

KOTAHITANGA IN WAIPAREIRA SERVICES

This story was adapted from an interview with a whānau who is currently engaged in Kaiārahi services at Waipareira. In this interview, she talks about her experiences with Waipareira services, and of being a caregiver and guardian to her whānau member's tamariki.

We originate from Ahipara, my ancestors, my whenua. And I'm a pre-school teacher.

It's good to have a support person like a Kaiārahi to help me navigate. Some children have come into my care, so I'm working with another service provider too. It's good having someone from Waipareira just to be a support person for me, to keep me mentally well and help me navigate, be another set of eyes and another pair of ears.

I needed that, not that I like getting help, but this is the first time I've actually allowed a service provider to kind of come inside, you know, your own personal life, and they don't get in your face. They're just there, give you enough support. I think the key thing is that you get along well with that person that you're working alongside. You know, you're forming a relationship, an understanding.

I also just came on board with the Māmā and Pēpi programme, I officially start next week. We've met a couple of times and that's good too. They kind of tell you things that you already know but they're just confirming what you need to do. Such as "have a rest, take time out for yourself when you're busy". I'm a single parent and I'm raising all these children. So, it just gives me a bit of an extra pillar, another support – because it can be quite heavy.

I'd never dealt with Oranga Tamariki [New Zealand Ministry for Children]. Having another set of ears and another set of eyes, someone that's been in a lot of those meetings, that's what that Kaiārahi was, there mainly to support me, guide me, make sure I haven't missed anything and that I'm doing what I need to do. They were helping me to be successful in where I needed to get to help with the children that I've got and making the clear, right decisions because the decisions we make now will have an impact when they get older, when we're dealing with children and whānau.



I've never been through anything like this. So, hence why I offered to take up getting some extra support to help me navigate because there's so many, 'section this and section that...' So, a child becomes a section. It's quite daunting and just the ease of having somebody there. I have my family but having somebody that understands being another communicator. When we get to meetings they always, with respect, check in, 'is it okay?' And they'll give suggestions. So, they've got suggestions that they can bring. For example, other service providers that may be able to help like for drug and alcohol rehab, stuff like that. So, it's like a collective team working with other providers. Not just with me, but it actually has a benefit for everybody.

Having to have two children under Oranga Tamariki and having to navigate and you have two different sets of hui and so, yeah. It can get quite hard. What I like is that the Kaiārahi is not in your face. They give you the space but they know when to come in and when not to. Not being your babysitter. They're just there doing what needs to be done.

For [nephew], he's never had a male except for my dad, in his life, who's passed away. So, the Kaiārahi can fill that void for now, instead of him hanging out with bad eggs. Yeah, so I'm hopeful that that's going to support him. Life's too short, if we tap into these service providers we can give him that opportunity to help him be successful. It may be just helping him to be honest and helping him how to be respectful when people come into the home, everyday life skills, things to help him get through. It's about providing him with the tools. I'll do what I need to do but there's an area I just can't do.

I think [nephew] now has got a buddy. They're at the beginning stages of doing that process because he doesn't have a father in his life and so I'm trying to just have that extra, like a male role model kind of thing. We're trying to find ways to support him. There was a need for him so the Kaiārahi kind of chased that up. And someone's been to the school to see him.

I don't have to repeat myself because that's one thing I don't like doing. I think in my case I've had a good, strong Kaiārahi, because I've seen other people have a Kaiārahi from other service providers and yeah, here the communication gets filtered down, it all depends on your Kaiārahi.

It is about relationships. I think that's like at Waipareira, because you have to have a connection... you've got to be able to connect with people, everything is about connecting. I just think it's worked because we get on, it kind of filters and so I'm reiterating and then the Kaiārahi is communicating. Communication is a big part and a key factor of how information is shared... For me, the communication has been really good from here, through the Kaiārahi and then to the whare.

What I've been doing is taking each step as it comes and dealing, it's like having a big dinner plate and I can't eat it all. So, just chomping away at what is in front of us instead of trying to get it all done, and we've been doing what needs to be done. The support has come in a lot of different fashions.

I'm happy I made the decision to get a Kaiārahi, especially preparing and going to the Family Group Conferences, because you need strong people. You need to have the right people that have experience and understand. You can't kind of walk in there all nilly willy because dealing with that other service provider just does your head in.

I like it because they let you breathe. As we're getting on, I can see where I need help and where I don't, so we'll sit down and talk about things and navigate through that and then we'll check what our main focus is and that's the children, the tamariki and me and the Oranga Tamariki. So, we wait for the next meeting and I'll try and do what I need to do and try and make a plan with the family before we go into the next meeting so we're not sitting there for hours which is really hard.

Some people might look at me like she's really strong and I don't need the help. But actually, I do, it keeps me in check. It keeps me sane and it brings peace to my mind. This is actually the first time in all my life that I've ever used a service provider like this. I like that it just feels more comfortable working with a multi-cultural provider. It's Waipareira and it's Māori, you kind of feel comfortable with your own. It's a Māori provider but it's also open to multi-cultures and diversities and I think I'm more inclined to go that way than to another provider.

I think they just have more understanding of our backgrounds because we're very much alike and take the time to understand the why. You have to understand the why, and history... everything has a history. I have a history to why I'm at the place I am today. These boys have histories. That's what I like Te Whare Tapa Whā and all that. They do all that at Waipareira.

I like that we catch up when we need to catch up and they're always saying "let me know whenever you need any help".

In my honest experience, I didn't want a Kaiārahi at the start – it was my cousin that said, you do. I said to her, I don't think I'm worthy enough. And what I mean by worthy, I was looking at my case and I'm going, there's worse people off than me. She goes, "why do you think that? You do need the help". Just because I'm not either a battered woman or you know, a drug addict or whatever. She goes, "you're looking after children. You're taking on so much responsibility," and so, I came home and went, "oh, she's so right". And she was.

You've got to want it for yourself. I kind of surrendered to the fact, "yes, okay, you can't do this on your own". When you're in it and you're amongst, it's hard to see you know, navigate. You think all these weeds are popping up, it's been a journey.