, including the date of discharge from the service.

The programme's success is evident in high engagement rates and positive outcomes as measured by exit interviews and the number of successful transitions from mental health support services.

A participant shared:

"My Peer Support Specialist's openness and understanding gave me the courage to face my challenges. I've come to believe in my own ability to heal and thrive."

Arataki Peer Support Service exemplifies the transformative power of peer-led support in tangata whaiora's journey towards wellness.



<sup>1</sup> Te Pou. (2021). *Competencies for the mental health and addiction consumer, peer support and lived experience workforce*. Auckland: Te Pou.

### 3. Artsenta

## Creative wellbeing for mental health recovery

[www.artsenta.org](http://www.artsenta.org)

**Artsenta, operated by the Creative Arts Trust, is a Dunedin-based creative hub dedicated to supporting tangata whaiora who are experiencing mental health and addiction challenges. This service fosters a safe, nurturing environment where individuals can engage in creative activities as part of their recovery journey.**

Artsenta was established in 1986 and primarily serves adults aged 17 and older, with 60% female attendees and a demographic makeup of 75% Pākehā and 13% Māori.

In addition to its Dunedin location, Artsenta delivers creative wellbeing programmes to 300 people located in seven towns in the Otago region, with the majority being in Dunedin. A mobile initiative has broadened access to people who live in rural areas in north, south and central Otago.

Artsenta's innovative pairing of art facilitators and peer support workers ensures attendees receive both technical guidance and mental health support, creating a holistic recovery experience.

User feedback highlights the transformative role of creativity in fostering community connections, building self-esteem and supporting mental health recovery.

One participant shared:

"Artsenta gave me a place where I felt accepted and inspired. Creating art helped me process my feelings and connect with others who understood my journey. It has been life changing."

Artsenta exemplifies the power of creativity and connection in mental health care, providing a vital space for personal healing and recovery.





## 4. Asian Family Services

### Tackling Gambling Harm in Asian Communities

[www.asianfamilyservices.nz](http://www.asianfamilyservices.nz)

**Asian Family Services (AFS) is a leading provider of culturally tailored mental health and social services for Asian communities in New Zealand. It delivers a range of innovative programmes to prevent and minimise gambling harm, informed by research, lived experiences and community engagement. One of the programmes is designed to address gambling harm and aid rehabilitation for Asian inmates who are in Wiri and Mount Eden prisons.**

This service is a collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Serco. AFS offers targeted programmes that equip inmates with the skills and knowledge to address gambling-related issues. This includes access to training courses specifically designed for the prison context, ensuring that participants receive culturally and linguistically appropriate support.

In its decade-long prison support programme, AFS has positively impacted countless lives through psychoeducation and individual support.

Participants report improved awareness, reduced stigma and greater accessibility to support services. A lived experience-centred approach ensures programmes address real challenges, fostering early intervention and recovery.

One participant noted:

"AFS gave me the tools to recognise my gambling harm and understand its impact on my mental health. Their culturally sensitive approach made me feel understood and supported."

Through research, collaboration and culturally specific interventions, AFS is breaking down barriers and building pathways to recovery for Asian communities affected by gambling harm.



## 5. DISC Trust and Odyssey Northern

### A peer-led mobile hepatitis C screening and treatment service in Te Tai Tokerau

**DISC Trust and Odyssey Northern collaborate to deliver a peer-led, mobile hepatitis C screening and treatment service in Te Tai Tokerau Northland. The service has been operating since 2022 and has screened over 1,000 individuals, over 85% of whom are Māori.**

The initiative addresses populations at higher risk for hepatitis C, including individuals with tattoos, body piercings and histories of incarceration and/or intravenous drug use. Many of these people are often discriminated against and have poorer physical health and social outcomes.

Key partnerships include a wide range of kaupapa Māori services, including Whakaoranga Whānau Recovery Hub based in Kaikohe (which provided peer navigators for 18 months), health promotions agencies, social services and Te Whatu Ora Northern's hepatitis C nurse based in Tāmaki Makaurau.

The programme organises screening events and also works alongside Northland Probation Services, reaching community members under supervision. Beyond screening, peer navigators connect participants to treatments and provide referrals for other health and social challenges identified during engagements.

This collaborative service model highlights inclusivity, cultural responsiveness and a holistic approach to health. The service reports monthly to Te Whatu Ora about the number of individuals screened, people who are antibody positive, those who have a positive viral load, and the completion rates for treatment.

Of those with a positive viral load, 50% were treated by the programme, and 50% by other services. One participant shared their gratitude, emphasising the programme's impact:

**"The team treated me with respect and helped me see hope beyond my diagnosis. They didn't just help me with hepatitis C – they gave me tools for a healthier future."**

The DISC Trust and Odyssey Northern partnership exemplifies innovation in MH&A service delivery for under-served populations, creating pathways to improved health and wellbeing.





## 6. EaseUp – Ka Puta Ka Ora Emerge Aotearoa

[www.easeup.org.nz](http://www.easeup.org.nz)

**EaseUp began in 2019 as a self-funded pilot in Tāmaki Makaurau to address a critical gap in youth services. It subsequently received funding from 2023 onwards to expand services into the Waitematā and South Waikato region.**

It is a free, mobile, community-based service supporting youth aged 12–24 from diverse backgrounds who are experiencing mental health challenges and/or substance use problems. The service has been co-designed with rangatahi, whānau, iwi and community stakeholders and offers accessible, culturally relevant support in locations that work best for rangatahi – at home, in schools or in the community. There are no waiting lists, and referrals can come directly from individuals, whānau or community organisations or through professionals such as GPs or school counsellors.

EaseUp has also been a platform for innovative pilot programmes that have been developed to address emerging needs amongst young people:

- The EaseUp and oVRcome Pilot is a virtual reality therapy with peer support guidance to support rangatahi with vaping concerns at school.
- The Intermediate School Wellbeing Clinic Pilot supports young learners who otherwise lack access to school guidance counsellors. Students receive support from a mental health clinician and a peer support worker.
- The Homeless Rangatahi Pilot addresses the challenges faced by homeless youth.

In 2024, the EaseUp service supported 1,919 rangatahi across Tāmaki Makaurau, Waitematā and South Waikato, with an average engagement of 31–71 days depending on individual needs.

Hua Oranga outcomes data shows that 80.7% of rangatahi have experienced improvements in their mental and physical health, spiritual wellbeing and whānau relationships. The initial pilot evaluation also found significant positive impacts for rangatahi and their whānau, including reduced substance use, increased educational engagement and enhanced life skills. Whānau also noted the positive impact, with one parent saying:

**“They saved us as a family. At the end of the day, I think they saved his life.”**

EaseUp continues to adapt, ensuring rangatahi across diverse backgrounds receive timely, strengths-based and culturally safe support to thrive.



## 7. Ember Services

# Individualised support service for people who have high and complex needs – Waikato Hub

[www.ember.org.nz/services](http://www.ember.org.nz/services)

**Ember Services offers individualised support programmes for 30 tangata whaiora who have high and complex MH&A needs, many of whom have exhausted other community support options.**

The service, based in the Waikato, was established in 2014 and was recently reconfigured in 2023/24 to support tangata whaiora who are transitioning from inpatient settings to community living.

It provides them with a flexible, culturally sensitive service that is tailored to their individual needs. There are no exclusion criteria. This change in approach has led to an increase of approximately 25% of service availability.

The approach includes options for people to live independently in their own homes. Staff travel across Hamilton and rurally to Te Awamutu and Whitiara to enable tangata whaiora to live in the community of their choice and to be close to family/whānau.

The positive impact of the service on people's lives includes improved wellbeing, decreased number of incidents, reduced substance use, improved financial stability and enhanced community integration. All tangata whaiora have been supported to apply for and obtain an accommodation allowance and to manage their own budgets, thereby reinforcing their sense of agency and feeling less stressed financially.

A success story from Ember involves Horace, a 44-year-old Māori male with schizophrenia and a history of substance abuse. With Ember's support, Horace significantly reduced his alcohol use, maintained sobriety from meth, gained employment and reconnected with his family. Now living independently in a Kāinga Ora home, Horace has remained well, requiring no hospitalisations, and continues to engage in cultural and social activities. Horace made the following comment when reflecting on his progress:

**"I've done some major growing up."**

Ember's approach, offering a culturally responsive and personalised service, enables tangata whaiora to rebuild their lives and achieve independence, thereby fostering their long-term recovery.



## 8. Hāpai Ngā Rangatahi

### Alternative pathways for rangatahi Māori mental health support – Te Paepae Ārahi

[www.tepaepae.co.nz](http://www.tepaepae.co.nz)

**Hāpai Ngā Rangatahi is a pioneering initiative launched in 2024 by Te Aka Whai Ora and Te Paepae Ārahi to address specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) waitlists for rangatahi Māori and their whānau.**

The service has received 56 referrals since it was established on 1 July 2024. The demographic profile is as follows:

- 37 Female and 18 male
- 60% are of Māori ethnicity, 25% NZ or other European, 10% are Asian and 5% are Pacifica
- Ages range from 6 to 18 years old.

The services provide culturally responsive wrap-around support for rangatahi Māori and their whānau to help transition them from the waitlists (where appropriate) into alternative culturally responsive pathways that meet their unique needs.

This model seeks to provide a comprehensive yet integrated array of community support and clinical services that work together to maximise the strengths of rangatahi Māori, their whānau and other natural supports.

By creating individualised support plans and linking rangatahi with community-based supports, the service is improving the lives of rangatahi Māori and their whānau as well as alleviating systemic pressure on the CAMHS waitlists. Tangible results include increased access to ao Māori models of care and strengthened pathways for early intervention, mental health treatment and support.

The long-term goal of Hāpai Ngā Rangatahi is to foster sustainable oranga outcomes of rangatahi Māori and their whānau, potentially reducing the need to access specialist acute mental health care. Early feedback highlights the programme's impact:

*"Hāpai Ngā Rangatahi offered us a sense of hope and a way forward. For the first time, we felt seen and supported in a way that respected our culture and strengthened our whānau bonds."*

Hāpai Ngā Rangatahi represents a critical step towards equity in child and youth mental health services, delivering culturally responsive care that recognises the strengths of rangatahi Māori, whānau and their communities.



## 9. He Ara Whakamana Tāngata

### Culturally grounded support – Auckland City Mission

[www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz](http://www.aucklandcitymission.org.nz)

**He Ara Whakamana Tāngata, a service under Te Tāpui Atawhai | Auckland City Mission, provides culturally centred support for tenants in high-density permanent housing, including HomeGround (80 apartments) and Te Ao Mārama (60 apartments).**

Primarily supporting Māori with a history of homelessness, mental health and addiction challenges, the service focuses on creating a cohesive and supportive living environment for residents.

The team comprises wairua and rongoā practitioners, AOD peer support workers and a restorative process facilitator and utilises a kaupapa Māori trauma-informed framework. The service emphasises manaakitanga and whanaungatanga when addressing residents' cultural, spiritual and social needs.

Preliminary qualitative feedback suggests that the programme enhances community cohesion, improves spiritual wellbeing and fosters unity among tenants. Evaluations are under way that aim to capture the service's transformative effects on residents' lives, focusing on behavioural changes and the strengthening of community bonds.

Both residents and staff have praised the programme's impact, with one resident noting:

"When I walked in, only 1% of me wanted to live. When I walk out, I am determined to use that 1% to fight with everything inside me, to fight for myself."

By embedding Māori values into its practices, He Ara Whakamana Tāngata is redefining support systems for vulnerable populations, helping tenants to achieve stability and thrive within their communities.





## 10. He Kākano Ora

### Perinatal mental health support – WALSH Trust

[www.walsh.org.nz](http://www.walsh.org.nz)

**He Kākano Ora, operated by WALSH Trust, provides holistic perinatal mental health services to birthing parents from the second trimester of pregnancy through to their baby's first year. Services include residential respite care, community and home-based support and parenting education, ensuring tailored, culturally responsive care for each parent and their family.**

In addition to mental health challenges, many of the parents using the service draw on their inner strength in the face of socio-economic challenges, navigating social support networks and cultural dynamics. The service builds on these strengths by offering holistic, accessible and culturally responsive care to empower them further.

Since its launch in 2015, He Kākano Ora has supported 886 birthing parents and their babies, offering over 6,400 overnight stays and 54,000 hours of day stays. An additional 1,038 families received over 25,000 hours of community-based support. Services prioritise diverse communities in Auckland Central and Waitematā.

Quantitative tools such as exit surveys and parental wellbeing assessments and attachment with their infants demonstrate enhanced parental confidence, stronger parent-infant relationships and improved mental health.

Qualitative data, including client interviews, also highlights the programme's profound positive impact:

"Thank you for your kindness, care and support. The impact you've had on our family will last a lifetime."

Through its compassionate, person-centred approach, He Kākano Ora has earned accolades, including Mental Health Service and Programme Awards in 2016 and 2022, exemplifying excellence in perinatal mental health care.



# 11. Higher Ground Papa Taumata Drug Rehabilitation Trust

[www.higherground.org.nz](http://www.higherground.org.nz)

**Higher Ground Papa Taumata is an addiction recovery service that was established in Auckland in 1984. It serves individuals aged 18–65+ and is inclusive of all genders and members of the rainbow community. Māori make up a significant proportion, with others from Pākehā, Pacific, Asian and diverse ethnic backgrounds. Many tangata whaiora face co-existing problems, severe trauma, disconnection from culture and a history of incarceration.**

Higher Ground Papa Taumata provides two types of structured live-in addiction recovery programmes. The adult programme is an 18-week therapeutic residential programme designed for individuals aged 18 and older. Te Whare Taonga is a 24-week initiative supporting pregnant wāhine and māmā with pēpi under three years old, emphasising parenting and recovery.

Both programmes integrate the therapeutic community model, 12-step principles and Te Whare Tapa Whā wellbeing dimensions, blending evidence-based therapies and tikanga Māori to address holistic healing and cultural connection. Post-treatment support is robust, including supported living, counselling, mentorship and group therapy.

Higher Ground offers life-changing outcomes for tāngata whaiora, including reconnection with whānau, reduced state dependency and

community reintegration. The 2012–2018 outcome review<sup>2</sup> highlights significant progress among tāngata whaiora, particularly for those who remained in the programme longer and whose primary substance of concern was methamphetamine.

One success story details a mother in Te Whare Taonga who regained custody of her children post-graduation. She credited the programme for fostering her recovery, enhancing her parenting skills and helping restore her family.

Higher Ground is dedicated to rigorous reporting and enhancing its programmes for tāngata whaiora. It is currently preparing a cost-benefit analysis of its work for the 2019–2024 period. Higher Ground exemplifies a recovery service dedicated to transformative healing, cultural alignment and long-term success.



Whānau reconnection  
© Rebekah Robinson

<sup>2</sup> King, J., Stevenson, B., Moss, M., & Garden, E. (2019). *Review of outcomes for clients of Higher Ground 2012–2018*. Auckland: Kinnect Group.



## 12. Kia Mataara

### Peer workforce development programme – Pathways and Real

[www.pathways.co.nz/real](http://www.pathways.co.nz/real)

**The Kia Mataara training programme was developed by Pathways in 2022 to validate and support the experiential knowledge of its lived and living experience peer workforce. This programme reflects Pathways' commitment to embed peer-influenced or peer-led approaches across all of its mental health and addiction services, including its youth-focused Real services.**

Kia Mataara has trained over 100 peer workers, eight of whom now hold leadership roles, with others contributing in ao Māori positions and youth work models. This training ensures peers are equipped to provide effective, peer-based support to tangata whaiora across Pathways' services.

The programme has been designed to incorporate the national competencies for the mental health and addiction peer workforce<sup>3</sup> and is uniquely tailored to Aotearoa's cultural context. A review in 2023 confirmed that graduates successfully applied peer competencies and values in their workplace, reflecting a transformative impact on practice.

An evaluation by Education Evaluation Ltd in 2024 highlighted the programme's effectiveness in integrating and embedding peer competencies within workplace practices, fostering a robust peer support culture.

Graduates of the programme have shared:

"Kia Mataara not only enhanced our professional skills but deepened our understanding of the transformative power of lived experience. It has empowered us to bring authentic care and connection to our roles."

Kia Mataara exemplifies Pathways' dedication to the integration of peer support roles across all of the services provided by the organisation, thereby enriching the professional growth of the peer workforce and enhancing the recovery journeys of tangata whaiora.



<sup>3</sup> Te Pou. (2021). Competencies for the mental health and addiction consumer, peer support and lived experience workforce. Auckland: Te Pou.

### 13. Nelson Marlborough Te Taihu Youth Wellbeing Service

The Nelson Marlborough youth wellbeing service delivers early intervention and support to youth aged 12–24 (and their whānau) who are experiencing mild to moderate mental distress. It serves over 17,000 youth within the Nelson Marlborough health district with a focus on Māori, Pacific peoples and under-served populations.

The service was co-designed with input from rangatahi, whānau and community organisations to resemble kaupapa Māori services provided elsewhere in New Zealand. It is jointly delivered by Nelson Bays Primary Health, Kimi Hauora Wairau, Health Action Trust and Te Whare Mahana.

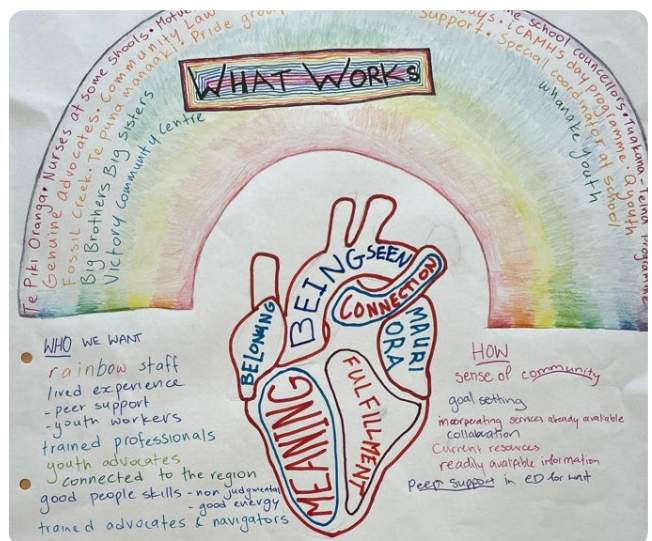
The service consists of three mobile wellbeing teams that operate across the Nelson Marlborough health district. The teams are comprised of clinical registered health workers and youth lived-experience support workers. The mobile teams are connected to iwi, hapū, marae and whānau, other health services, education and employment services, social services and community youth networks across Te Taihū | Top of the South).

The integration of services allows for early intervention and streamlined referrals, ensuring that youth receive timely and effective support.

As of October 2024, the service was seeing 50–80 young people a month and running approximately 20 sessions involving whānau.

"Peer support has been a massive help to me with sorting out personal issues I've been having. I feel comfortable and safe talking to them."

This co-designed model highlights the importance of culturally grounded, accessible mental health services, fostering better outcomes for youth in the Nelson Marlborough region.



## 14. Ngā Kete Aronui

### Kaupapa Māori Mental Health Service – Te Waka Whaiora Trust

[www.tww.org.nz/nga-kete-aronui](http://www.tww.org.nz/nga-kete-aronui)

**Ngā Kete Aronui is a kaupapa Māori primary mental health service that was established in 2022. It is provided by Te Waka Whaiora Trust in collaboration with four other kaupapa Māori providers – Ora Toa PHO, Te Paepae Arahi Trust, Maraeroa Marae Health Clinic and Te Hauora Runanga o Wairarapa.**

Ngā Kete Aronui service – the baskets of life’s knowledge – delivers holistic mental health and addiction support services across greater Wellington, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa to people who are experiencing mild to moderate mental distress and who are not eligible for secondary MH&A services.

Ngā Kete Aronui works with diverse populations, particularly Māori and vulnerable groups, and provides accessible, free and flexible care. The service spans urban and rural areas, connecting communities to culturally grounded supports.

Ngā Kete Aronui offers holistic support, including peer support, therapy, self-management tools and access to social services. By addressing social determinants such as housing, education and discrimination, it fosters people’s resilience and wellbeing. Specific programmes and initiatives are developed and delivered for specific groups, including tāne, wāhine, rangatahi, kaumātua, pēpē and takatāpui.

The overall service delivery model – Te Whakawhiti te Rā – developed by Te Ringa Whakawhiti collaborative is a whānau-centred model of care that encompasses a holistic approach to wellbeing, with the focus on the whānau as a whole, to build on whānau strengths.

The service provides easy access to a range of social connections with relevant community and government resources, cultural, social and health support networks, primary care and secondary services as and when they are needed.

The service uses a number of outcome tools including Hua Oranga to measure progress, linking personalised care plans to whānau priority outcomes and Te Whare Tapa Whā pillars. A participant shared:

**“Ngā Kete Aronui gave me the tools to reconnect with my whānau and manage my mental health in a way that felt respectful of my culture. The support was life changing.”**

Ngā Kete Aronui exemplifies kaupapa Māori care, providing early intervention services for tangata motuhake and their whānau, reducing barriers to care and improving community wellbeing. The collaborative approach ensures culturally aligned, strengths-based support that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of those it serves.



# 15. Pathways

## Cognitive health approaches for mental wellness

[www.pathways.co.nz](http://www.pathways.co.nz)

**Pathways serves individuals living with severe mental illness and addiction challenges and recognises the importance of cognitive health in enabling full and connected lives.**

Pathways has integrated innovative cognitive health approaches to enhance support for tangata whaiora facing challenges with attention, memory and executive functioning. These cognitive health approaches are grounded in evidence-based practices. Understanding and complementing these skills are vital for promoting independence and wellbeing.

In 2024, Pathways piloted cognitive health approaches in four housing and recovery services. Kaimahi trained in cognitive health approaches participated in learning how these approaches work best for tangata whaiora. Findings showed that tailored strategies enhanced goal attainment and independence in daily living activities and equipped staff to integrate cognitive health practices into everyday care, broadening the impact of this approach. Building on the success of this pilot, Pathways plans to roll out a refined living skills group programme in 2025.

A tangata whaiora shared:

“The support I received helped me organise my thoughts and daily tasks. It made a huge difference in how I manage my life and stay connected with what matters to me.”

Pathways’ focus on cognitive health exemplifies its commitment to holistic, person-centred care, helping individuals achieve greater independence and a more fulfilling life.





## 16. Piri Pono

### Peer-led acute mental health service – Ember Services

[www.ember.org.nz/services/peer-led-services/#piri-pono](http://www.ember.org.nz/services/peer-led-services/#piri-pono)

**Piri Pono is one of only three peer-led acute alternative mental health services operating in New Zealand. It was established by Ember Services in 2013 and is located in Rodney, Auckland.**

This innovative service provides people who are in extreme mental distress a community-based alternative to an acute hospital admission. It offers them a homelike environment that supports a personalised holistic approach to recovery and wellbeing.

Piri Pono serves tangata whaiora within the Waitematā area, offering short-term stays of up to 10 days. It provides a supportive environment staffed by peer support specialists and registered nurses, catering to individuals who have been assessed by Waitematā Adult Mental Health Services.

The service uses Hua Oranga, a holistic outcomes tool to assess tangata whaiora progress. Feedback consistently highlights the programme's positive impact on recovery, with 161 guests reporting a high level of satisfaction with the service.

Peer support specialists – 25% of whom have lived experience with the service – play a pivotal role in fostering trust and connection, enabling meaningful engagement and recovery.

A past guest shared:

**"The peer-led approach made all the difference. Knowing someone who's walked a similar path gave me hope and the confidence to take steps toward wellness. Piri Pono truly felt like a safe space to heal."**

Piri Pono exemplifies the transformative power of peer-led services in mental health care, emphasising the important role that lived experience plays in supporting people's recovery.



## 17. Rātā Koura Ora

### The Bridge programme – Salvation Army

[bridge.salvationarmy.org.nz](https://bridge.salvationarmy.org.nz)

**The Bridge programme, operated by The Salvation Army, provides a range of harm minimisation services to support individuals and families affected by alcohol and drug addiction. The programme is offered in residential and community-based services at 25 centres across New Zealand.**

An innovative initiative within The Bridge is Rātā Koura Ora, a Māori-centred peer support model that weaves together mātauranga Māori and the Salvation Army's core values. Rātā Koura Ora, named after the life-giving crown of the rātā tree, embodies the essence of tautoko (support), whakawhanaungatanga (connection) and whakamana (empowerment). This innovative model, developed in partnership with Dr Andre McLachlan, is deeply rooted in te ao Māori, drawing inspiration from the six pathways of Whiti Te Rā – a Māori framework of hauora (wellbeing).

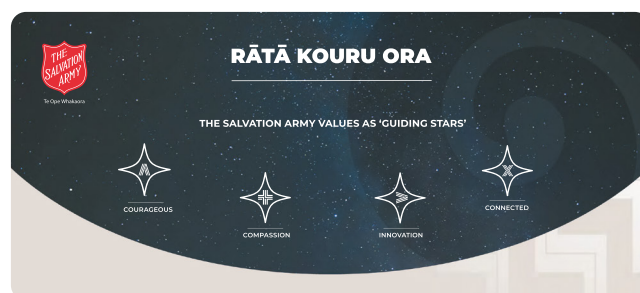
In 2023/24, the programme assisted 4,512 individuals, provided 40,505 bed nights and achieved a 70% graduation rate for participants who completed their treatment plans.

Participants report transformative changes, including increased self-worth, reconnection with whānau and healthier lifestyle choices.

Rawiri, a former participant, shares:

“At The Bridge, I experienced deep therapy that motivated me to change. The connection with supportive people helped me stay on track. Now, my life is filled with hope, meaning and a stronger relationship with my whānau. I encourage anyone battling addiction to take the first step and join The Bridge – it’s a path to transformation.”

Through the Rātā Koura Ora programme, The Bridge is opening doors to a world where the Māori-centred peer support model acts a powerful catalyst for transformational change as well as providing people with a valuable source of support.





# 18. Real Waikato

## Youth justice support with a kaupapa Māori lens

[www.pathways.co.nz/real](http://www.pathways.co.nz/real)

**Real Waikato is a youth-focused service that has been operating in Kirikiriroa since 2016 to support taiohi navigating the youth justice system. As part of Pathways Health, Real Waikato offers the Supported Bail programme, a community-based alternative to custodial remand. Grounded in kaupapa Māori principles, the service emphasises whānau involvement, cultural respect and holistic wellbeing.**

Real Waikato serves predominantly Māori and Polynesian males aged 15–19, many of whom face mental health and addiction challenges. Many of these young people also have strong connections to negative social groups, including gangs.

Each year, approximately 40 taiohi are supported, reflecting the trust of referring agencies like Oranga Tamariki and New Zealand Police.

The Supported Bail programme provides six weeks of intensive, community-based support, extendable by another six weeks if required. The service boasts steady referral rates and high engagement levels. Its success lies in fostering positive behaviour, compliance with bail conditions and strengthened whānau dynamics.

David's story exemplifies the service's impact:

David's transformation from a troubled youth who caused harm in Huntly to a hopeful individual with a positive outlook on life is a powerful testament to his resilience and the unwavering support he received from Tainui (Kaimahi) at Real Waikato.

Real Waikato stands out for its culturally grounded, youth-centric approach, helping taiohi reconnect with their whānau and communities while navigating their way towards positive, hope-filled futures.



# 19. Rural Support Trust

## Navigating challenges in rural wellbeing

[www.rural-support.org.nz](http://www.rural-support.org.nz)

**The Rural Support Trust started in the 1980s and became a nationwide service in the early 2000s. It offers confidential, wrap-around mental health and wellbeing support for primary producers facing personal, financial, business or health stressors. Designed for farmers, growers and rural communities nationwide, the service addresses challenges that are unique to rural life such as isolation and limited access to specialist clinical services and related resources.**

Support is available to all who earn their primary income from the land, including landowners, employees, and leaseholders. Rural professionals and communities are also engaged through connection and wellbeing events.

The Trust's facilitators are rural people with experience and knowledge of the challenges that rural people face. The Trust also collaborates with key partners to deliver community connection and wellbeing events and to respond to adverse events impacting rural communities.

Case tracking shows that people's needs are being met. Attendance at community events also reflects strong engagement as well as the service's growing reach into New Zealand's rural heartland.

A farmer shared:

"Rural Support Trust understood my struggles in a way no one else could. They guided me through some of the toughest times, connecting me to the help I didn't know was out there."

The Rural Support Trust is a vital part of the support network for rural communities, helping individuals navigate challenges and build resilience in tough times.



## 20. Speed Freaks

### Running towards recovery

[speedfreaks.org.nz](https://speedfreaks.org.nz)

**Speed Freaks Charitable Trust supports individuals recovering from addiction and mental distress through running and walking programmes. Operating in Ōtautahi and Tāmaki Makaurau with satellite services in Taranaki and Whangārei, Speed Freaks fosters health, wellbeing and social connection for anyone managing addiction, sobriety or mental health challenges.**

Attendance has increased by 248% since the programme's inception in 2021.

Participants range from 12–65+, representing diverse ethnicities and genders. Pilot programmes have responded to the attendance of rangatahi with a new pilot planned for the Tāmaki Makaurau LGBTQI+ community.

Speed Freaks works within the CHIME framework<sup>4</sup> to build recovery capital, promote personal agency and enhance community connection. Participants work with volunteer coaches to set goals, improve fitness and build social skills. The programme has been able to offer level 4 health and wellbeing placements for graduates and is proud to have offered two part-time employment positions, fostering leadership and sustained recovery.

Research conducted by Massey University in 2022 highlighted significant benefits of the service, including increased fitness, commitment to recovery and community integration.

Feedback indicates that participants gain confidence, maintain sobriety and feel more connected to their communities. Francis, a programme graduate and peer support worker, shared:

**"Speed Freaks gave me purpose and a support network. Running became a metaphor for my recovery – taking it one step at a time, with people cheering me on."**

Through a unique blend of physical activity and peer support, Speed Freaks promotes health and wellbeing, proving that recovery is a journey best taken together.



<sup>4</sup> Recovery College. (2023). *CHIME framework*. [www.therecoveryplace.co.uk/chime-framework](https://www.therecoveryplace.co.uk/chime-framework)

## 21. Taupae Wheako

### Peer support workforce development – Odyssey House Trust

[www.odyssey.org.nz/taupaewheako](http://www.odyssey.org.nz/taupaewheako)

**Taupae Wheako is a part of Odyssey House Trust that is focused on building the capability of the lived experience and peer support workforce. Located in Tāmaki Makaurau, the service provides training nationally and offers foundational training (Peer Support 101), workforce development and professional supervision to individuals with lived experience of mental health and addiction challenges.**

It extends this training to include other teams and organisations to help enhance their knowledge and understanding of lived experience via role clarity training and social models of recovery. Peer Support 101 is tailored for those starting their careers in peer support roles or other related positions where lived experience is an asset.

The service is rooted in supporting people on their recovery journeys by equipping them with the skills and confidence to contribute professionally to the mental health and addiction sector. Taupae Wheako serves as a bridge for participants, helping them transition from being a recipient of MH&A services to impactful careers where they can leverage their unique insights.

The programme primarily caters to individuals with lived experience in MH&A challenges who aspire to join either the peer support workforce or other lived experience-led roles.

Since 2022, this service has delivered 29 Peer Support 101 (NZQA micro-credentialled training) to over 450 people across addictions, mental health, kaupapa Māori and refugee services.

Evaluations of the training are consistently rating participant satisfaction as high or very high:

“I see the benefits of peer support in a whole different light now. The benefits of being heard, the benefits of having one’s mana restored in such a simple yet effective manner by way of listening and reflective and active listening. Sharing my own journey is so empowering.”

Taupae Wheako exemplifies Odyssey’s commitment to growing and developing the lived experience workforce as a vital part of the MH&A sector.





## 22. Te Whare Mahana

### New Zealand's residential dialectical behaviour therapy service

[www.twm.org.nz](http://www.twm.org.nz)

**Te Whare Mahana, located in Golden Bay, offers New Zealand's only national residential dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) programme. This renowned service supports individuals aged 18 years and older who frequently experience high levels of emotional distress that is often linked to complex disorders such as borderline personality disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.**

This is the only intensive trauma treatment centre in New Zealand. The programme specialises in addressing people's ineffective behaviours when trying to cope with intense emotions and disrupted relationships. It gives people a unique opportunity to process their traumatic memories intensively using a combination of DBT and cutting-edge trauma-focused therapies, including prolonged exposure and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing.

Participants report significant improvements, as measured by tools like the Multidimensional Inventory of Dissociation – 60-item version (MID-60), Borderline Symptom List (BSL-23), International Trauma Questionnaire (ITQ), Depression Anxiety Stress Scales – Short Form (DASS-21) and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale – 16 item version (DERS-16).

Fleur, a former participant, shares her transformative journey:

"Before Te Whare Mahana, my behaviour was described as 'incompatible with life'. I was given the chance to join this programme in 2016, and it changed everything. Twelve months later, my friends still tell me I'm a new person. I was more dead than alive before, and now I'm truly living."

Te Whare Mahana's commitment to intensive trauma-focused care makes it a lifeline for people who have not experienced success in any other mental health service. Te Whare Mahana provides them with the skills and the support that they need to reclaim their life.



## 23. Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua

### Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court – Odyssey House Trust

[www.odyssey.org.nz/our-services/pakeke/te-whare-whakapiki-wairua](http://www.odyssey.org.nz/our-services/pakeke/te-whare-whakapiki-wairua)

**Odyssey provides the coordination of treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration services for Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua, which offers an innovative alternative to incarceration for individuals whose offending has been influenced by unresolved problems with alcohol and other drugs. This service was established in 2012 and is provided in Auckland and Waitakere. It supports individuals who, without intervention, would otherwise serve a prison sentence and potentially miss out on opportunities to engage in AOD treatment and support.**

The programme prioritises a holistic approach, with a team of specialists providing a range of treatment, cultural, whānau, employment, housing and peer support options.

The aims of this abstinence-based initiative are to reduce reoffending and imprisonment, reduce harmful drug and alcohol use and positively impact on health and wellbeing. Key outcomes are monitored through graduation rates, programme delivery data and qualitative feedback. A quantitative outcomes evaluation of the service in 2019<sup>5</sup> found that graduates had substantially better outcomes relating to reoffending than those people released from prison who were matched to graduates.

In summary, graduates:

- had a 28 percentage point lower reoffending rate
- had a 27 percentage point lower imprisonment rate
- committed 71% fewer new offences per 100 offenders than matched offenders over a three-year follow-up period.

Many graduates reported reduced recidivism and sustained recovery, highlighting the programme's success in breaking the cycle of addiction and offending.

**"The programme gave me a chance to rebuild my life, to face my addiction and to reconnect with my whānau. Without it, I wouldn't have been able to see a future for myself beyond the prison system."**

Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua exemplifies Odyssey House's commitment to addressing addiction in a holistic way, supporting individuals in their recovery while enhancing community safety and wellbeing. This service is a beacon of hope for those seeking a second chance and a new path in life.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice | Tāhū o te Ture. (2019). *Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court quantitative outcomes evaluation 2018–2019: Reducing reoffending, imprisonment, and benefit dependency. Final report*. Wellington: Ministry of Justice.



## 24. Vaka Tautua

### Pacific-led mental health and wellbeing services

[www.vakatautua.co.nz](http://www.vakatautua.co.nz)

**Vaka Tautua is a national Pacific-led organisation that was established in 2007. It provides comprehensive mental health, disability and social services in Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury. Guided by the Pacific value of nofo 'a kainga (families caring for families), the organisation focuses on holistic, culturally tailored support to address mental health challenges and promote wellbeing within Pacific communities.**

Vaka Tautua supports Pacific individuals and families, addressing mental health conditions, recovery from addiction, physical health needs, housing and financial challenges. In 2023/24, the organisation assisted 2,423 individuals, with services primarily accessed through community outreach and self-referrals. Outreach is an essential component of the service (for example, into schools, youth clubs and churches) as there is a lot of unmet need amongst Pacific communities due to poor access to mainstream services.

Through services such as financial literacy programmes, peer support and housing assistance, Vaka Tautua helps clients achieve meaningful goals such as securing employment, enrolling in training programmes, increasing housing tenure, reducing debt and reconnecting with their families. Feedback highlights the value placed on the programme's culturally competent and empathetic approach, fostering trusted relationships and recovery.

One participant noted:

"The presenters spoke from the heart, sharing personal stories that were raw and honest. It was this openness that resonated deeply with us, emphasising the value of the Pacific worldview."

Vaka Tautua exemplifies culturally anchored holistic care, transforming lives by addressing the unique needs of Pacific peoples from a Pacific worldview.



## 25. Whakaata Tohu Tohu | Mirror Counselling Service – Aroha Ki Te Tamariki Trust

[www.mirror.services.org.nz](http://www.mirror.services.org.nz)

**Established in 1991, Mirror Services is a tamaiti (child), rangatahi (youth) and whānau-centred service delivering specialised mental health and addiction interventions & support for mokopuna aged 0–25 years, who reside in Otago and Southland.**

Providing a suite of services, including an AOD/ CEP Youth Exemplar Service, Counselling Service and an AOD Youth Day Programme, Mirror has developed treatment and support services by demonstrating that they are more effective when they are part of the community. Taking an integrated cultural, clinical and whānau approach and using evidence-based models of practice, tangata whai ora have an ‘easy in, easy out, and easy back in’ experience of the service.

Last year, kaimahi worked with 1,399 tangata whai ora, 30% of whom identified as Māori. Key presenting concerns across all services included substance related challenges (100% for our AOD services), parent-child relational issues (46.2%), low mood, sadness, and depression (47.42%), with 54.35% of clients presenting with anxiety and fear. Additionally, trauma associated with family separation was observed in 59.75% of presentations. The average length of time in the service is four months.

Using a Choice and Partnership Approach, a therapeutic pathway is established, which is monitored by multidisciplinary teams. Interventions are well considered offering brief or longer-term clinical case management, counselling, psychiatry, peer support, family therapy, clinical psychology and/or group work. All the mahi is approached through a cultural,

clinical and whānau centric lens, utilising best practice, trauma-informed, person-centred, attachment- based therapies in a respectful, professional and welcoming environment.

Outcome tools, including the WHO Quality of Life NZ (WHOQoL) Bref (adapted for adolescents aged 13–24) and the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (for children under 13 years) have revealed statistically significant positive outcomes in the health, social, physical and environmental domains. These are completed at pre-entry, two months and/or on exit.

Client feedback highlights the service’s transformative impact:

**“Just having someone to keep me honest toward making changes and the encouragement helped me stay motivated.”**

Whakaata Tohu Tohu | Mirror Services exemplifies a compassionate and culturally responsive model, supporting tamaiti and rangatahi and their whānau to overcome challenges and thrive.



## 26. Work Counts

[www.workcounts.co.nz](http://www.workcounts.co.nz)

**Work Counts provides support for organisations to develop and deliver Individual Placement and Support (IPS) programmes within their services. It is one of six IPS employment support centres globally.**

The types of support that Work Counts provides include technical assistance, fidelity self-assessment and fidelity reviews, along with training for commissioners, clinicians, employment consultants and anyone providing employment support for people using mental health and addiction or housing services.

In 2024, there were 103.1 FTE employment consultants integrated with 87 mental health teams across 12 health districts in New Zealand.

The research shows the benefits of IPS employment support for people with mental health or addiction issues when they access employment support together with their mental health or addiction care and treatment. People earn more money, hold onto jobs for longer, gain more qualifications and have more access to mental health supports and services.<sup>6</sup>

By enabling organisations to adopt an evidence-based employment support approach, Work Counts enhances the capacity of MH&A services to utilise employment as a health intervention, supporting people's recovery and strengthening communities.



**"Finding a job helped me gain confidence and feel part of my community again. The support I received was life changing."**

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, M., Cram, F., Gibb, S., Gray, S., McLeod, K., Peterson, D., & Lockett, H. (2024). The impact of individual placement and support on employment, health and social outcomes: Quasi-experimental evidence from Aotearoa New Zealand. *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 137 (1602), 27-54.





