



**Social impact assessment of
the adventure therapy underpinnings and components
of services delivered by St John of God Waipuna**

Prepared for
St John of God Hauora Trust
by
Sarah Wylie, Social Research and Evaluation
swylie@socialresearch.co.nz

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Executive Summary

Background

St John of God Waipuna, an Ōtautahi-based service of St John of God Hauora Trust, has been delivering adventure therapy continuously through a range of programmes for 25 years. Elements of this approach are woven across the organisation, but most prominently in Waipuna's delivery of Te Whare Hāpai Tangata, its strengths-based reintegration service for young offenders aged 18 – 25 years (delivered since 2013, and with MSD-funded follow-on since 2021) and adventure therapy 10-week programmes for secondary school students, delivered for the past decade. Formal notice, without prior warning, was received in early March 2025 of the cessation of \$639,432 in annual operational funding from Ara Poutama Department of Corrections from 1 July 2025 for youth specialised reintegration support delivered by Waipuna. To Waipuna's knowledge, there is no other specialised youth reintegration service in Canterbury.

The reintegration programme was seen as successful, with internally gathered metrics indicating promising impacts, but apart from university student reviews and small-scope evaluations, it had not been formally reviewed. Likewise, adventure therapy, as delivered by St John of God Waipuna, has been the focus of various external research student projects and study undertaken by Waipuna's own staff, but only at programme-specific level. St John of God Waipuna often struggled to clearly articulate what a service-wide adventure therapy approach means in practice, yet its service delivery is unique because its adventure therapy components sit within the setting of a social service agency, and are not restricted to specific programmes but are instead carried across the organisation. St John of God Waipuna have over a number of years passionately sought to preserve their adventure therapy approach and build on it into the future.

In mid-2024, over 7 months prior to the news regarding the funding cessation from Ara Poutama Department of Corrections, they sought and successfully secured funding from Rātā Foundation to enable commissioning of a Social Impact Assessment (IAIA, 2003). Seeking to evidence the service and its impacts for clients and their whānau, and to explore and articulate their approach, so that other service providers elsewhere in Aotearoa, politicians and decision makers can learn from the Waipuna experience, the focus of the SIA was to be adventure therapy and its application across the organisation and its mahi, and in particular, the reintegration service and schools programme. This research was conducted by Sarah Wylie MA (hons) - psych. Ethics approval was obtained for the research from Aotearoa Research Ethics Committee (AREC25_10).

Purpose and scope

The key purpose of the research was to develop an understanding of what St John of God Waipuna's use of adventure therapy looks like in practice, why this approach has developed, the value and impact of such an approach, and where it could be strengthened in the future. The research was to briefly explore its context within the research literature, document the history of adventure therapy at Waipuna, develop a theory of change model which captures the realities of application of adventure therapy principles and practices across St John of God Waipuna as an organisation and its service delivery across contracts, assess the impacts of schools and reintegration programmes and of any ripple effects and whānau outcomes, explore how and the

extent to which cultural needs of clients are met in the context of adventure therapy and identify areas in which services could be enhanced in the future.

Approach

A mixed methods approach was employed in the social impact assessment. The following components were delivered:

- A brief literature review was undertaken, prioritising New Zealand and Australian research.
- A Theory of Change workshop was conducted with resulting outcomes framework used to underpin the research.
- Interviews were conducted with a range of staff from Waipuna, seeking to understand and document the history of the reintegration service delivered by St John of God Waipuna, the nature and dynamics of relationships between key stakeholders, perceived social impacts of the service and areas for improvement.
- Archival material relating to Waipuna's adventure therapy approach (previous research, conference papers etc.) were reviewed.
- De-identified client closure interview records for 30 randomly selected school programme participants (over the past 5 years) were analysed in line with the research scope, and with a focus on short-term impacts.
- 30 previous participants in the Ara Poutama and MSD funded adventure therapy programmes and follow-on supports were randomly selected, and the Community Development Manager and another member of the team independently rated them for progress on a number of attributes/desired outcomes identified in the theory of change, with scores averaged across the cohort.
- An electronic survey was conducted, targeted at people who have taken part in adventure therapy programmes / programme components delivered by SJOG Waipuna in the past, seeking their perspectives on the long-term impacts of the intervention they received for them and for whānau.
- Interviews were conducted with 8 male former participants of Ara Poutama-funded adventure therapy programmes, including some who had more recently completed the programme and others who were further along in their journey with Waipuna. Māori clients were given the choice of a Kaupapa Māori interviewer, Cheyenne Scown, or the lead researcher.

FINDINGS

Adventure therapy approach of Waipuna within wider research context

In terms of the research literature, there is a greater body of work available to substantiate the value of the schools adventure therapy mahi than its use as part of a wraparound approach employed with rangatahi involved in the criminal justice system. Via several major meta-analyses (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997; Bowen & Neill, 2013; Beck & Wong; 2022), there is a growing body of evidence supporting the value of adventure therapy approaches, especially in terms of positively impacting on self-esteem, self-efficacy / locus of control, self-awareness, confidence, and delinquency, and as meta-analyses have been conducted over the years, it

seems that adventure therapy approaches are becoming more impactful as practitioners learn and develop this approach.

In a New Zealand context, adventure therapy has been identified as promising in meeting needs of Māori where programmes are grounded in a te ao Māori world view, just as programmes are for Waipuna (Phillips, Berghan, Clifford, Arahanga-Doyle & Totoro, 2022). Regardless of their referral pathway, participants in adventure therapy activities delivered by Waipuna more often than not bring with them a history of trauma, and positives impacts of adventure therapy have been identified in recent research with such populations, including in New Zealand (Pringle, Boddy, Slattery & Harris, 2022; Wylie & Scown, 2024).

The rapid literature review undertaken set out as one of its aims to identify markers of best practice service delivery. To respond to this, the conclusion of a recent rapid systemic literature review focused on effective strategies and interventions for engaging 'at-risk' youth (Toews, Letourneau, Pohl & Ruse, 2024) seems most apt. There is no single best approach, and rather, a variety of strategies can and should be combined to fit the individual needs of young people and the resources available. Waipuna's less clinical and prescribed, and more organic, sometimes a bit messy delivery of adventure therapy does this really well, holding rangatahi at the centre, taking a deeply relational approach centred on identity and respect. The research literature highlights the importance of relationship to adventure therapy outcomes: the unique approach of Waipuna in delivering adventure therapy within a setting where relationships endure well beyond the duration of a 10-week programme, continuing as long as is needed would seem to be strongly endorsed by prior research findings.

Looking more at Waipuna's use of adventure therapy with its Ara Poutama and MSD-funded clients, Lee & Wong's (2025) Canadian-based exploration of strengths and barriers of wraparound interventions targeting high risk young people are highly relevant. They identified a need for strong case management practice in the face of complexity, something that the present research suggested that Waipuna again does very well. They suggested that wraparound approaches enable flexibility and a tailored, individualised and youth-centred approach: the present research saw that in action. They and others (Bartlett & Freeze, 2020) also suggested that operating in the context of a young person's broader social environment enables greater consideration of risk and protective factors. Lee & Wong's review noted that the strengths of the wraparound model lie in its flexibility and facilitation of natural, sustainable and relational community support for those involved. Again, the present research revealed multiple tangible examples of this. They recommended implementing processes to mitigate risk of staff burnout and using an approach delivering persistence and consistency. Staff shared how this was working for them, enabling work-life balance, while rangatahi shared their common experiences of persistent, consistent support.

The approach to the social impact assessment was underpinned by a theory of change for Waipuna's whole-of-service adventure therapy approach, with the outcomes framework designed to evidence extent of impact and the truthfulness of the model: does adventure therapy operate in the manner it is designed to, and in what ways, if any, does it make a difference in the lives of participants and their whānau in the short, medium and long term.

The theory of change for Waipuna's adventure therapy approach asserts that the values of:

- Whanaungatanga – connection / relationship
- Manaakitanga – hospitality
- Kaitiakitanga – care and stewardship
- Whakaute – respect
- Managed risk
- Vulnerability
- Mana Motuhake
- Te Taiao

underpin the whole approach.

It also claims that St John of God Hauora Trust prioritises the people they support, striving to deliver high quality services that are person-centred and enhance:

- taha tinana (physical health)
- taha wairua (spiritual health)
- taha whānau (family) and
- taha hinengaro (mental health)

by promoting tino rangatiratanga.

The team was described as diverse, but with shared values and beliefs, strongly inclusive, empathetic and relational in approach, passionate about their mahi, and with the capacity to be vulnerable, reflective, to live well in chaos and the “grey area”, and to unconditionally hold hope for others.

The kaupapa of the adventure therapy approach is distilled down to:

- starting where rangatahi are at and journeying **with** rangatahi
- taking an eco-psychological and social constructivist approach that is highly relational and culturally appropriate, defined by unconditional aroha and vulnerability
- connection being seen as essential to wellness
- with a key focus on building sense of self-efficacy + self-belief, working towards positive change and not “settling”.

Triangulating across all components of the research and the various data gathering techniques, the evidence was strong that Waipuna are delivering adventure therapy in a manner well-aligned with these theoretical underpinnings, with a great, diverse, well-equipped team in place, sound processes and approach and strong values and tikanga that are appropriate for mana whenua, tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti. Whanaungatanga – connection / relationship, whakaute – respect, manaakitanga – hospitality, and kaitiakitanga – care and stewardship are especially strong through the approach and are values which appear to quite quickly spill over to many of those who participate in adventure therapy activities delivered by Waipuna.

Delivering on the value of managed risk, feedback gathered via survey of and interviews with former participants strongly endorsed Waipuna as delivering physical, cultural, emotional and spiritual safety in their adventure therapy mahi.

Assessment of the short term impacts of schools programmes

Short term impacts were assessed via analysis of a random sample of closure interviews with participants. The information disclosed in these interviews showed that participants were very much challenged physically, mentally and socially in the programme. They commonly overcame challenges through encouragement of others and teamwork, but also internally through their own bravery and courage, a positive mindset, resilience: the analysis revealed a high degree of personal discovery, especially regarding their individual capacity for determination and perseverance, helping others, motivation, connection and leadership. Completion of the programme and its various activities, and especially those which required participants to overcome fear appeared a significant source of pride, and the interviews revealed quite high intent to transfer these learnings to school, home and lifestyle.

Assessment of the short term impacts of Waipuna's use of adventure therapy in reintegration context

Part of the approach to assessment of short term impacts of the adventure therapy mahi with rangatahi in a corrections context was adapted, as the funding changes meant a new intake programme did not run in term 2. To determine short-term impact, two staff members involved in delivery of their adventure therapy programmes independently rated the progress of 30 randomly selected participants retrospectively. Ratings were made on 9 attributes/domains on a 5-point scale (1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=moderate, 4=quite a bit, 5=a lot), drawn from the Theory of Change, with relatively high inter-rater reliability. Average overall ratings for the whole sample are presented in the following table, showing moderate – high impacts on all domains, but with strongest impacts on confidence, capacity to be reflective, level of physical activity and readiness to engage with other Waipuna services.

Attribute/domain <i>'To what extent have you observed this rangatahi to...'</i>	Overall average score 1-5	Score range
demonstrate an enhanced capacity to be reflective	4.1	2-5
grow in confidence	4.2	2-5
be more physically active	4.1	1-5
make social connections – make friends and enjoy own activities alongside/with others	3.5	2-5
increase their connections to positive / wellbeing-supporting things in their community	3.5	2-5
improve their self-care	3.6	2-5
share their experiences with whānau	3.2	1-5
experience improved interactions with whānau – doing their bit	3.2	1-5
shown a readiness to engage with Waipuna post-programme + continue relationship	3.8	1-5

Feedback from participants we talked to showed that some were nervous about the programme at the start, and/or were not particularly invested in it. However by the end of the initial 10-week adventure therapy course, those we interviewed recalled that they had developed a strong sense of connection with the people who led their course and with other Waipuna staff they connected with, growth in their sense of self-efficacy and of confidence, overcoming fear / anxiety, mastering new skills, and helping others. They could all think of tangible examples where they had demonstrated bravery / courage and where they had persevered at something that was hard.

“They’ve got a good model there that’s called the rubber band model from memory. And it’s like, your comfort zone, and then your stretch zone, and then your break zone. So it’s always good to be in a stretch zone. They say, like, so you’re always constantly growing and not burning yourself out, kind of thing. So yeah, that does wonders for your confidence.”

Everyone we heard from agreed that their sense of hope increased through the programme.

Long term impacts of Waipuna’s adventure therapy approach on former participants and their whānau

Of the 37 schools programme former participants who responded to the survey:

- 29.7% indicated that the programme had a huge impact on them;
- 37.8% a big impact;
- 24.3% a moderate impact; and
- 8.1% a small impact,

while nobody responded to say it had no impact.

“The 10 week course I did at Waipuna had a more positive affect on me than all the years of schooling I did. [Two of the workers] treated me as an equal and taught me life skills I still use in my everyday life.”

“Those things have saved me and become the foundation of my life. The things I centre the meaning of my life around and want to share and invest in when I have tamariki. It has led me to feel a deeper appreciation for my whakapapa. I think it’s helped me to see the world differently adventure therapy.”

“Having been through this at high school I found this made me lean away from crime and joining a gang. The people there were always warm and inviting but most of all understanding of bad backgrounds.”

“Absolute life-saving programme that changed the course of my future and therefore my family’s future.”

The survey sought to determine what (if any) lasting impact Waipuna adventure therapy programme(s) and the relationships and connections made through this had on a range of domains for the individual, including relationships with others, active lifestyles, self-awareness, feelings of hope, self-efficacy, social connections, support networks and pro-social behaviour.

Combining the proportion of respondents indicating that the Waipuna adventure therapy programme(s) and the relationships and connections made through this made a big – huge impact for them, strongest impacts were evident for the following domains:

- **Awareness of own emotional state** (80.0% rated impact big-huge)
- **Feelings of hope** (78.1% rated impact big-huge)
- **Perceived social connection** (78.6% rated impact big-huge)

Looking at the responses only for those who received adventure therapy during a community sentence or after release from prison, the greatest impacts were on sense of hope, making good choices around drug and alcohol and offending behaviour, relationships with others, awareness of emotions and self-belief, and impact was stronger on all domains than for the respondent

group as a whole. For those who had taken part in schools programmes, the greatest impacts were on awareness of emotional state, self-belief, relationships with others and sense of hope.

Impacts were largest for those who received adventure therapy during a community sentence or after release from prison.

- 100% indicated a big – huge impact on their feelings of hope
- 94.8% indicated a big – huge impact on their self-belief – knowing they can achieve things – backing themselves and taking risks
- 94.8% indicated a big – huge impact on making good choices (around drug and alcohol use, offending etc.)
- 94.4% indicated a big – huge impact on their awareness of their emotions
- 94.4% indicated a big – huge impact on their relationships with others – professionals, service providers, whānau, friends, peers
- 89.5% indicated a big – huge impact on having an active lifestyle where physical activity is a habit – they make time for sport and/or active recreation and try and stay fit in body and mind
- 89.5% indicated a big – huge impact on how connected they feel to other people, and a two-way valuing of each other
- 89.5% indicated a big – huge impact on how many different people, groups, services, activities and places they have around them to support their wellbeing and that they know they can get support from when things are tough.

It was clear in much of this feedback that it is hard to separate the adventure therapy components of Waipuna's mahi from the holistic wraparound support.

Both via the survey and the interviews with rangatahi who had taken part in Ara Poutama-funded adventure therapy, feedback from those we heard from who were parents showed that the approach was impactful in terms of their hopes and dreams for their tamariki, how much time they were spending with their tamariki in the outdoors, how they relate to their tamariki, the whānau's levels of community connection, their prioritisation of the wellbeing of their whānau and their understanding of what it means to be a 'good parent'. The adventure therapy had most strongly impacted on their hopes and dreams for their tamariki, how they relate to their tamariki and how much of a priority the wellbeing of their whānau is to them.

How and the extent to which cultural needs of St John of God Waipuna clients are met in the context of adventure therapy

Across both survey and interview findings, it was very strongly apparent that those who have taken part in the adventure therapy activities led by Waipuna felt strongly respected, including culturally. The staff interviewed articulated a very holistic approach, seeing and responding to the person as a whole and understanding and utilising the power of nature. Adventure therapy at Waipuna has always strived to employ bicultural practice, and this has strengthened with input from key staff along the journey. Te ao Māori values of manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga are particularly well embedded. It was apparent from feedback that at least some of the staff /

former staff recognise some fragility around this: it should never be taken as a given, and the journey to grow cultural competency need to be consciously nurtured over time.

It was highlighted that as a non-Māori organisation, Waipuna are a place that Māori who may feel disconnected from their culture, are more likely to engage with, but this needs to happen in a manner which puts rangatahi at the centre and responds to their individual needs. Via interview with some of the rangatahi who have taken part in the reintegration adventure therapy activities, it seemed that a lot of the language expressing the bicultural approach and te ao Māori concepts embedded in Waipuna's adventure therapy was new to participants. We heard from one former participant (non-Māori) who'd spoken up about this and seen staff respond really well to unpacking the te reo Māori used so he and his mates understood. However for Māori and non-Māori alike, it is important that all use of te reo Māori is clearly explained in a way that is accessible to everyone, and is at all times mana-enhancing. The Māori researcher who assisted with interviews and helped sense-make findings suggested value in employing a tuakana-teina approach - a concept from te ao Māori referring to the relationship between an older sibling (tuakana) and a younger sibling (teina). This mentoring approach has been applied to learning contexts between those who are more and less knowledgeable about a topic - the 'tuakana' or more knowledgeable person guiding the 'teina' who may be less knowledgeable. However, this learning relationship is also reciprocal, meaning that the teina will also guide and teach the tuakana at times. In the context of an adventure therapy course, this could look like having those with more knowledge of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori leading and guiding learning within the group and include the participants as well as the staff.

The suggestion of a Māori former staff member that Waipuna place more emphasis on sharing the cultural narrative of the places in which adventurous activities are delivered, both pre- and post-tiriti is well worth following up with action.

Areas for enhancement

Besides the value in embedding cultural narrative, and striving to use te reo Māori and te ao Māori terminology in a more mana-enhancing manner, outlined above, former participants did not offer suggestions for improving the adventure therapy approach: they just wanted to see it continue. This was obviously also a sentiment echoed by Waipuna staff. They expressed a hope that funding could be secured to at least enable the programmes to continue in their current forms, and that staff could continue to be looked after in these roles. There was also a keenness to see adventure therapy expand within Waipuna, to include delivery to parents as well as young people, extending to reach more of Waipuna's counselling clients and moving into the ACC Sensitive Claims space to address trauma alongside other therapeutic interventions. Delivery to young people on cancer journeys was hugely impactful in the past through a collaboration with CanTeen, and some were also keen to see this mahi be offered again in the future, with others keen to see development of the approach for people with disabilities. There was also an appetite to reach into more schools if funding allowed.

It is hoped that the present report proves valuable in educating decision makers and politicians about the enormous impactfulness of adventure therapy as delivered by Waipuna.

1. Background

St John of God Waipuna, an Ōtautahi-based service of St John of God Hauora Trust, has been delivering adventure therapy continuously through a range of programmes for 25 years. The Adventure Therapy team now sits within the Community Development team at Waipuna (14 staff), but adventure therapy and its kaupapa is woven within the fabric of everything St John of God delivers, from CAYAD, to advocacy to MSD, to the support provided when accompanying a young person to court: Waipuna themselves see adventure therapy as directing practice across the organisation.

Adventure therapy sits most prominently in Waipuna's delivery of its strengths-based reintegration service for young offenders aged 18 – 25 years (employing 7 staff across 6 FTE roles under two reintegration contracts, one with Ara Poutama - Department of Corrections (4 FTE) and one with Ministry of Social Development (2 FTE)). The Ara Poutama-funded service, Te Whare Hāpai Tangata, began in 2013, developing and evolving over time to a multi-partner coalition including the Ara Poutama - Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), philanthropic partner Te Rangatahi Tumanako Trust, and a range of Canterbury employers and educational institutions.

In Te Whare Hāpai Tangata, Waipuna works with a maximum caseload of 40 young people aged 18-24 years who are on-sentence, both in prison and in the community. Through the Ara Poutama-funded service, Waipuna also provides three months of reintegration support post-programme for community participants and six months reintegration support post programme for prison participants upon release. Te Whare Hāpai Tangata delivers a combination of group therapy, individual therapy and adventure therapy along with the wraparound support that Waipuna can offer through its other social and community services, spanning housing, parenting support, employment pathways and alcohol and other drugs.

Since 2021, Waipuna has worked in partnership with MSD to provide prosocial mentoring and support beyond the Corrections programme in the journey towards education and employment. Clients from the Corrections-funded programme requiring ongoing support can roll over to its Ministry of Social Development-funded programme (15 clients per year caseload) which continues the mahi with a focus on employment readiness for a further 1-2 years as needed. Even beyond these programmes, clients of the reintegration service can remain involved with Waipuna through evening programmes, parenting support, trips/adventures, Coast to Coast and touch rugby. A number of reintegration service clients are young parents, and many are connected to the St John of God childcare facility on-site and to parenting supports.

Formal notice, without prior warning, was received in early March 2025 of the cessation of \$639,432 in annual operational funding from Ara Poutama Department of Corrections from 1 July 2025 for youth specialised reintegration support delivered by Waipuna. To Waipuna's knowledge, there is no other specialised youth reintegration service in Canterbury.

Adventure therapy has also been delivered in Waipuna's school programmes for the past decade, with programmes regularly delivered at Avonside Girls' High School, Hagley Community College, Haeata, Te Aratai College, Hillmorton High School, Shirley Boys' High School and Lincoln High School.

The reintegration programme is seen as successful, with internally gathered metrics indicating promising impacts, but apart from university student reviews and small-scope evaluations, it has not been formally reviewed. Likewise, adventure therapy, as delivered by St John of God Waipuna, has been the focus of various external research student projects and study undertaken by Waipuna's own staff, but only at programme-specific level. St John of God Waipuna often struggle to clearly articulate what a service-wide adventure therapy approach means in practice, yet its service delivery is unique because its adventure therapy components sit within the setting of a social service agency, and are not restricted to specific programmes but are instead carried across the organisation. St John of God Waipuna have over a number of years passionately sought to preserve their adventure therapy approach and build on it into the future. In mid-2024, more than 7 months prior to the news regarding the funding cessation from Ara Poutama Department of Corrections, they sought and successfully secured funding from Rātā Foundation to enable commissioning of a Social Impact Assessment (IAIA, 2003). Seeking to evidence the service and its impacts for clients and their whānau, and to explore and articulate their approach, so that other service providers elsewhere in Aotearoa, politicians and decision makers can learn from the Waipuna experience, the focus of the SIA was to be adventure therapy and its application across the organisation and its mahi, and in particular, the reintegration service and schools programme.

This research was conducted by Sarah Wylie MA (hons) - psych. Sarah has experience in Social Impact Assessment approaches, and has extensive experience in research and evaluation of social services, including a range of projects relating to rangatahi involved in the justice system, adventure therapy and wraparound services for rangatahi and their whānau. Ethics approval was obtained for the research from Aotearoa Research Ethics Committee (AREC25_10).

2. Scope of the social impact assessment

The key purpose of the research was to develop an understanding of what St John of God Waipuna's use of adventure therapy looks like in practice, why this approach has developed, the value and impact of such an approach, and where it could be strengthened in the future.

The scope of the assessment was as follows:

- A brief literature review focused on adventure therapy service delivery particularly in a New Zealand context, with marginalised young people – reintegration of young offenders 18-24 years and adventure therapy. The rapid review sought research literature regarding use of adventure therapy as part of a wraparound service approach, its use in the context of te ao Māori and research literature regarding impact and markers of best practice service delivery.
- Documentation of the history of the reintegration service delivered by St John of God Waipuna.
- Development of a whole-of-service adventure therapy theory of change model which captures the realities of application of adventure therapy principles and practices across St John of God Waipuna as an organisation and its service delivery across contracts.
- Assessment of the short term impacts of schools programmes, and the place held by adventure therapy through retrospective analysis of de-identified closure interview data.
- Assessment of the short term impacts of Waipuna's reintegration (prison and MSD-resourced) service.
- Exploration of the long term impacts of Waipuna's adventure therapy approach and of any ripple effects and whānau outcomes – to what extent might any changes achieved for Waipuna clients impact on their whānau (parenting skills and style, engagement in ECE of tamariki, parental engagement in tamariki education journey etc.)
- To explore how and the extent to which cultural needs of St John of God Waipuna clients are met in the context of adventure therapy.
- To identify areas in which services could be enhanced in the future.

3. Methodology

A mixed methods approach was employed in the social impact assessment, utilising both qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques and triangulating findings from a range of sources to yield robust findings that span the full scope of the project.

The following components of the social impact assessment were delivered, focused on developing a strong understanding of the application of adventure therapy in Waipuna's mahi and the context in which it operates and predicting, analysing and assessing likely impact pathways – social changes and impacts, both direct and indirect, and cumulative, affected party responses, alternatives, and the significance of any changes:

- A brief literature review was undertaken, prioritising New Zealand and Australian research focused on best practice service delivery – adventure therapy approaches with young people.
- A Theory of Change workshop was conducted with members of the Community Development team, with a draft Theory of Change developed and honed with the team through an iterative process. This was used to underpin the survey and interview questions employed in the present research. (See Appendix A).
- Interviews were conducted with the following, with interviews seeking to understand and document the history of the reintegration service delivered by St John of God Waipuna, the nature and dynamics of relationships between key stakeholders, perceived social impacts of the service and areas for improvement:
 - Community Development Manager and 6 members of the Adventure Therapy team
 - Paddy Pawson, service founder
 - George Anderson, General Manager Communications and Marketing, St John of God
 - Gaius Rewiti – former Adventure Therapy team member
 - Danielle Marra, Manager, Young Parents Development Team
 - Paul McMahon, Senior Project Worker, Community Action on Youth and Drugs
- Archival material relating to Waipuna's adventure therapy approach (previous research, conference papers etc.) were reviewed.
- De-identified client closure interview records for 30 randomly selected school programme participants (over the past 5 years) were analysed in line with the research scope, and with a focus on short-term impacts.
- It had been intended that all staff members involved would collectively rate randomly selected participants in Ara Poutama-funded courses on a range of attributes connected with the Theory of Change early on and again at the end of a course, with rating compared for each participant. However because these did not proceed in term 2, 2025, a different approach was needed. 30 previous participants in the Ara Poutama and MSD funded adventure therapy programmes and follow-on supports were randomly selected, and the Community Development Manager and another member of the team independently rated them for progress on each attribute, with scores averaged across the cohort.

- An electronic survey was conducted, with the link promote via St John of God Waipuna chat groups, and via email / texted link to former clients as available / appropriate, targeted at people who have taken part in adventure therapy programmes / programme components delivered by SJOG Waipuna in the past, seeking their perspectives on the long-term impacts of the intervention they received for them and for whānau.

In total, 75 survey responses were received over a 6 week period.

- Interviews were conducted with 8 male former participants of Ara Poutama-funded adventure therapy programmes, including some who had more recently completed the programme and others who were further along in their journey with Waipuna and who had received ongoing support including the 12 month post-programme support funded by MSD. The sample was purposively selected to ensure an ethnic mix reflective of the overall client group and to ensure that those invited to be interviewed were in a good place in terms of their mental wellbeing and had the capacity to share their service experiences with a stranger. Māori clients were given the choice of a Kaupapa Māori interviewer, Cheyenne Scown, or the lead researcher. With consent, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and were thematically analysed in line with the research questions / scope.

All interviews only took place after participants were fully informed about the social impact assessment and had given their full informed consent. Every effort was taken to ensure they did not feel any sense of compulsion/obligation to share their experiences. All received a small koha for meeting with the interviewer.

4. The history of adventure therapy at Waipuna

Paddy Pawson has a lifetime passion for the outdoors and an empathy for young people. Having secured outdoor skills qualifications in the late 1990s, he developed a programme for what would at that time be referred to as ‘at-risk’ young people, drawing on the natural environment and being outdoors. In the course of talking with not-for-profits around Christchurch to put the programme into practice, he approached the then-manager of Hebron Trust. They were in a period of rebuild/rebirth and healing following a very dark time from the mid-1980s to early 1990s in which a Catholic Brother, Bernard McGrath, with a prior history of sexual abuse, had repeatedly abused young people in the Trust’s care¹. By the time Paddy engaged with the Trust, the organisation was well along in their journey of rebuild, with completely different personnel and a move in 2000 to different premises in Shirley Rd in 2000 (moving to the current premises around 2005), and strong leadership in place, all carrying a strong community development focus and with practice informed by what would come to be known as positive youth development: Ministry of Youth Development’s first Youth Development Framework was published in 2001.

The very first adventure therapy programmes delivered through the organisation, commencing in May 1999, were delivered by Paddy (then via a 0.4 FTE role) working in partnership with Jim Strang, then the guidance counsellor at Aranui High School, someone who shared Paddy’s strong background in the outdoors and also Paddy’s professional supervisor at that time. Two school groups (8 students per group) were delivered one day per week for a term out of Aranui High School (now Haeata Community Campus), culminating with a journey at the end of each programme. As Paddy recalls, the pair worked well together.

“Jim came from an outdoor background too. And so, you know, there was a bit of synergy, a bit of ability, and he had a similar empathy for young people and for me, that was fairly important. Much as I had support at Waipuna, finding someone - a bit of a kin-type person, you know, who understood what you were doing without having to talk about it every time you come up against it, that was pretty important.”

Programmes at a second school, Hillmorton High School, began around 2001, with Lincoln, Papanui, Mairehau, Cashmere, Shirley and Christchurch Boys, Avonside Girls High Schools, Unlimited (now Ao Tawhiti) and Cathedral College variously having programmes delivered over the subsequent years.

Around the time the first groups started, Paddy studied and secured a Diploma in Counselling, which he sees as giving ‘depth to the work’ and moving it from ‘outdoors based language’ to being more ‘natural world’, integrated with the value brought by invoking te ao Māori concepts and building/applying bicultural understanding. The adventure therapy offerings of what became known by the original name, St John of God Waipuna in 2000 when Maria MacEntyre became General Manager grew steadily over the first few years, and through successive managers. Paddy

¹ This resulted in multiple prosecutions, and the history has been well-documented through the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

sat on the International Adventure Therapy Committee alongside another Cantabrian, Chris Jansen (now at UC), and as such, was well-connected with best practice and the latest approaches.

Since its inception in 1999, the adventure therapy offerings of Waipuna were fully supported by their kaumatua at the time, Ray Kamo. Ray provided much input and left an indelible mark on growing Te Ao Māori understanding and implementation within adventure therapy at Waipuna. Subsequent input from Bevan Tipene, Wiremu Gray, Jodi Apiata, Iaeen Cranwell, Craig Pauling, Gaius Rewiti and others within Ngāi Tahu who connected through the development of the Te Tira Horomaka programme further shaped Waipuna's approach to adventure therapy.

Around 2005, Paddy stepped out of the leadership role for adventure therapy at Waipuna² and took on a community initiatives role. Paddy's step back from grassroots programme delivery enabled him to put thought into the value and impact of the approach. Waipuna developed community-based adventure therapy programmes, including programmes for young people who had experienced cancer and another delivered in Rolleston (a 16-week strengths-based programme for young people 13-19 years, incorporating adventurous activities, individual sessions, family events, a parent – young person programme - GAIN, and an adventurous journey). It was from this that the connection with Department of Corrections started to form.

An evaluation was undertaken of Waipuna's community-based adventure therapy programme delivered in Rolleston in late 2008 (McKay, Donaldson & Schroder, 2008), by The Collaborative Trust for Research and Training in Youth Health and Development, highlighting three key themes as embedded core principles in the Waipuna programmes:

- (1) Development of the whole person;
- (2) Respectful and meaningful relationships; and
- (3) Building ownership through the sharing of power.

The philosophical underpinnings of the adventure therapy approach which evolved over the first decade or so of delivery are set out in Jansen & Pawson (2011) and are summarised as follows:

Situations that help young people:

- gain respect for themselves and their abilities;
- feel their contribution is important;
- give them resiliency; and
- provide them with hope and aroha

arise out of settings, both formal and informal, where young people are able to form respectful, robust relationships with more experienced others (usually adults) who are prepared to walk with them as they transition through a state of dependence through independence and on to interdependence. Adventure therapy programmes were suggested to offer one such setting, introducing participants to challenging encounters and experiences and taking them to new places within themselves.

² Waipuna Trust was wound up a year or so later and merged with St John of God Healthcare (Australia) under St John of God Hauora Trust (NZ).

At that time, Waipuna used the following definition of adventure therapy:

Adventure takes us to new places within ourselves and into encounters and experiences with many diverse mediums on the journey. Therapy in its many mediums of practice seeks to bring to light the life story of its participants. This opens up new parameters of understanding and allows our spirituality, connectedness and cultural identities to breathe upon our life story, make new meaning of our past, experience growth in the present and allow hope for the future.

There are several factors that are common to all definitions:

- *The intervention occurs in a natural setting*
- *A group format is used with the active involvement of the participants, Elements of perceived risk are introduced*
- *A therapeutic focus is maintained; the use of self-reflection, journal writing and group processes are common*
- *Technical skills are integral to AT programmes but are secondary to a focus on the central goals of supporting personal growth, therapy, education (McKay et al., 2009), later honed as:*

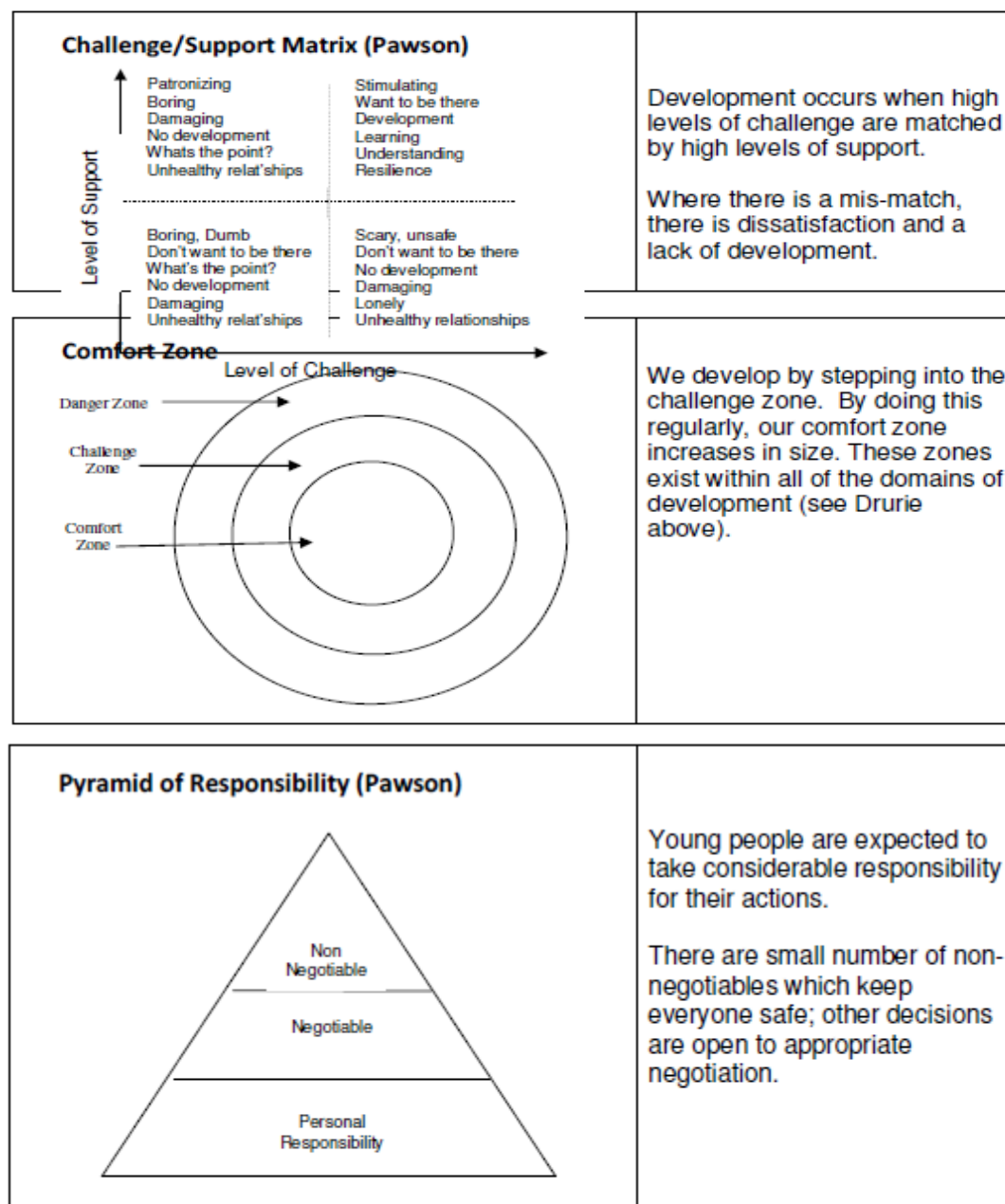
“Adventure Therapy is a practice that utilises the natural world as a medium to engage in facilitated therapeutic experiences for its participants, these experiences are experiential and the level of participation is generally self determined by the participants. Experiences are designed around the needs of participants and can range from just being in nature through to more adventurous experiences. The activity is a vehicle for the experience which creates therapeutic moments, which gives opportunities for facilitators to use their skills to benefit a deeper understanding for the participants.” (Pawson, in Harrington, undated)

Jansen & Pawson (2011) noted that Waipuna had kept the following questions in mind since first implementing its adventure therapy programmes for challenging young people:

- How do those of us delivering these programmes balance our philosophical beliefs with the needs of the young people?
- How do we support them to make reasoned choices, take responsibility for their actions, and build respect for themselves and others?
- How do we honour, respect and do justice to their journey to develop their own philosophy of understanding?
- Why should they invest in us and our philosophy after all, in their view, it is we who ‘stuffed the world’?
- How do we create therapeutic enhancing environments for young people who consider themselves ‘bombproof and bulletproof’?

The evaluators of Waipuna’s community-based adventure therapy programme (McKay, Donaldson & Shroder, 2009) presented the practice framework for adventure therapy at that time. This drew on a number of models, including Mason Durie’s (1984) Te Whare Tapa Wha centred on the transition mandated for young people, from dependence to independence, Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle, The Circle of Courage / Mana Weel model (Brendtro, Brokenleg

& Bockern (2002) Lloyd Martin's Models of Relationship and Paddy Pawson's Value / Relationship model, asserting that building relationships takes time, and while the first 80% of the relationship yields 20% of the value, the next 20% of the relationship building often yields a rapid increase in value from an intervention. They also included Paddy's Challenge / Support Matrix and Pyramid of Responsibility, as follows:



Over the early years of adventure therapy and Waipuna, the programmes were identified in Jansen & Pawson (2011) as having evolved, with increased flexibility around the experiences to put the needs of young people as the reference point, landing in a space where the journey was theirs. Over time, they have developed and trialled, in collaboration with the young people, various tools and models to address the questions outlined in the previous page, with individual facilitators taking those tools, using and shaping them in ways that suit their own ways of working

with and alongside young people. Journal writing has always been a key approach, because of its requirement for self-reflection, both individually and in group contexts.

By 2012, the adventure therapy team at Waipuna had come to see themselves as delivering adventure therapy practice / life rather than programmes per se. They recognised the value for them in an evolutionary approach, adapting to the world around them, and maintaining this diversity and complexity adding value to what others do while also maintaining self determination over what they delivered themselves. Waipuna's 'brand' of adventure therapy did not sit in a neat and tidy box. Adventure therapy has grown Waipuna staff as a community.

"There is no such thing as work life balance. There is only life balance. I was saying that we needed to come to Waipuna to do our life, not to do Waipuna work, and what's that look like for you to do your work? And so, so began a bit of a story of a more of an intentional shift to a life focus for what we did, rather than coming to work or delivering a programme or whatever that might look like, some of them are still used at being but ... And one things that fell out of that as we keep going further with it. Well, if we come here to do life, well, I need more flexibility with my life. Well, we'll make that happen. ... If you need to leave at two o'clock today because your life at home, because you've got life at home, sports clubs, Waipuna, like you, need to take responsibility for all that if we are going to maintain a life balance. So if you need to leave at two, then how do you take responsibility for what you might be doing at two or three o'clock at Waipuna? So the end result was that everyone's covering which works really well." - Paddy

Waipuna first started delivering adventure therapy to rangatahi in Christchurch Prison around 2010. Use of adventure therapy in Christchurch prisons has occurred since at least the early 1990s; Mossman (1998) evaluated a two-week Outdoor Adventure Challenge Programme delivered at Rolleston Prison at that time. The initial Waipuna-run programme, developed by Corrections psychologists was only delivered for one cycle. Young people turned up for the adventure days but not for anything else, and because attendance was a key focus of the outcomes, if they did not attend enough, they were removed from the programme. Sometime later, a staff member at Corrections, Christchurch contacted Paddy, concerned that the programme had been dropped and there was nothing for rangatahi within the adult justice system. They put their heads together to develop a new programme, drawing on the learnings from the community-based adventure therapy work. Paddy was clear that the programme was only going to work if rangatahi had a choice about taking part – that they opted in, after being provided with enough information about the programme to be able to make an informed choice. Just like the schools and community adventure therapy programmes, the core principles needed to centre on development of the whole person, respectful and meaningful relationships and building ownership through the sharing of power. The programmes that had gone before for rangatahi in the Corrections setting were seen as far-removed from what was needed.

"The corrections programme was really developed by psychologists, and it was really psych-driven, and their focus on outcomes were like - kids needed to turn up. If they missed 30% of the programme they were kicked off, ... And I was saying the evidence shows that the kids you could kick off, we still keep in contact with them, and they turn up our stuff, but not your stuff. Why? And then there are kids who finish programmes having been 100% on the corrections part of it. And then they go on, and then they're back inside. So attendance doesn't mean development has occurred ... And the imperative says, If I turn up, my life's gonna be okay. That's not much different

to a boot camp. Whereas Sergeant Major says, you do this, and your life will go okay. If you, you know, turn up with clean shoes in the morning, you won't be scrubbing the toilet with a toothbrush. Then what do you do? You do it. But as soon as you're out of that environment, that's why I call that stuff creating a situational change, not long-term change. So situational change, you change in that environment, because you work out that if I do what's required, my life will go well. But the biggest, I'm sort of alluding to boot camps and other like things, the biggest damage is the sergeant major or the whatever it might be, what that young person likes is what they have got is this power. And that's what's been role modelled when they leave, that they throw their caps in the air, they have their big graduation and parade and with their nice, shiny shoes, then they go back to their whānau, and they start operating like the sergeant, and it's so damaging. It wrecks whānau. It's really damaging. The role modelling of relationship by using power and weakness is absolutely abhorrent to me. So that is the basis by which, regardless of all the noise that goes on, the most important thing we should be role modelling is healthy relationships, respectful relationships, the vulnerability that goes with that. ... So that's the basis. That's a very strong basis, for me, by which we would forge forward and make things change. So based on that, How can kids have a choice, an informed choice, to be on programme? So we developed things like the taste day - that, to me, was literally about the young people encountering - they get a taste of the programme, relationships that're involved, or an environment..." – Paddy Pawson

For Waipuna, success from the work within Corrections settings was about distance travelled in terms of wellbeing, life outcomes / achievements and quality of life in the fullest sense – degrees of progress forward, rather than where someone has landed in life.

"It's about movement. And movement doesn't necessarily land somewhere, but it moves. And that's all that's required. And if I were to give a description of this, so if we had zero to 100, zero being, some young persons had the worst possible start to life. Their life might not survive that stay through to 100 being a high achieving young person But if 60 was a threshold by which society accepted a young person, you know? You're okay, a contributing member of society, you know. And I think in the middle class world, I guess, and probably stretching, but further than that, you know, young people start with 50. We've got a roof over their head and food on their table. So these (Corrections-involved) young people start life with 10 and they work so hard over five or 10 years, and they get to 35 maybe 40, he still hasn't even got to 60. ...I would argue that these people have travelled further in their journey of life. We need to honour the journey that has been made, and that, to me, deserves every amount of respect, because they probably travel further than a lot of us ever will. It's sort of that understanding of how we how we make sense of the value of the work. It is a long term investment. It's a long term commitment." – Paddy Pawson

Te Whare Hāpai Tangata, began in 2013, developing and evolving over time to a multi-partner coalition including the Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Social Development, philanthropic partner Te Rangatahi Tumanako Trust, and a range of Canterbury employers and educational institutions. While Waipuna had for a number of years been a provider of an array of services for rangatahi, development of this programme led to an embedding of the wraparound approach at Waipuna. In Te Whare Hāpai Tangata, Waipuna works with a maximum caseload of 40 young people aged 18-24 years who are on-sentence, both in prison and in the community. Through the Ara Poutama-funded service, Waipuna also provides three months of reintegration support post-programme for community participants and six months reintegration support post programme for prison participants upon release. Te Whare Hāpai Tangata delivers a combination of group therapy, individual therapy and adventure therapy along with the wraparound support

that Waipuna can offer through its other social and community services, spanning housing, parenting support, employment pathways and alcohol and other drugs.

Since 2021, Waipuna has worked in partnership with MSD to provide prosocial mentoring and support beyond the Corrections programme in the journey towards education and employment. Clients from the Corrections-funded programme requiring ongoing support can roll over to its Ministry of Social Development-funded programme (15 clients per year caseload) which continues the mahi with a focus on employment readiness for a further 1-2 years as needed. Even beyond these programmes, clients of the reintegration service can remain involved with Waipuna through evening programmes, parenting support, trips/adventures, Coast to Coast and touch rugby. “Adventure therapy” does not sit neatly confined to a “programme” delivered by Waipuna. Rather, it is interwoven across the services delivered and the relationships between staff and participants / clients, and between participants / clients themselves. A number of reintegration service clients are young parents, and many are connected to the St John of God childcare facility on-site and to parenting supports. Referring to the analogy of one’s success in their life journey sitting on a continuum from 0 to 100, Paddy talked about this long-term supportive relationship between Waipuna and its adventure therapy participants being about progressing them on this journey.

“So what fills the gap for these young between 40 and 60 (scores on imaginary life continuum). ... That’s where we go. Okay, where we turn up ourselves, we can’t get any funding for that. So that is trying to bridge that gap for that cohort of young people from 40 to 60.” – Paddy Pawson

The Community Development Services current manager, Dan Eastwood, who has been a member of the Adventure Therapy team at Waipuna for 18 years, sees adventure therapy as very much a community, and this is something that developed over time, crystallising through the Corrections mahi since 2013.

“And I guess that shift kind of into, like, more wraparound support and community, creating a community using adventure therapy long term. So most stuff before then had been programmes. Yeah, you know, it’s 12 weeks, and young guys, young girls, people would come on to potentially multiple programmes and do a few journeys and things, but ... once we started that work with corrections, it was more ... we worked out that these guys needed long term support and it wasn’t offered in the community. Yeah. So how can we go about doing that in the Tumanako group.” – Dan Eastwood

Adventure therapy approaches vary quite widely, and the service’s current manager sees their current approach being far less clinical in its approach and much more focused around relationships, the power of nature and te ao Māori concepts, and a youth-centred approach, flexible to individual and group needs.

“Not trying to define it too much, where some people are really quite almost medical model with it, yeah, we’ve kind of stayed very relational, like relationship is the most important part of it with those young people, and then just seeing where they’re at and not trying to be too clinical, just be more community and let the day just do its thing.” – Dan Eastwood

Formal notice, without prior warning, was received in early March 2025 of the cessation of \$639,432 in annual operational funding from Ara Poutama Department of Corrections from 1 July 2025 for youth specialised reintegration support delivered by Waipuna. To Waipuna's knowledge, there is no other specialised youth reintegration service in Canterbury.

Adventure therapy has continued to be delivered in Waipuna's school programmes over time, with programmes now regularly delivered at Avonside Girls' High School, Hagley Community College, Haeata, Te Aratai College, Hillmorton High School, Shirley Boys' High School and Lincoln High School. These sit alongside after school activity programmes for rangatahi from each of these schools and for rainbow rangatahi, mana wahine programmes and programmes supporting young parents to explore the outdoors with their tamariki.

5. The literature regarding adventure therapy: rapid review

Adventure Therapy spans a very diverse field of expertise, therapeutic approaches, activities and environments, making definitions differ from country to country and practitioner to practitioner (Natynczuk, 2019; Gass, Gillis and & Russell, 2012; Jeffery, 2017). One consistency across country, providers and programmes is that the intervention is situated in nature, fosters connection with nature, and uses the health-giving benefits of nature (Harper, Rose & Segel, 2019). Programmes and approaches vary in the extent to which the emphasis is placed on a medical vs. community / ecological model. In the context of Waipuna, those delivering adventure therapy lean towards the latter, but bringing clinical skills and approaches with them within a multidisciplinary team.

Jeffery (2022), Pretorius (2020) and Arahanga-Doyle (2019) identified a trend of increasing use and profile of Adventure Therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand over time, but very limited research into the use of nature in adventure therapy practice locally. Jeffery (2017) and Pretorius (2020) highlighted the value of working alongside Māori to include nature-based interventions for Māori. Arahanga-Doyle (2019), exploring impacts of an short-term adventure education for school-aged Māori and New Zealand European adolescents, identified increases in psychological resilience, self-esteem, and ‘positive outlook’ in both Māori and New Zealand European adolescents. Improvements in psychological resilience were suggested as resulting out of the group-derived social identity adolescents formed during the adventure experience. Locally in Ōtautahi Christchurch, Horn’s (2021) research, focused on use of nature by talk-based therapists working with adults, identified an enhancement in therapeutic alliance resulting from the setting. Therapists were identified as facilitating connection with nature as healer, and the research also highlighted nature-based adventure therapy as a good fit for Māori.

A group of Māori academics at Otago University, in their article exploring adventure therapy from a kaupapa Māori lens (Phillips, Berghan, Clifford, Arahanga-Doyle & Totoro (2022, p149) cited indigenous values associating nature as a source of healing and rehabilitation. They cite Houkamau and Sibley (2010) as describing that *‘from a Māori perspective, identity, spirituality and the natural environment tend not to be conceptualised as separate entities’* (p. 10), and that rather for Māori, these concepts are intrinsically tied within the idea of identity. Similar perspectives of self-identity as interconnected with the natural environment are shared with across many indigenous populations globally (Freeman 2019). Research exploring this link has identified the sense of connection with the land held by Māori as intertwined with spirituality and socio-political concerns such as environmental protection (Lockhart, Houkamau, Sibley & Osborne, 2019). Phillips et al. (2022, p.149) assert that *‘It follows, then, that grounding adventure therapy in a Te Ao Māori worldview which favours a cultural, communal, ecological, and spiritual perspective, could better align with the hauora needs of Māori’*.

Jeffery’s (2022) research reiterated these findings. Many of the young people who take part in adventure therapy activities at Waipuna carry with them a history of trauma, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Indeed the Ministry of Justice reported in 2018 that an estimated

60% of community-sentenced offenders (typically youth) have co-occurring problems with mental health and substance use (Ministry of Justice, 2018).

Jeffery (2022) emphasised the importance of safety in practice, and this often being easier to achieve in nature. Recent research in Ōtautahi evaluating impacts of adventure therapy on adult survivors of abuse (Wylie & Scown, 2024) identified a range of positive impacts including increased self-confidence, growth in self-awareness, strengthened social connection and social engagement, enhanced capacity for mindfulness, increased self-regulation, a sense of pride in their achievements on the course, reductions in stress and numbness, and enhanced mood and feelings of hope.

Pretorius (2020) noted the therapeutic alliance (and the way conversations in outdoor settings can overcome anxieties (Bowen, 2016) and establish trust), inherent healing powers of nature (Barton & Pretty, 2010), strengths-based focus, use of kinaesthetic metaphor and contrasting developmentally and culturally relevant experience (Gass et al., 2020) as all distinctive features of adventure therapy and relevance of the approach to young people. Ryan's (2024) qualitative research exploring female participant experiences of adventure therapy highlighted the importance of positive experiences – of having fun and experiencing success as part of the experience of trying new and challenging activities.

In reviewing the current literature regarding adventure therapy, Waipuna's approach, where adventure therapy, at least in relation to young people who have/are engaged with Corrections, sits firmly within a context of wraparound services appears to be uncommon. The literature scan did not identify any published research on a similar approach elsewhere. Recent Canadian research by Lee & Wong (2025), exploring strengths and barriers of wraparound interventions targeting high risk young people, identified resource demands of this approach and a need for strong case management practice in the face of complexity. Wraparound approaches enable flexibility and a tailored, individualised and youth-centred approach. Operating in the context of a young person's broader social environment enables greater consideration of risk and protective factors (Bartlett & Freeze, 2020). Lee & Wong's review noted that the strengths of the wraparound model lie in its flexibility and facilitation of natural, sustainable and relational community support for those involved. This strengths-based approach was identified as encouraging young people to develop 'essential skills for long-term self-benefit'. They recommended implementing processes to mitigate risk of staff burnout and using an approach delivering persistence and consistency.

A meta-analysis is an examination of data from a number of independent studies of the same subject, in order to determine overall trends. Probably the most well-known meta-analysis regarding adventure therapy dates back to 1997, when Hattie, Marsh, Neill, and Richards undertook a meta-analysis examining effects of adventure programmes on young people in terms of a wide range of outcomes (eg. self concept, locus of control and leadership). Based on analysis of the findings of 96 studies featuring over 12,000 participants, including some New Zealand and Australian studies, they concluded that "adventure therapy programmes can obtain notable outcomes and have particularly strong, lasting effects" (p. 77). In the New Zealand context, Jansen (2004) outlined the nature and the strengths of adventure therapy approaches

as presenting a similar picture. According to Jansen, these kinds of programmes are characterised by an engaging and action-orientated setting within an unfamiliar environment. This was seen as acting as a catalyst for change. Jansen observed programmes as focus on finding solutions, gaining immediate understanding of the consequences of actions, and on success, with staff facilitating supportive peer groups, and opportunities to process big emotions and opportunity to reframe one's life.

Much more recently, Beck & Wong (2022) undertook a meta-analysis of literature regarding effectiveness of adventure therapy in addressing youth 'delinquency', drawing from 189 studies conducted between 1990 and 2020 and focusing in on 11 studies and a total sample of 1,874 young people who had taken part. They assessed self-reported and caregiver-reported 'delinquency', and their findings showed stronger effect sizes than had been identified in similar meta-analyses (including Hattie et al. (1997) conducted 15-20 years earlier). This finding was reported as concurring with meta-analysis findings that effect sizes identified in adventure therapy evaluations have increased over time, suggesting programme improvements. Their findings concurred with earlier studies showing positive impacts on self-esteem and offending behaviour, but indicated that young people tend to under-report shifts in their dysfunctional behaviour compared to their caregivers.

Bowen & Neill (2013) from the University of Canberra undertook their meta-analysis on 197 studies of adventure therapy outcomes, across a total of 2,908 participants of different ages. As such, it was the largest such study undertaken up until that time. Their findings indicate that adventure therapy programmes are moderately effective in facilitating positive short-term change in psychological, behavioural, emotional, and interpersonal domains and that these changes appear to be maintained in the longer-term. They did find stronger impacts for adults compared with younger participants. It is frustrating that so much of the research literature is focused on programmes that are relatively short-term and finite, often delivered by different professionals to those with whom young people have any sort of on-going relationship. It is probably more relevant to the use of adventure therapy by Waipuna with young people in its schools programmes, and less relevant to the commonly long-term mahi undertaken with young adults involved in the justice and corrections systems. A recent rapid systemic review of the literature regarding effective strategies and interventions for engaging 'at-risk' youth (Toews, Letourneau, Pohl & Ruse, 2024) concluded that there is no single best approach, and that rather, a variety of strategies can and should be combined to fit the individual needs of young people and the resources available.

Looking specifically at use of adventure therapy with secondary school students who are struggling with mental health challenges and/or school engagement, recent research in the US identified positive impacts of adventure therapy within a school context on the self-efficacy of middle schoolers, especially boys (Christian, McMillion, Brown, Schoonover & Miller, 2021). Another literature-study by Pringle, Boddy, Slattery & Harris (2022) looking at impact of use of adventure therapy with adolescents with complex trauma identified positive impacts on attachment, coping skills and schema and stress management and recommended ecological and human rights-based approaches.

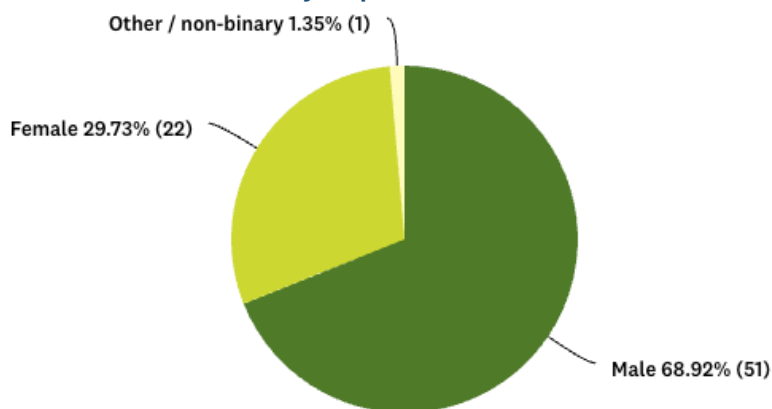
6. Survey findings – former adventure therapy participants

An electronic survey via Survey Monkey was conducted over a 6-week period, with the link distributed via text and/or email to known former participants, and via social media groups / chat groups for Tumanako. Links were distributed via text and email by Waipuna staff, and all communications made it clear that survey responses went to the researcher and not to Waipuna staff.

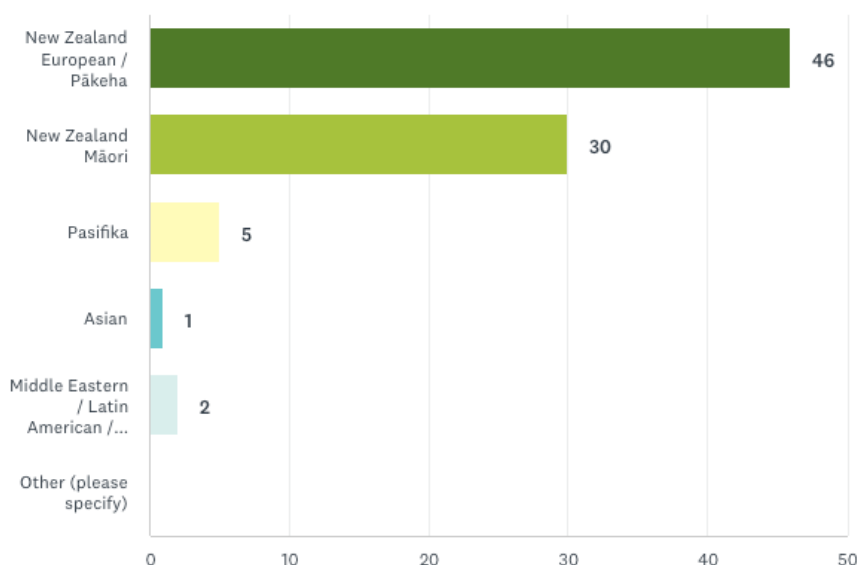
The respondent group

In total, **75 responses were received to the survey**. Of those who responded, **68.9% were male, 29.7% female** and 1.4% identified as other gender / non-binary.

Gender of survey respondents

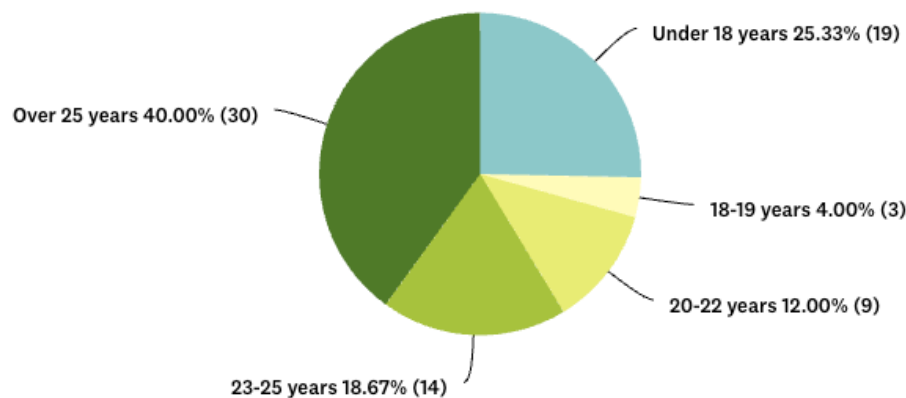


Ethnicity of survey respondents



Of the former Waipuna adventure therapy participants who responded to the survey, **63% identified as New Zealand European, 41.1% as New Zealand Māori, 6.9% as Pasifika, 2.7% as Middle Eastern / Latin American / African and 1.4% Asian**. Respondents could select as many ethnic groups as needed to describe themselves.

Age of survey respondents

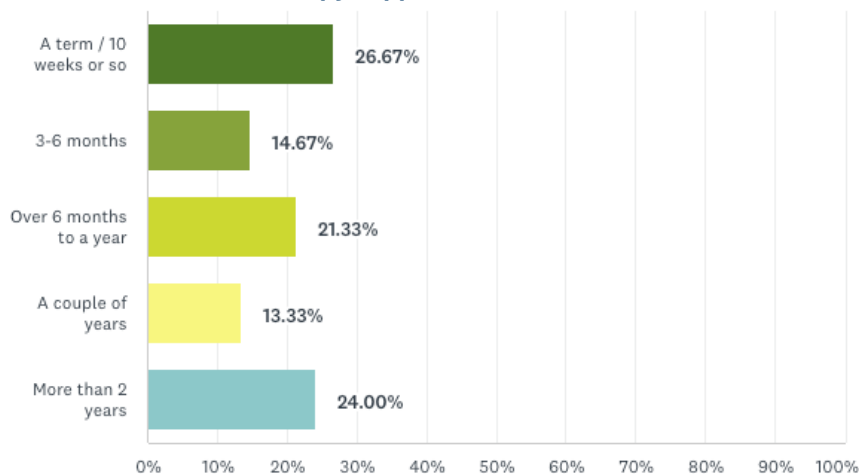


Just under 30% of the former adventure therapy participants who responded to the survey were aged under 20 years at the time of the survey. 40% were aged 26 years and over.

Of the survey respondents, **over a third (n=27, 37%) were now parents** with tamariki in their care full or part-time.

Of the former participants who responded to the survey, two-fifths completed the programme more than 5 years ago, two-fifths completed it in 2024 and the remainder completed the programme 2-5 years ago.

Duration of adventure therapy support

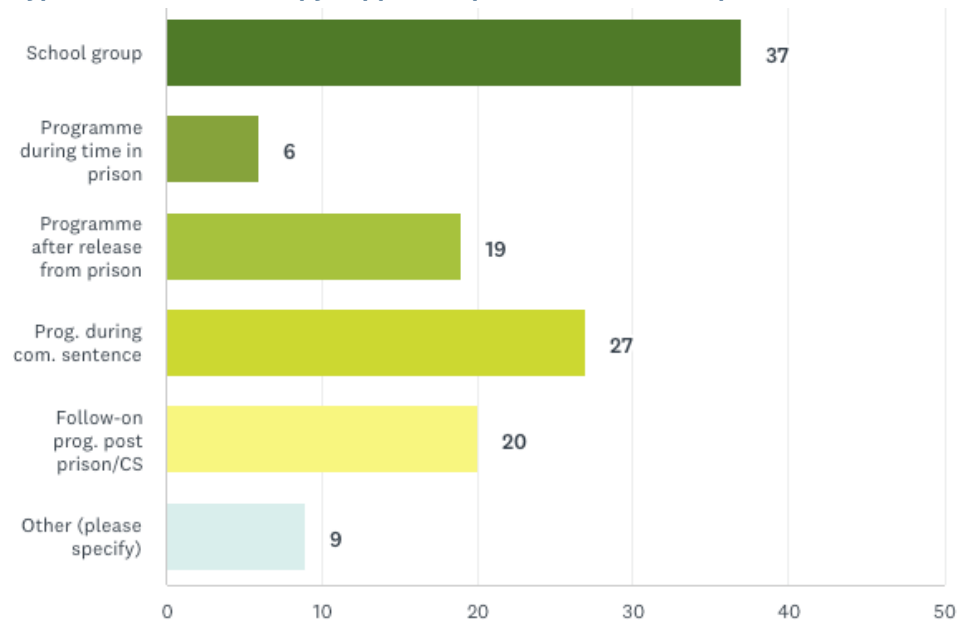


Almost three-quarters of the respondents indicated that they had received adventure therapy support for more than a term, even though almost half the respondents had taken part in a school programme. It was clear that a large proportion of the former adventure therapy programme participants who responded to the survey had received longer term support from Waipuna.

Of the 75 survey respondents, **around half had taken part in Ara Poutama-funded adventure therapy programmes at Waipuna** either during time in prison or on community sentence or following release. Just over a quarter (n=20) had taken part in follow-on support funded by MSD after completing a programme in prison / on community sentence and after completion. A

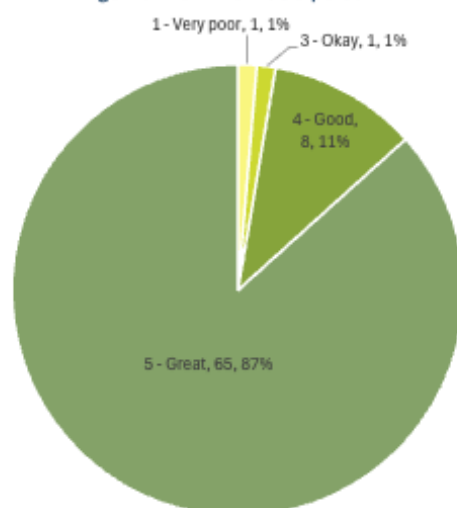
number identified also indicated that they had received parenting support, counselling or drug and alcohol support or took part in an adventure therapy programme as a follow-on from drug and alcohol treatment.

Type of adventure therapy support respondents had taken part in



Perceptions of Waipuna adventure therapy and its impact on respondents

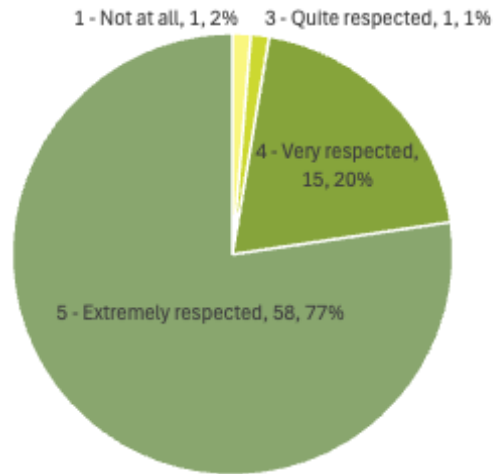
Ratings of staff and how they related to respondent, connected with them and really got to know them as a person



All but two respondents rated the staff and how they related and connected to them as either good or great, one rating this as very poor and one okay.

Ratings of how professional and good at their jobs the staff were on the programme were exactly the same, with 86.7% rating staff as great in terms of professionalism / being good at their job, 10.7% rating them as good, 1.3% as okay and 1.3% as very poor, with nobody selecting '2- Poor'.

Extent to which respondents felt respected on the adventure therapy programme, including culturally



97% of the survey respondents indicated experiencing high levels of respect while on the programme, with only 2% indicating that they did not experience this. The following comments were a selection of those made by respondents regarding the respect they experienced in their adventure therapy programme:

"I felt like I was around family."

"From the very beginning I felt like [three staff] and everyone that was a part of Waipuna was always respecting and was definitely a massive part of people being able to help me as a person, husband, partner, father in every aspect of life."

"They are the most kindest loving caring people I've ever met."

"Very genuine and friendly people that have well respected values and take and understood and acknowledged my feelings etc."

"They never judged anyone. No matter what."

"Well respected, understanding and supportive."

"I always felt they really had my back."

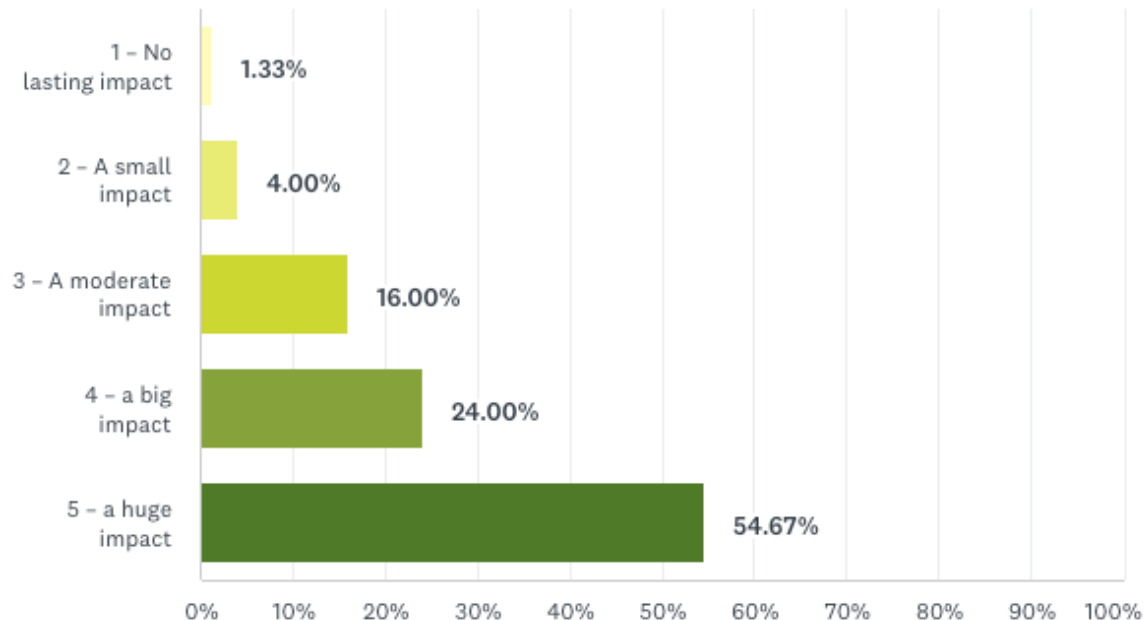
"5 - Even though at the time I was a troubled kid in the moment I'd say different but now I have matured with their help, I definitely say 5. Absolute best people I've ever met. I have ultimate gratitude that I got to meet them and attend one of their course."

When survey findings were considered only for those who took part in an adventure programme while on community sentence or following release from prison, all responses regarding Waipuna staff were positive.

Asked the question "Thinking about your life now, to what extent, if at all, did the Waipuna adventure therapy experience and the connections you made through it have a lasting impact on

you?”, more than three-quarters of the respondents indicated that their adventure therapy experience with Waipuna had made a big – huge impact on them. For those who took part in an adventure programme while on community sentence or following release from prison, 94.7% indicated a big – huge lasting impact.

Lasting impact of adventure therapy programme on respondents



An open-ended question invited the survey respondents to share a bit about the lasting impact of the adventure therapy programme. Almost two-thirds of respondents took the time to respond to this. Some of their responses are shared below.

The following feedback regarding impact was provided by respondents who had taken part in adventure therapy schools programmes:

“It made me see that there are more fun things available and not just hanging around the mall with my friends and at their houses.”

“Made new connections and friends, got out of my comfort zone, made a lifelong memory.”

“Getting out in the air away from usual indoor activities.”

“It was so much fun and really helped motivate me and get me out of a slump.”

“The 10 week course I did at Waipuna had a more positive affect on me than all the years of schooling I did. [Two of the workers] treated me as an equal and taught me life skills I still use in my everyday life.”

“The outdoors and exercise are two things I value highly and are a significant part of my life as an adult in my late 20s. I was a child when Waipuna found me, and I say found because despite all the people I had around me and had known for years growing up in what was then a fairly small community in [neighbourhood], I felt so lost. My parents separation was bitter and painful. ... I looked in the mirror and I saw ugliness. I hated my body. I started doing all sorts of things early and

felt so disconnected. Waipuna staff were safe adults and they were invested. Their interest and manaaki was genuine. I got to meet other young people in a small group and they became a regular part of my week and we shared commonalities in our struggles but in the support we were receiving from Waipuna. Adventure therapy was outdoor based and challenging - an opportunity to connect with the outdoor environment, step out of your comfort zone, feel the fear and do it anyway (with lots of encouragement, positive feedback and testing boundaries safely). It's hard to pinpoint exactly what adventure changed for me. What I do know is that even when I was young I found strength and joy and hope from what I was supported to achieve there. I got to experience cool things, build trust in others and in myself. I hate to think of where I would have ended up without it and if I hadn't have found meaning in nature and movement and personal development. Those things have saved me and become the foundation of my life. The things I centre the meaning of my life around and want to share and invest in when I have tamariki. It has led me to feel a deeper appreciation for my whakapapa. I think it's helped me to see the world differently adventure therapy."

"Well I learned to trust myself and others, I was taught life skills that I still implement in my life to this day. I learned that nothing is impossible and if I want I can strive for the best..."

"It was really helpful for getting out and doing fun cool things in nature and seeing beautiful places. Good for seasonal depression."

"Realising that I can push myself more than I thought and that I have more trust in people around me."

"It made me more confident, I feel like I am more open to opportunities that before I started the programme. I've learnt to stop and take a breath when I feel upset or stressed."

"Waipuna's adventure therapy made me a lot more confident as a person and I got to experience things I was too scared to do and didn't have the money or people to experience it with."

"It saved my life. At the time I was involved with Waipuna I was 13-15 years old with no connections to nature. Lots of drugs, violence and abuse in my home with no escape. The time I spent in nature ... gave me a connection to the outdoors and taught me so much. Throughout my life I have always turned back to nature to heal and it is a core part of my identity now, and will be for my children and future generations of my family. I was involved with ... Waipuna at a time where that programme was the only good influence in my life and I believe it would have been the largest contributing factor in a more positive direction my life took afterwards. I am not an emotional person, however I find it incredibly difficult not to get teary eyed when I look back and see what Waipuna was doing for us kids, and how bloody lucky I was to have been involved. Forever grateful."

"Before Waipuna, before I met the staff I didn't trust people, I was neglected as a child, I wasn't healthy, I was broken, no people skills no confidence, didn't trust a soul, drug/drinking problem, Waipuna saved my life I'm now living ... a life that seemed impossible before, and I hope I can make an impact on others like Waipuna did that saved my life."

The following feedback regarding impact was provided by respondents who had taken part in adventure therapy programmes either while serving a prison or community-based sentence or following:

"Without Waipuna in my life I wouldn't have passed my learners or have better self-awareness. It got me out of the house and stopped me doing crime. That course changes life's ask anyone."

"If it wasn't for the support of Waipuna I'll be in prison no doubt about it but thanks to them I'm able to be in the community and even made a little family on my own. I had ... a high chance of coming back to prison ... I was last in prison in 2022 and still going strong - crime doesn't even come into my mind and that's thanks to Waipuna."

"Before I done the programme I rarely had respect for other people let alone myself - the way I spoke, how I reacted to things, my anger, frustration was all over the show but on the programme I learnt so much about myself and about other people that I feel like I became a better version of myself. Being surrounded by Waipuna staff has had a massive impact on the person I am today and I couldn't thank them enough. I haven't reoffended since I've been off the programme and I'm not going to again. They taught me that I am good enough and that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. I'm now working fulltime, I have my own house, I'm in a beautiful relationship with my partner, I see my son more than I did before I done the programme. I'm so grateful for taking part in the programme and I would do it again in a heartbeat just to experience it once more."

"Waipuna engage with me heaps since I been out of jail, take us out for the day, do something fun with our kids too."

"I do more outdoor activities rather than sit home and abuse substances."

"It definitely kept me encouraged to continue on with my healthy lifestyle change that I am still living and lean myself in the direction of enjoying nature and being grounded too what I have in the space around men (environmentally) - signed myself up at the gym and pool whilst undergoing my prison release and community based sentence and I'm still engaged to this day doing so which was back in 2023 which was the third course programme I had graduated and attended."

"If it wasn't for this programme I would be dead or in jail for a very long time."

"Everything about Waipuna helped me become to person I am today."

"Good relationships have come from it, cool experiences that I would never thought of doing in my own time I love doing and to this day it helps me with thinking and gives me my little escape when the head gets a little much I head out and do some adventures to clear the mind."

"The programme showed me that if I ever feel like things are getting too much for me I can use physical exercise and or walks to help me think about the situation I am in and to think about what actions I want to take and what the consequences or rewards are. The programme also provided me with activities to fill my day while I was re integrated into life outside prison."

"I'm still out of jail. Haven't been in trouble since Waipuna. Waipuna is the stepping stone for young males to return to normal population."

"Still to this day I use my tools I've taken from this course and can hear [staff member]in my head ha!"

"I've learned a lot of life and social lessons from Waipuna to take on my journey and use them to today."

"Being there definitely helped me be at making better decisions by realising I'm more than what I thought of myself."

"To breakdown a lifetime of bad habits and no direction, they help me find my direction and create the habits that will carry me in the direction I choose to go."

"I never would have had the cool outdoor experiences, my ...l job, help with my licence, my baby's stuff, honestly I wouldn't even have a house without them so I owe it all to the staff at Waipuna. Also being in the girls group has helped my mental health so much and I've made lifelong friends I'm still friends with after 4 years of being with Waipuna. And making a lot of cool friends at Waipuna with the staff too was amazing to have that support."

"Definitely made see things differently, made me be more respectful & be a better person in general! Made me look at life & choose a better lifestyle for myself. Without Waipuna and all the tools they have taught me I would be in prison. I have not attended this course in a few years but what they've have taught me I still use those tools to this day. I wouldn't have a licence without them. I wouldn't be the person I am today without their help. They taught me more about life and how to deal with things correctly when I'm in a vulnerable state or a sticky situation. They still help when you haven't attended the course in years. They go well over and above to help us rangatahi to get on track and stay on track and I'm very grateful for the opportunity I had to attend Waipuna. Without Waipuna I wouldn't be the person I am today. Waipuna is the best place I have ever attended! I look at them as family and a safe place I know I could always go too."

Not just the adventure therapy programme but also the never ending support from the whole Waipuna team especially [Community Development Manager]. Best programme I ever committed to when I was younger it has helped me drastically through my life so far and decision making."

"I was in a position where it was death and or jail with a life of being a patched up gang member & doing things that I didn't really want to be doing, to being in a position where they guided me and helped me lose that connection with the gang and to this day they still help me deal with keeping my life on the straight and narrow."

"I used to be a drug smoker, alcohol drinker, sex addicted, thief. I now have a job, a car, a stable income, a safe home and a girlfriend I would like to marry and make my wife. I am fit and motivated to be anything close to the staff of Waipuna. My dream job is to become anything close to [staff members]. They are my absolute idols."

"Waipuna has changed my life and the ongoing support is awesome I would be back in prison without their support they do a awesome job here in the community."

"The time [staff members] spent with me changed the trajectory of my journey from negative to positive."

"If it wasn't for Waipuna and the staff there helping me turn my life around I'd be serving time in jail or dead. I was heading down a dark path with crime and addiction and they helped me overcome that dark path as well as unlimited support with getting sober."

“I wouldn’t be who I am today without the help of Waipuna they have changed my entire life around.”

It was clear in much of this feedback that it is hard to separate the adventure therapy components of Waipuna’s mahi from the holistic wraparound support.

Grounded in the theory of change articulated for Waipuna’s adventure therapy approach (refer Appendix A), the survey sought to determine what (if any) lasting impact Waipuna adventure therapy programme(s) and the relationships and connections made through this had on a range of domains for the individual, including relationships with others, active lifestyles, self-awareness, feelings of hope, self-efficacy, social connections, support networks and pro-social behaviour. Respondents rated impact on each desired outcome individually, as presented in the table on the following page.

Combining the proportion of respondents indicating that the Waipuna adventure therapy programme(s) and the relationships and connections made through this made a big – huge impact for them, strongest impacts were evident for the following domains:

- **Awareness of own emotional state** (80.0% rated impact big-huge)
- **Feelings of hope** (78.1% rated impact big-huge)
- **Perceived social connection** (78.6% rated impact big-huge)

Looking at the responses only for those who received adventure therapy during a community sentence or after release from prison, the greatest impacts were on sense of hope, making good choices around drug and alcohol and offending behaviour, relationships with others, awareness of emotions and self-belief, and impact was stronger on all domains than for the respondent group as a whole.

- 100% indicated a big – huge impact on their feelings of hope
- 94.8 indicated a big – huge impact on their self-belief – knowing they can achieve things – backing themselves and taking risks
- 94.8% indicated a big – huge impact on making good choices (around drug and alcohol use, offending etc.)
- 94.4% indicated a big – huge impact on their awareness of their emotions
- 94.4% indicated a big – huge impact on their relationships with others – professionals, service providers, whānau, friends, peers
- 89.5% indicated a big – huge impact on having an active lifestyle where physical activity is a habit – they make time for sport and/or active recreation and try and stay fit in body and mind
- 89.5% indicated a big – huge impact on how connected they feel to other people, and a two-way valuing of each other
- 89.5% indicated a big – huge impact on how many different people, groups, services, activities and places they have around them to support their wellbeing and that they know they can get support from when things are tough.

Domain	1 No lasting impact	2 A small impact	2 A moderate impact	4 A big impact	5 A huge impact
Your relationships with others – professionals, service providers, whānau, friends, peers	2.7% (n=2)	5.3% (n=4)	14.7% (n=11)	28.0% (n=21)	49.3% (n=37)
Having an active lifestyle where physical activity is a habit – you make time for sport and/or active recreation and try and stay fit in body and mind	4.0% (n=3)	2.7% (n=2)	20.0% (n=15)	28.0% (n=21)	45.3% (n=34)
How aware you are of your emotions – knowing how you are doing	2.7% (n=2)	6.7% (n=5)	10.7% (n=8)	32.0% (n=24)	48.0% (n=36)
Your feelings of hope	4.1% (n=3)	-	17.8% (n=13)	28.8% (n=21)	49.3% (n=36)
Your self-belief – knowing you can achieve things – backing yourself and taking risks	2.7% (n=2)	2.7% (n=2)	16.0% (n=12)	17.3% (n=13)	61.3% (n=46)
How connected you feel to other people, and a two-way valuing of each other	2.7% (n=2)	6.7% (n=5)	18.7% (n=14)	21.3% (n=16)	50.7% (n=38)
How many different people, groups, services, activities and places you have around you to support your wellbeing and that you know you can get support from when things are tough	4.1% (n=3)	4.1% (n=3)	21.6% (n=16)	24.3% (n=18)	46.0% (n=34)
Making good choices (around drug and alcohol use, offending etc.)	5.5% (n=4)	8.2% (n=6)	15.1% (n=11)	23.3% (n=17)	48.0% (n=35)

Impact on whānau

The survey asked respondents to think about their whānau, and to rate the impact they thought their experience of the Waipuna programme and the relationships and connections they made through it had had on a range of domains. Filtered only for those 27 survey respondents with tamariki in their care at least some of the time, findings are presented in the following table.

Combining the proportion of respondents indicating that the Waipuna adventure therapy programme(s) and the relationships and connections made through this made a big – huge impact for them, **strongest impacts were evident for the following domains:**

- 88.9% indicated a big-huge impact on **their hopes and dreams for their tamariki**
- 88.9% indicated a big – huge impact on **how they relate to their tamariki – whether they think about the way Waipuna staff relate to their tamariki and try and be like them**

- 88.9% indicated a big-huge impact on **how much of a priority the wellbeing of their whānau is to them – knowing what to do to help their tamariki and wider whānau thrive and live a great life**

Domain	1 No lasting impact	2 A small impact	2 A moderate impact	4 A big impact	5 A huge impact
Their hopes and dreams for their tamariki	3.7% (n=1)	3.7% (n=1)	3.7% (n=1)	11.1% (n=3)	77.8% (n=21)
How much time they spend with their tamariki doing active outdoor stuff	3.7% (n=1)	-	22.2% (n=6)	18.5% (n=5)	55.6% (n=15)
How they relate to their tamariki – whether they think about the way Waipuna staff relate to their tamariki and try and be like them	7.4% (n=2)	-	3.7% (n=1)	14.8% (n=4)	74.1% (n=20)
How connected they and their whānau are to their community – clubs and groups, friends, Waipuna staff, marae, parks, the beach and other natural places etc.	3.7% (n=1)	-	22.2% (n=6)	18.5% (n=5)	55.6% (n=15)
How much of a priority the wellbeing of their whānau is to them – knowing what to do to help their tamariki and wider whānau thrive and live a great life	3.7% (n=1)	-	7.4% (n=2)	14.8% (n=4)	74.1% (n=20)

Looking just at those 19 survey respondents with tamariki who took part in an adventure therapy programme either while on community sentence or following release from prison:

- 94.7% indicated a big-huge impact on how much of a priority the wellbeing of their whānau is to them – knowing what to do to help their tamariki and wider whānau thrive and live a great life
- 94.7% indicated a big – huge impact on how they relate to their tamariki – whether they think about the way Waipuna staff relate to their tamariki and try and be like them
- 88.5% indicated a big-huge impact on their hopes and dreams for their tamariki
- 79.0% indicated a big-huge impact on how much time they spend with their tamariki doing active outdoor stuff
- 79.0% indicated a big – huge impact on how connected they and their whānau are to their community – clubs and groups, friends, Waipuna staff, marae, parks, the beach and other natural places etc.

Looking particularly at these survey respondents, almost three-quarters reported engaging with other services at Waipuna, with 7 receiving parenting support, 2 accessing the preschool, 2 antenatal classes and one baby massage. Eighty-five percent reported still being connected with Waipuna staff.

Connection to other services delivered by Waipuna

Just over half the former adventure therapy participants who responded to the survey (n=39, 52.0%) reported engaging with other services at Waipuna, as follows:

• Counselling	25
• Drug and alcohol support	23
• Housing, as part of wraparound support	11
• Parenting support	10
• Food / budgeting support as part of wraparound support	6
• Sports/ active recreation activity (eg. Ju Jitsu, Wednesday night sports, marathon etc.)	5
• Eating awareness support	4
• Antenatal classes	3
• Little Owls Preschool	2
• Art group/therapy	2
• Anger management	1
• Baby massage	1
• Support into employment	1
• Driver licensing support	1
• Mama wahine	1

Other feedback

The survey offered respondents the opportunity to provide other feedback on the adventure therapy approach at Waipuna and their experiences. Over half the respondents took the time to add to the feedback they had already provided, all with a sentiment of gratitude evident in their responses.

Feedback from Schools programme participants:

“This is a massive part of my journey in life, and for a massive part of it didn’t think I was ever gonna make it out ... the support I had through Waipuna gave me the strength to push through - not only the carry on and shit up but actually helping me through counselling and getting into the mahi - the repercussions of realising the relationships I had with people and the follow up conversations with [worker] and the Waipuna family marking sure we were all on track and on track to a place we would be happy to have our family living in. ... What I do know is what Waipuna gives and can achieve is monumental compassion to every day schooling.”

“[worker] made me understand that sports and being amongst safe and cool people has changed my life.”

“It helped me believe I could do things that I wouldn’t have attempted before.”

“I went to Ara and studied outdoor education because of [staff members] and earned a degree and now work in the outdoors. They are a big reason why I do this and I will always be grateful for them and the Waipuna adventure therapy programme I got to do.”

“I’ve had many ups and downs since Waipuna but it was a massive part of my kete and something to draw on as I have been repairing and building my life as a teenager and adult. I am a [social services professional]. I enjoy the outdoors and exercise in my personal life but am generally a

person who loves challenges and achieving things. I am someone who aspires to be a kind and compassionate leader and to be someone I needed when I was younger, like those who facilitated the adventure therapy groups. ...”

“It was amazing/challenging and gave me drive to do everything I have accomplished. I have been for 10 years / currently still travel the world in search for more adventures. When I stop travelling I would love to help others in the way that Waipuna helped me. Kia Ora.”

“Having been through this at high school I found this made me lean away from crime and joining a gang. The people there were always warm and inviting but most of all understanding of bad backgrounds.”

“I have gotten the job I have today because of their help as well as my licence, outdoor and indoor experiences like games which I love very much. I know so many good scenic areas and walks that I can now enjoy with friends. Many good memories shared amongst my now closest friends who I met at Waipuna. My future career is mostly thanks to the experiences I had with Waipuna.”

“I’d have to say Waipuna stuff especially [staff member] helped me out of a lot of dark places in my life and helped me to grow to be the independent woman I am today. She helped me through my whole pregnancy - always checking up, always my biggest cheerleader pushing me to better my life. And most of the Waipuna staff have impacted me, things like helping me move into my first home, my baby group, and getting my licence which I never would have done without them. Pretty much everything I have now I owe a big thanks to Waipuna. They’ve been like a family outside of my own family. And shown me what a real family is like. And I’ve grown so much emotionally because of their therapy sessions and outdoor ed. My favourite part was the outdoor ed - you never realise how much better life feels from just going outside and being with nature, and to that I have Waipuna to thank for all my blessing I now have.<3”

“Waipuna helped me find a community that I felt I belonged in and helped me find out my love for adventures and water activities such as rafting.”

“Absolute life-saving programme that changed the course of my future and therefore my family’s future.”

“Honestly Waipuna ... they change my life I didn’t have anything growing up - no people skills, no confidence, I was neglected, not going to school, turning to drugs/ alcohol, Waipuna made such a massive impact on my life, if I didn’t have them I’d probably be in prison or worse right now, however they helped me get work, they taught me how to have a relationship with my family and the community. I’m now living a life that once never thought possible but it was only because of the Waipuna that gave me an opportunity to get my life together and sort my emotions together when no one else looked at me. I just hope one day I can give back to teenagers/young adults cause it’s life-changing, I owe my life to Waipuna and the staff that work there, they’re amazing!!”

Feedback from participants in adventure therapy while serving community or custodial sentence or post-release

“If it gets shut down expect a lot of people to ruin their lives and go back to jail.”

“I have so much love and respect for the Waipuna staff. I hope that they can continue to change young men’s lives around for the better by being able to continue their programmes and courses!!”

“Best bunch of people you’ll meet - cheers Waipuna!”

“Overall great place and very nice and welcoming staff. I let them down a few times and they only ever showed me love, I’m hoping there is another course to attend in the future as I’d really like other young men who were in my situation change and see that there is hope for them to change and be better men themselves, Cheers”

“This programme made my life change from being down a very dark tunnel with no light in sight to a place where now even if I ever end up in a dark tunnel again I have the skills, knowledge & support to break out of it.”

“Just all worked out for the better - being able to have that support from all the guys there made it feel like a family. Got me on the right path to living my life to the fullest and stopping thinking and making much better choices in life.”

“It’s a good community - love the staff. I’ve never seen staff interact with people like Waipuna. I highly recommend the programme for those who want to change for the better. It changed me into the person I am today and can’t thank them enough for all the support.”

“The whole journey with Waipuna was amazing. They give you the opportunity to get out of the house while on home detention. They also give the necessary skills to successfully have positive lasting relationships. To all the team at Waipuna I thank you.”

“The tools I still use - My understanding of things/situations/environments. Overall great team. I enjoyed my time there - created relationships with participants and staff. Years down the track and a whole new perspective on life, still in contact with [Community Development Manager] and others.”

“Just grateful a place like Waipuna exists. I’ve seen a lot of people start the programmes angry and come out a whole different person! It’s incredible to see how much of a positive impact Waipuna has on everyone that has attended this programme. Even when you don’t attend the courses, most people still go back to see the staff because they put in time to each individual that has attended this place - go well over and above! It’s a life changing programme. It’s like winning lotto! I doubt most people would find a special place like Waipuna. It’s like another home. You know you’re always welcome back and it’s just so amazing! I love this place and I’m grateful I got to be a part of Waipuna.”

“Before joining Waipuna, I wasn’t going down a good path. Waipuna helped me get into rehab, finding housing and a full time job. They helped me learn to connect with my family and I knew if I ever needed anything, I could reach out to them. They have made a huge impact on who I am today, I really hope Waipuna is able to continue helping others like they have helped me.”

“I cannot thank the staff at Waipuna enough for the continued support throughout the years with many different things. [staff member] has changed my way of thinking throughout the years and helped me get through a lot of tough times. He has improved my interest in many sports I would not be doing these things or be in the position I am in life without him.”

“If it wasn’t for Waipuna’s help, I’d be a deadbeat father, I would be on drugs & still be a patched up gang member. I just wanna say thank you from the bottom of my heart to all the staff at Waipuna for the guidance and consistent help you all have provided for me and my son, So grateful, thank you is an understatement.”

“Feel like it has helped me interact with others better and given me more motivation to get out and do the things I love.”

“I owe my life and soul to the staff at Waipuna. They feed me, sheltered me and taught me the ways of life and how to survive without taking from others. They are angels in disguise and one day I will pay back everything they have ever given me. I have an unconditional love for them, not only as staff or family but as the best friends I could ever ask for.”

“It really helped me when I was released and changed my life for the better. [Worker] is a awesome support worker and all of the staff continue to support me 5 years later and I would be lost with their support in this community. thanku Waipuna.”

8. Interviews with participants of Ara Poutama – funded programmes incorporating adventure therapy approach

Who did we talk to?

Eight young men who had taken part in Ara Poutama-funded adventure therapy courses with Waipuna were interviewed. The sample included a mix of those who had completed the course more recently and were now earlier on in the post-course journey, being supported by Waipuna through MSD-funded follow-on support, and others whose adventure therapy course had been several years earlier. They were invited to meet with an interviewer at Waipuna at a time that suited them, and assured that they did not have to do this and if they chose not to, it would not make any difference to the service they received. At the time of the meeting, the interviewer fully explained the research and sought full informed consent before the interview commenced.

In practice, one of the young men keen to take part was not living in New Zealand, so the Community Development Manager at Waipuna connected the researcher and the former participant and at his preference, a video chat was arranged at a time that worked. The other 7 participants were interviewed *kānohi ki te kānohi*, four by the principal researcher and one by a kaupapa Māori researcher. Two chose to be interviewed together, and being one Māori and one non-Māori, both the Māori and non-Māori researcher shared leadership of the discussion.

Waipuna staff were present in the same building at the time of the hui for safety reasons, and assisted those who needed it with transport to and from the interview, but the participants were assured that if they chose not to take part, the researcher would not pass this information on and they would get the koha (\$20 supermarket giftcard) regardless.

Of those interviewed:

- 3 were aged 21-24 years
- 3 were aged 25-27 years
- 2 were aged 28 years and over

and

- 4 were New Zealand European
- 3 New Zealand Māori
- 1 Asian.

Five of the 8 former participants interviewed were engaged in fulltime work, one was on a trades course, one had got his outdoor activity instructor ticket with Waipuna's support and was applying for jobs and voluntary hours towards his ticket, and one was on leave from his employment due to drink drive reoffending but returning to work soon.

Their experiences

Because the men we heard from had taken part in the adventure therapy courses at different times, they had been supported by different staff members, with some shared across the cohort. All affirmed the staff as professional in their approach, and well-trained for the work undertaken.

They appreciated how staff differed in their personalities, cultural backgrounds and life experiences and in terms of their adventurous passions and skills.

"It feels like they work well together, especially during group and they just they know what they're doing."

"Their job doesn't tell them they have to be this way, like schools and therapists and prisons are. So you know, there's a big difference here. So they're more freer to do their job too, easier for them to be able to tell their stories and who they are really. Genuine. If I have problems, I'll talk to them, anything you know, relationships ... because I know that if they give me an advice on something, it's not gonna be some bullshit. It's not just out of a book or something."

It was strongly evident from the interviews with former participants that the staff had at all times taken a strongly relational approach to their mahi, demonstrating the core values of whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and kaitiakitanga. All felt very much cared for by staff. For three of the young men interviewed, they'd been given housing assistance by Waipuna, one when homeless and one enabling him to get parole.

"I didn't have anywhere to go for my probation and anything. So I had no family. And the only family I had were where I wasn't allowed in the district because of the crime and that. So I had nowhere to go. So I kept getting delayed with my parole. That's three, four times ... and then [Waipuna staff said] 'so we actually have a bed free now'. ...Otherwise, I would have had to do my whole time."

They all felt respected and accepted, and feedback suggested that even where group dynamics were complex, the staff worked hard to successfully develop a strong and supportive group culture. A number of those we met with spoke of a family feel to the adventure therapy.

"The way that they engage with you gives that away, because you can tell when people are just there for their work, or when they're there to, you know, to actually make a difference. So that's one thing I noticed about [worker], big time, because he really cared about that stuff, especially with the family ... Yeah, he's very family orientated."

"I feel like [my culture was included]... I would always do karakia. And the boys would like give us the option if we wanted to open up or close [with a karakia]..."

"They know how to engage with young, naughty people and stuff. Like, if they talk to anyone else, you know, it's hard to, like, even have a conversation with them, and because they're so, you know, naughty. But somehow the Waipuna staff knew how to communicate very well with them, and yeah, and sort of relate to them in a way as well. And yeah, they just love the stuff."

"I could relate to them quite a lot. Yeah, just in the fitness side of things, and I don't know, they were just great personalities. They didn't give off any bad vibes. And yeah, just really good people to talk to. You look forward to going, they'd pick you up every single day, it was very good, you know, like, and they feed you as well, which is another great thing. Very lucky. So I loved going. I loved pretty much every bit of it."

"I guess it's just more of a family orientated place, yeah, yeah. You know, they're not. That's not so like you don't feel pressured to do anything, you know, you do it your own time or your own pace."

All participants interviewed reported feeling very safe on the adventure therapy programme and in their interactions with Waipuna staff – physically, culturally and spiritually. At a physical level, this was facilitated by the training/skill of staff and the processes and procedures in place to ensure safety during the various activities. All demonstrated a holistic understanding around safety and what this means within the context of adventure therapy.

“I felt like they actually had a pretty good structure, really, pretty much did everything properly. Yeah, all of us felt safe. There was always definitely like safety procedures we would go through and make sure that everyone's safe...I felt pretty safe actually, to like, let my guard down. Just, yeah, just have a bit of fun.”

“Very safe. In good hands. ... If anything was to blow out of proportion, the staff could easily handle that. ... I've never really felt like scared or anything like that with a new group of people, so it's not really the way I operate. But yeah, no, there's no sense of fear. I felt totally safe.”

“If someone's being a dick or whatever, they just kind of diffuse it. Oh, usually they'll pull you. Give me some time. 'Wow. What's happening? If you want to talk about it, you can. If not, don't be a dick.' Because the whole point was not, you know, it's everybody's here to do the whole fucking programme - you want to put in the effort, you'll get what you want out of the group, but if you don't, then you're wasting everybody's time. ... They're good. If they see something happening, they'll try sort it right then and there without disturbing the whole group, if they can.”

“We always had to have a talk in the morning. And anyways, say how we're feeling, and if we knew what we were going to do, and if we didn't feel comfortable doing it, they always gave us, like, a second choice or whatever, but, yeah, always felt comfortable.”

“They were they good at giving instructions to help people keep safe. ... they're following good procedures, like stuff where we have to put our life jackets in there. So you check yours, you check theirs. Oh well, you check yours, you check somebody's, and someone else will come around and check them. So it's not ever, oh yeah, he checked his own one. It's always someone else's checked too, so it's not like 'you're adults', because not a lot of us haven't done, I haven't done most of the stuff that we did on the programme, and I probably wouldn't if it wasn't for them.”

“I felt safe in every way, like you could trust what you say to them was between yous, ... I know you felt like you could talk to them, or like when we were doing the activities, you felt safe in their guidance, because they seem quite capable and trained in what they were doing.”

Impacts

In terms of impacts of the 10-week adventure therapy course, all of those interviewed identified a strong sense of connection with the people who led their course and with other Waipuna staff they connected with, and this sense of connection had endured since. All experienced a sense of connection to some of the other participants on their course, although all also indicated that there were at least one or two rangatahi in their cohort who didn't fully engage in the course, and with whom they felt less connected. The majority did not form enduring friendships with participants through the course itself, but they commonly came to see key staff members in this manner. The following comment was typical of a lot of the feedback - Although one participant, 'Chase' initially made connections with other guys in the course, he felt like things changed over time after the course ended.

"I did [make connections]... But then I guess everyone just kind of goes their own way, really. Yeah, guess they had things going on for themselves as well...we all didn't want what they wanted. I was just busy doing mahi and just trying to focus on that."

Where meaningful, supportive friendship connections were formed with other participants which endured, these tended to be through the Wednesday evening programme which followed on after the course ended.

All of the young men we heard from indicated growth in their sense of self-efficacy and of confidence as arising from the adventure therapy programme. All could identify specific things they had done where they overcame fear / anxiety, mastered a new skill, helped other people. They could think of tangible examples where they had demonstrated bravery / courage and where they had persevered at something that was hard.

"They've got a good model there that's called the rubber band model from memory. And it's like, your comfort zone, and then your stretch zone, and then your break zone. So it's always good to be in a stretch zone. They say, like, so you're always constantly growing and not burning yourself out, kind of thing. So yeah, that does wonders for your confidence."

"Before this, I probably wouldn't come to this. Yeah, I wouldn't have come to this interview. But my confidence now is heaps better."

All recalled the various activities they had experienced as part of the adventure programme, and the adventures undertaken through Waipuna. While some of those interviewed had undertaken activities like those included in their programme, most had not enjoyed these for some time. All experienced something that was new to them, and all went to places they'd never been before, including those 'on their doorstep', and many have returned to some of these with their tamariki or to enjoy the activities and places again, either alone or with friends / whānau.

"Every single place I went, I hadn't been there before. Like, Cave Stream, never, never had been there before. And I actually, I loved it so much. I even took my [tamariki] there a year later. Yeah, we loved it too, and that was great."

Everyone we heard from agreed that their sense of hope increased through the programme.

"More just thinking about the future, yeah, not getting stuck in the past, yeah."

They'd all really enjoyed the time spent reflecting at multiple points each day on the programme. Looking at longer term impacts, this was something commonly carried forward: Participants expressed feelings of gratitude, and for a number, much more insight into their emotions and how they are feeling at any one time. This had been very helpful for preventing further offending, and holding down employment. It did seem like a testament to the approach that the majority of former participants interviewed were engaged in employment and that they typically had remained with the same employer for some time and/or progressed in their career. It seemed from the feedback of at least some of those interviewed that learnings around decision making and emotional recognition and regulation were a key part in this.

All the former participants interviewed were now much more physically active than they were before their time with Waipuna, in physical activity that engages them, running, working out, surfing, ju jitsu, hiking or cycling. All were demonstrating or were on a pathway to much better self-care than they experienced before connecting with Waipuna.

“Once I got out and come here, that’s when I wanted to start, like, looking after my body, eating properly, gymming in there, like I got myself my gym at home. Just before I didn’t care.”

The former participants interviewed all remained connected to Waipuna, and this connection was utilised for recruitment for the interviews: this is obviously not the case for everyone who takes part in the adventure therapy programmes. For the people we heard from, they were all in a place in their lives where they had strong support networks around them – people they could reach out to and talk with if they needed to, or for advocacy support around housing, training and employment or in the courts if they did reoffend. They also had an open door to a range of social supports including counselling, alcohol and drug support antenatal classes and parenting support. A number of the men we heard from had utilised a range of supports provided by Waipuna.

The interviews revealed strong evidence of improved interactions with whānau. For those in the cohort who are fathers, all talked of looking to staff and their role modelling of what it means to be a good father. This was a big priority for them, even when they only had their tamariki in their care some of the time. All of those interviewed who were not the main carer for their tamariki made a point of telling the interviewer that their ex-partner was a great mum: this seemed to indicate conscious consideration of what it means to be a great parent, and this was something very important to them. Those interviewed who are parents enjoy engaging in active recreation with their tamariki.

The tane were heard from indicated strengthened connections with some whānau members as a result of their journey with Waipuna, although for some this was complicated. Where whānau were characterised with dysfunction, including in at least one case involvement in crime, connection was weighed against staying on the right track and living a crime-free and positive lifestyle. One of the former participants interviewed had, encouraged by staff at Waipuna, recently reconnected with his mum who was dying. A number spoke of the pride their whānau, and especially their mothers felt at their progress and their successful completion of the adventure therapy course.

“It’s my mum. Yeah, they made me, I don’t know, speak, talk to her. Never really like connected with her, but talk to her about things. But yeah, they got me into it. Just me and mum are real close now. ... She just she knew that I was in going into bad stuff, and until I wanted to change that, she didn’t really well want to have anything to do with me. She just knew I was going down a bad path and was going to end up in jail. Anyways, she still helped me once I got out. That’s what probably changed my mindset the most was having people looking out for me. A lot of the boys, they don’t get anyone.”

One tane Māori, very quiet at first in his paired interview, really lit up when sharing his experiences of the course graduation and the whānau pride around this.

"I got 100% attendance. I got a certificate. Oh, man, my mom stole it. This picture of me riding on a wave and 100% attendance. She goes 'I got a couple things out of your room'. I was like, down the track, I was looking around for the picture, and then I went to go see my old lady. And then I walked through the house, looked up and there's a picture that I was looking for. She always takes my stuff."

For tane Māori, some had really strengthened their sense of cultural identity – of whakapapa through the adventure therapy course and their interactions with Waipuna since.

While we can only rely on the information passed on in the interview, it appeared that the Waipuna mahi had made a tangible impact on offending behaviour and drug and alcohol use across the interview cohort. One young man, whose offending history is intertwined with alcohol use, has reoffended with drink driving. No other interviewees reported reoffending, and the level of their alcohol and drug use has reduced, certainly with a shift from use of Class A and B drugs.

"The charges ... that I got convicted for, which was the reason I was doing the course was, I got sentenced, convicted for two counts of supply of Class A drugs, a count of supply of Class C drugs, four counts of possession of firearms, which was all drug related. ... And then doing that course, and doing the drug programme ... just taught me a lot about how I was using that to mask what was going on inside my head and there were other ways to deal with it, instead of turning to drugs and alcohol, and how being around pro social people and doing pro social things like outdoor education and things like that has such a benefit for you when you're trying to transition away from those things."

Case summaries

The following are case summaries for most of the former participants interviewed.

'Rehua'

Rehua is tane Māori in his late 20s, and he lives with his partner and her two tamariki, while he has his own two tamariki also in their care every weekend. His tamariki attend kohanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori. While Rehua never grew up learning te reo, it's really important to him that his tamariki have this opportunity.

Rehua connected with Waipuna while in the prison youth unit around a decade ago, serving a sentence for a violent offence committed when he was 17 years old. He still remembers lots about the activities he took part in with Waipuna. After release he stayed connected with Waipuna for a while on and off, and took part in 4 Coast to Coast races, and lots of cycle and running events.

Right from the outset in the programme, Rehua found the Waipuna staff really welcoming. For him, it felt strange being around what he described as 'normal people', and said he was quite 'observant' of the staff at first, and it took a while before he felt like he could be open with them. As his relationship built with them and with others on the programme, he found the relationship with staff friendly, with the group feeling really 'family-orientated'. He developed a lot of understanding through the programme, especially around "thinking traps", and also learned to recognise his emotions much better and respond more appropriately to them.

"If I felt like, instead of bottling up my emotions, which is, I'm pretty bad for, and then explode, I would, if I could feel it coming, actually acknowledge what's happening instead of keeping it quiet."

Rehua saw some of the other participants not really engage with the programme, but he'd consciously decided to make the most of it. However in the time following his release, he feels like he got too relaxed, and was drinking and using drugs, and things at home "turned to shit". He reached out to the staff at Waipuna for help, and to him, it felt like reaching out to friends - it felt safe. They let him repeat the programme and helped him get his life back on track.

Staff at Waipuna helped him get a job, and he's now been with the same employer for 6 years, doing work he really enjoys.

Rehua feels like he developed a lot of people skills through the support of Waipuna, and feels like his communication skills improved a lot because of the time spent with Waipuna staff.

"Talking to normal people - my vocabulary was pretty bad when I was younger, just from not hanging out with a wide range of people, so just more people skills. I guess I learned more of a leadership as well."

The programme got him out of his comfort zone and helped him build confidence, becoming a bit less standoffish over time. While the on-going relationships with staff at Waipuna since he completed the programme have been really important in supporting positive change in Rehua's life, he feels like these only came about because of the adventure therapy aspects of the programme – the "getting out of the classroom".

"You know, it's kind of a must have, yeah? Because you won't build that relationship. For me, I feel like, yes, you can build a relationship inside a room, right? But not the adventure. That's when you can get someone's their true self, you know, through adventure."

Rehua described his large whānau as "a bit all over the show", and he keeps his distance because while he has changed his life, they don't want to change. He's very focused on doing the best he can for his partner and their tamariki. As a whānau they try and get away tramping every 3 months or so, something he got into through Waipuna. He's also strongly focused on self-care and continues to make this a priority. Right now, having a strong support network around him through the staff at Waipuna just feels like a "normal thing".

'Nick'

Nick is a New Zealand European male in his mid-20s. He is the only former participant involved in the interviews for the impact assessment who was not interviewed in person (interviewed instead via video call), because he now lives and works overseas, and has done for 2 years. He was involved with Waipuna and their Ara Poutama-funded adventure therapy programme back in 2018, court-ordered to undertake the course while on home detention. As well as the course itself and the various adventurous activities that formed part of that, Nick also competed twice in the Coast to Coast with Waipuna and also got involved in various cycle races and other competitive events. He also undertook drug and alcohol counselling with Waipuna.

Nick says he was quite standoffish with the guys from Waipuna in the first couple of weeks, but especially connected with one staff member whose story he could relate to. Within a couple of weeks it felt like good relationships were formed with all the team, and a good team feeling also developed across the participants, who had some shared experiences and all enjoyed the activities they took part in. This carried on beyond the 10 week course because of the Wednesday evening programme that followed.

"On my course, quite a lot of us, we were in similar circumstances, being in trouble and stuff like that, and then a lot of us just clicked really well. We got along. We just, like, I don't know, we just kind of formed a good group bond early in the course which made it quite enjoyable. And, like, then everyone would start turning up a lot, because they enjoyed being there with the people that were there and on the group and stuff like that. And it wasn't about being forced to go there. We were going there to hang out with each other and then with the tutors and like, learn new things and go do cool activities and stuff like that. ... What helped was that Wednesday night group, because we got to meet and get to know other people who had done the course before."

Nick really liked the way te ao Māori concepts were woven into the way the course was delivered, and felt that this clicked with a lot of the guys on the course, including non-Māori. He felt really respected and safe on the course, and really liked how the staff delivering the adventure therapy activities were all varied in their skills and interests, complementing each other really well. He also thought it worked well that they all have different personalities.

"They all, like, they were all easy to get along with. They're all slightly different personalities. So, that could reach a wider variety of people and get a wider variety of people feel more comfortable and easier for them to, I don't know, benefit from doing the group."

The staff at Waipuna made Nick feel really cared for as a person, and he still feels this way, years on from his programme.

"A lot because, and I still feel they do. They still check in with me now, and how I'm going. And anytime I come back to New Zealand, they always want to, you know, we always catch up."

Nick got to experience a lot of new things and places on the programme. He described his learnings from the adventure therapy course as follows:

"How much you could push yourself to the limits, and then how much you could use adventure therapy to test your mental strength, and like, I guess, strengthen it and because then you could use that same mental strength in other aspects and areas of your life. If you can control the hard times when you doing those adventure tasks like cycling, running, or, you know when you're pretty worn out or whatever, and you want to give up, but if you keep telling yourself not to give up and you don't, you can also translate that into other areas of your life. ... A lot of those activities probably pushed me outside my comfort zone, and at that time and point of my life. Look, if they had asked me a year beforehand to go and do that sort of thing, I would laugh to you every single time, no matter which of the activities. ... And I would have never thought I'd be able to accomplish any of those activities, or even some of those, like some of those races and that, but then also just doing some of those adventure therapy things we did, like the cave walk and all that, I wouldn't have even considered doing that before and then, so then I wouldn't have, I guess, had had trust or hope in my ability to do it. But now, after doing that with them, I know I'm perfectly capable."

Nick enjoyed the opportunities available for reflection on the programme.

"You always had the time while you're in the van going from, and then normally, we're just like, you know, everywhere all day, you know, we'd have a lunch break and we'd do like, a group talk thing. ... It was, like, things you're grateful for that day, positive, negative, and just think how you were feeling, or something like that. We'd normally start every morning off like that. ... We'd do that before we leave, and then we'll do another one again at lunch time to see how it changed from the morning. That was good. Not only think about it for yourself and try and reflect on it, and I guess, have an understanding of how you were actually feeling, but also how other people perceived it as well. The others on the group, if they were feeling similar or in a different way, and try and look at it from their perspective as well. So you kind of not always, I guess, focus, not always, just focused on yourself as much as it was about you. It kind of teaches you to be considerate of others and how they're feeling as well."

Nick recognises that he made some significant changes in his life through involvement with Waipuna.

"At the time, I didn't have the opportunities, and for at least 12 months, if not longer beforehand, I hadn't had the opportunities to do anything like that, like even just get out and do any sort of fitness or anything, and the being out in nature, being out in the fresh air and just being able to relax and not have anything to stress about, you know. I was actually fortunate enough because of I guess it was a lot to do with everything I'd learned on the course and stuff like that. I had made so many changes within myself and in my life and all that. I was actually the first person ever that probations petitioned to get their sentence finished early and go. So I my probation officer petitioned to the court and put an affidavit into the judge that she didn't think I needed to do the last month of my home detention or any of my after release conditions stuff like that. So I actually got my bracelet off a month early and quashed all my release conditions and stuff like that. And if, well, if it wasn't for that, cause that definitely wouldn't have happened, and I probably wouldn't have changed my life, to be honest, I probably would be dead or in jail, probably still be on the same path. Yeah, it was a mixture of things. It was the judge. It was the judge sentencing me having faith in me because ... she said that in her personal opinion, she thought sending me to jail at the point in time, the age I was as well, what I was up to and all that wasn't going to benefit me. It was just going to make me worse. Wasn't going to help me in any sort of way. And she was right. If she had sentenced me to jail, I'd probably still be there. I'd be dead. And if it wasn't for her doing that and then her sending me to the course to meet [Waipuna staff] and them teach me this life's not only the life skills, but the emotional and mental skills about yourself and how to deal with things, and you know, how to get, I don't know, see a light at the end of the tunnel when things are tough or whatever, whatever you're going through, just ways of dealing and coping with it for wasn't for all of that combined. Yeah, I'd be dead or in jail."

The charges ... that I got convicted for, which was the reason I was doing the course was, I got sentenced, convicted for two counts of supply of Class A drugs, a count of supply of Class C drugs, four counts of possession of firearms, which was all drug related. ... And then doing that course, and doing the drug programme ... just taught me a lot about how I was using that to mask what was going on inside my head and there were other ways to deal with it, instead of turning to drugs and alcohol, and how being around pro social people and doing pro social things like outdoor education and things like that has such a benefit for you when you're trying to transition away from those things."

Nick sees the drug and alcohol programme he took part in through Waipuna as a really important part of his journey away from crime and to where he is today, employed in a well-paid and highly rewarding career, in a place he enjoys, and with prosocial family nearby, but he also sees the Wednesday evenings programme as critical to his change.

"Like so the adventure therapy course, that's a component of it. ... I obviously did the drug and alcohol thing while I was doing the course. But then the main service probably was that after care, Wednesday night group was the main service I benefited from, because I guess that just ran all those other extra activities, events and stuff like that. It was all bundled under that – the wraparound stuff I think, I think the wraparound stuff carried on for 5 years. ... adventure therapy was probably 40 to 50% of what helped me change. And probably another 30% would have been the people and, like, the conversations and all that, and [drug and alcohol counselling] and the support I had from them, and then the other 30% or whatever would be just me, myself and how much I wanted it kind of thing, yeah, yeah. 50% would probably be due to the adventure side of it, helping me, making, putting me in a positive environment and doing positive things. And then the half of the what was remained, it would be the support from [staff member] and everyone at Waipuna that I had while I was trying to make those changes. And then the leftover would be the, I guess, the willpower I had to want to do it."

He feels that the support of Waipuna had a really positive impact on his relationships with his family.

"100% - my relationships before doing that course, were pretty bad, especially before, getting in trouble. They were bad, but now I've got really good relationships with my family. [Interviewer: "They must be so proud of you."] Yeah, yeah. They are, yeah."

It also strongly impacted his self-care.

"One main thing is, beforehand, I didn't really bother. I didn't really have much care or whatever. And I wasn't, didn't really look after my teeth very well beforehand, and then during that course and all that, after all that. And then I ended up getting a job through [a friend of one of the Waipuna team], I worked for him for a couple years. And while I worked for him, I had gone and had done about between \$10-12,000 worth of work, fixing all my teeth. I'd saved the money to do it."

Coupled with assistance from Waipuna to get his full drivers licence, Nick believes this made him a much more appealing prospect for employers, and helped get him to where he is today. He was strongly appreciative of the impact of Waipuna on his life.

'Chase'

Chase is a tane Māori in his mid-twenties who had moved to the local area a few years ago to get away from the type of life he was living in the North Island. He was serving part of his sentence on a home detention ankle monitoring bracelet when he was referred by a judge to the adventure therapy course a couple of years ago. Most of Chase's whānau are still based in the North Island but he has one whānau member nearby. Chase has a primary school aged tamaiti from a previous relationship and his current partner is recently hapū, so it is an exciting time for him.

Chase decided to stay involved with Waipuna after the adventure therapy course finished. Reflecting on the activities he was able to take part in, Chase felt grateful for the opportunities he was given.

"I was quite fortunate; I did the Coast to Coast with the boys. That was quite a cool experience. I'd have never got anything like that if I wasn't connected into this type of group, which is pretty cool. Did a run with the boys, a trail run, was like 15k or something. Did surfing, mountain biking...a bit of a range...even like snowboarding as well."

Over time, Chase felt like he was able to connect with some of the staff.

"With some I feel like I'm quite open, and I can just talk about whatever, and they're like, quite good, because they give you helping tips and kind of lead you into a path where you- like if I feel confused, they'll just kind of make it a bit more clearer for you...felt like they were pretty helpful. You could ask them anything, and they'd tell you..."

Chase felt like his culture was respected within the course and liked the fact that tikanga Māori was included in the sessions too.

"I feel like [my culture was included]... I would always do karakia. And the boys would like give us the option if we wanted to open up or close [with a karakia]..."

The feeling of care was extended by staff to his whānau too.

"Feel like they [the staff] care a lot, even though I'm like busy working and stuff like the boys are always checking see how I am and see how my family is, like, even when I bring my little fella to touch and that like all the boys kick the ball around with him and give him lollies and drinks."

Looking back at what he learnt from the programme, Chase spoke about being courageous, open-minded and learning how to communicate. Doing new things in a group helped him feel less alone and being able to travel to new places like Wānaka was exciting for him. Chase shared that kayaking on white water was probably the activity that took the most bravery while opening up emotionally in the group took a lot of effort but was worth it.

"Well, just being honest to yourself and keeping an open mind when you're learning new things and just giving it 100...just giving everything a go. Maybe, like communication, I was pretty closed off and I didn't really know to communicate properly...there was, like, a few boys that were quite new to it, and that just made it more comfortable, because knowing that I wasn't one of the first ones on it, so kind of made it a bit easier."

"They've given me a few tools, like, just like entering something new, of, like a fresh mind, like, yeah, just being open minded about things, and like, taking a step back from it and then having a look at it from different angles."

Chase credited the staff and the programme with being a part of the key supports which have helped him disengage from negative behaviours and have helped him stay positive and out of trouble, alongside his own mahi of attending wānanga and having support from his whānau.

"...it all kind of helped me move towards a different life. I just, yeah, there's really nothing in there for me... just keeping me active, the boys giving me things to do, checking up on me too was quite a big one."

Already a sporty person, Chase has continued to stay active after finishing the course and sees this as remaining in his future. When thinking about how the course impacted on his feelings of hopefulness, Chase could definitely see positive impacts.

"Just knowing that I had the support around me was pretty good. If I was in a dark spot, I could always talk to the boys, and they'd just throw their whakaaro out. Quite good having people to reach out to... I'm a pretty shy guy."

Although he prefers activity type therapy, Chase did try some talking therapy. Although it wasn't the right fit for him, he would not have given it a go if not for his connections and journey with the Adventure Therapy course. In terms of self-care, Chase doesn't think too much has changed as he continues to use sports and activity to care for his mental health. Now however, he does make a point to connect with his sporting friends to both socialise and share how he is feeling.

Considering the role the programme has played in his life, Chase feels positive. His only regrets are that he may have been a bit rude to some of the staff early on in his journey.

"I'd say that it like, definitely helped me, it's given me a bit of triumph for life and stuff, and just like, 'You're the main priority.'

Chase felt really proud of his high attendance rate when he graduated the programme and when asked if he would recommend the programme to others, he said he would.

"Yeah I would.... It definitely changed me, definitely gave me a better look on life. Definitely proud I came here. It's awesome."

'Tom'

Tom (New Zealand European) is in his late 20s and is Dad to a school-age tamaiti who he has part-time care of. He's been connected to the adventure therapy team at Waipuna for more than 8 years, having first been connected to them by Corrections, as part of a community-based sentence. Tom got into quite a bit of trouble as a teen, and actually took part in two programmes over two years. He stayed connected in a leadership role. Tom still remembers lots of the stuff they did on those programmes and the places they visited, along with the learnings he gained. He was pretty nervous about the programme at first, but the activities appealed, as he's always liked that kind of thing, and was lucky enough to have grown up with some great outdoor experiences with family. Tom remembers forming relationships with the Waipuna staff and some of the others on the programmes quite quickly – feeling quite a bond.

Following on from the programme, Tom got involved in running, ju jitsu, MTB racing and a lot of other competitive activities, and his key staff at Waipuna continued to support him years on from the programme, especially around encouraging his to stay on track with his AoD use. Being active and keeping fit are now just part of who he is as a person. He counts the Community Development Manager as one of his best friends, along with his boss – staff at Waipuna helped arrange the job for him.

"He's one of my best friends. I'd say, like, I don't have too many friends now."

Reflecting on the programmes, Tom feels like the biggest impact has been on his decision-making and on his outlook on life. His offending has strongly centred around alcohol use. Alcohol remains an issue for him, and as he says, he still makes "slip-ups", but he feels that things are nothing like they'd be if he hadn't had the programmes.

'[Waipuna] has just made me more positive, a lot more positive, better outlook on the future. Because before I went to Waipuna, I just didn't know what was ahead of me, and didn't know, like, what I was good at, or anything like that. You're trying to find yourself. And when you do a Waipuna adventure therapy group, you kind of, you find yourself a little bit there, you know, you find out what you're good at. They really go in depth mentally with you, so you figure out, you know, what your interests are and stuff like that. They even have counselling programmes there as well. I've done a little bit of counselling there - that was quite good ... Just the whole organisation is just great. And it really does make a change and helps kids that are like teens now that are in trouble with the law. It really does help change them.'

Tom feels like while the programme was great, it was the relationships he formed with staff and the ongoing connection with them and support from them that made the difference.

"I would say more of an impact was with the tutors themselves... The programme at the time was great, yeah, an up and comer, young guy that wants to figure himself out kind of thing and do better with life. That's where it really comes into play. But it's just, [staff member] pretty much is the one who's helped me, just helped me lot, lot, like, I can't really explain it, and the adventure therapy group, yeah, that that's, it's good at the time, ... just helps you with your decision making, you know, not to do any silly, silly things after the programme, and yeah, stuff like that. ... Such a good programme. Yeah, the tutors were good, and, yeah, it was great. Just doing the activities, yeah, just from memory, it was just, yeah, it was awesome. Awesome. Great days. I remember all the days we went out on the adventures. It was sunny, yeah, it was great."

'Cassidy'

Cassidy (New Zealand European) is in his mid-20s. He had what he described as a "pretty rough upbringing". He first came into contact with Waipuna when he was in Christchurch Prison, when a friend was doing the course. Cassidy talked to his probation officer to find out if he could do a programme as a condition of release, and his PO took it to the judge who agreed. At the time Cassidy did his Waipuna adventure therapy programme, in early 2024, he was living on the streets, so life was quite tough, but he enjoyed attending the programme. He remembers lots about that programme and all the activities they took part in – going to Castle Hill, MTBing, hiking in the Part Hills, coasteering and going to Laser Strike. Part-way through the programme, Cassidy told one of the other boys that he was homeless, and that boy reached out to let the Waipuna staff know. They moved him straight away into the Waipuna transitional house, and subsequently advocated strongly to help him secure his one Kāinga Ora house. He's really grateful for this support.

"If it wasn't for them, I don't think I would have had the confidence to actually tell my housing manager what position I was in. Yeah, they just stepped in, you know, like he's homeless. He needs a place, yeah? That's when I realised I would get a house."

Cassidy is a naturally very reserved person, and he struggles a lot with mental health. He's often got into confrontations with other people in the past. On his course, there was another guy who Cassidy had had trouble with, but this changed thanks to the tikanga of the programme, even out in the community.

"There's some people don't want to be there, but on the group, there was one person that on the street, we would always fight - we would not get along. In this environment, one of the rules is, whatever happens on the outside, you leave it on the outside, that's a neutral environment, and it stayed that way."

Where there were a couple of times earlier on where he didn't feel safe on the course because of the presence of his previous co-offender, and he was concerned that he might get into trouble with him, this improved over time as the group culture was embedded.

Cassidy enjoyed the way te ao Māori was reflected in the programme even though he is not Māori, and he enjoyed learning through this. He felt really respected and valued for who he is on the programme and by Waipuna staff. He really liked the way Waipuna staff related to others and the sense of connection they developed on the programme.

"There's just a sense of like being welcomed, a family feel."

Through the Waipuna team, he's discovered a passion for running, and is training to complete Te Araroa trail, running the length of Aotearoa. On the day of the interview, he was working on carving a headstone for someone he knows who has passed away and does not have one. Following on from the programme, Waipuna staff supported him to get his driver licence since his learner licence had lapsed, and encouraged him to enrol in a career-focused training programme at Ara.

"They helped me build up the confidence where I was able to just go in and actually enrol myself."

Cassidy had been estranged from his family for a long time, but with the support of Waipuna staff he'd been to see his dying Mum just a week before the interview – something that he said had taken a lot of confidence to do, and that he is very thankful that he has done. Waipuna have offered Cassidy counselling, but he's still working up to that – he said his life story is "a bit deep". Through the programme and the support he's had from Waipuna since, Cassidy said he's *"learned how much and how strong my voice can be"*. For him, Cave Stream had been the most

challenging activity because he was really nervous, but speaking up in a group setting was also something that took a lot of courage and bravery, and that he had to work really hard at.

"Just speaking out - it's a group of strangers that I've never met. And here I am sharing my life with them."

He sees huge wellbeing benefits in his life because of the programme and ongoing support from Waipuna, tangibly in getting him into secure housing and much better physical health because of that, but also a much more positive mindset and lifestyle, and getting him much more active because he feels more confident in himself and his abilities.

"Things like the running and stuff, I never got into that but now I'm confident enough to do it. I used to worry about what everyone would be thinking of me and all that sort of stuff."

Cassidy has now been out of trouble and not using drugs for just over two years, and he displayed obvious pride in sharing this in the interview. He feels much more hopeful about his future.

'Mika'

Mika, Asian, is aged in his early 20s, and moved to Christchurch from another city in the South Island when he was a kid. Mika was interviewed with his friend, who also took part in a Waipuna programme and is the same age and from the same town. They are both in fulltime employment and doing well. Both Mika and his friend live in the Waipuna transitional housing together. Mika has a tamaiti but they are in their Mum's fulltime care – he said she's a really great mum. She accessed some parenting supports through Waipuna.

Mika did the Waipuna adventure therapy while he was in the youth unit at Christchurch Prison, about 3 years ago. He'd been serving a 2 year sentence since he was 18. He'd really enjoyed the activities they took part in and especially getting out of the prison to do these, going to Castle Hill, coasteering in Lyttelton Harbour, and experiencing kayaking, horse riding, MTBing, surfing and high ropes activities. He really liked all the staff he'd met at Waipuna and thought they were "pretty cool", and the kind of people you want around you – patient and really supportive, willing to help whenever one of the guys has a problem – it feels like they really know what they are doing.

Mika felt like his culture was respected on the programme, and that they understood him, but to him, he was there to do all the activities and to have fun – the programme felt comfortable and he liked how they regularly did check-ins on how everyone was feeling. This was something new for him, but he liked how the staff encouraged people to be reflective and to notice their thoughts and emotions – this turned out to be one of the biggest learnings for him from the programme. Mika's mate was pretty quiet in the hui, but he did open up in this discussion, and offered the following comment which seemed to also really resonate for Mika:

"So you sort of take that moment to actually go, what do I feel? So you, I don't know, you learn to recognise what emotions you are actually feeling, and then later after the programme, and you know, it's helped me to know when I need to walk away ... that's because that's all I really wanted to get out of the programme. Was to learn that, because that's why I did the programme in prison was to learn when to walk away, and then to understand my own emotions. And so I think I got what I wanted out of the programme".

Both Mika and his mate had found the focus on Te Whare Tapa Whā while inside to be really helpful, and it had increased their connections to whānau in a way that still supported their positive changes.

Mika felt like he had really developed self control through the programme, and felt that it demanded a lot of courage and bravery, along with perseverance of him through the various unfamiliar activities.

Mika really valued the way the staff delivering the programme and post-programme support were all very different, and he tended to reach out to different people for different reasons because of who they are and their life experiences. While sharing in the group setting was always hard, it was really good connecting with staff one on one but during the programme and since.

"Not so much with the boys, but to the staff. Like I say, if I got problems with family or in my relationship with my partner at the time, I'd come here after work, I've been my head, you know? Sometimes they'll just

listen and just talk. Sometimes I'll just come here talk shit, because I don't feel like going home, things like that. But it's always, once you're gonna come to them with a problem, you might as well just be honest. Yeah, otherwise they might give you the wrong fucking advice. When I do that, I don't care if any of them hear, I feel safe with them."

Since doing the programme, Mika tries to be a lot more polite in the way he talks to people, and feels a lot more 'kicked back'. He's really active, and got a job thanks to support from Waipuna staff.

"My first job? They helped me out. Yeah, that first job, because I told him that was yeah, I wanted a job after my programme, they helped me do my CV, apply for a bunch of jobs, took me to my job interviews, and that guy actually took me to my first day. Got up, so I had to start at seven. So he got up around 5:30 in the morning to come drop me off to work. I told him right after jail, yeah, I'll do the programme but I want a job after. And then went from that job to the job I have now."

'Kieran'

Kieran's a New Zealand European male in his early 20s. He was living with his mum at the time of the interview, and was connected with Waipuna a year earlier, when he got into some trouble – what he referred to as a one-off stupid mistake - and ended up in prison for two weeks, and then when bailed to a 6 month home detention sentence with a bracelet. His probation officer didn't want him just sitting at home for all that time, so he suggested the adventure therapy course. He met with them for an interview, and when they could see he was a good fit, he got on the course. He was quite reluctant at first, just not in a good place mentally at that time. That shifted fairly quickly as he got to know the staff.

"Didn't really like anyone around here, or I just wasn't in a good head space, I guess, yeah. Just didn't want to be around people. ... It wasn't them. ... Just getting to know everyone, getting to know the staff, but yeah, once I sort of, opened up a bit, I started to enjoy it. Made me want to come in. I wanted to get up every day, do stuff. ... I guess I just hadn't been around people like that. I'm used to bad people, and, um, yeah, they just, I don't know, just helped me think, like, sure, I don't want to go back to jail. This is way better than being inside and all that."

Kieran is pretty sure if he hadn't connected with the course, he'd have breached his conditions and gone back to prison, something he was thinking about before the course.

"I was already thinking about doing it, thinking about it and then, just fully changed my mindset when all the other boys talked about what they were going through."

Being able to go to course was great for Kieran, as without that, he'd have only been able to get out of his house for 4 hours per week for walks.

He feels like his change of mindset around the course, and around what he wanted for his life happened slowly through the course, and he saw the same thing for some of the others, though not all – a couple just really didn't want to be there. As he connected with the staff and started really enjoying it, he just kept out of their way – by halfway through the course, he was really committed to it.

"So the ones that did end up leaving and that they were kind of just like, getting us, well, pushing us towards getting in trouble, so we just, like, kind of stayed away from them, just did our own thing. But like the two other boys I've got in my class, like, we're all good-as mates now - catch up after course. They were the same. They didn't want to be here, and then, yeah, just changed their mind. Like, wanted a better lifestyle."

Kieran was one of only two non-Māori participants on his course, and he found it hard not knowing the te ao Māori concepts they were often talking about on course. They spoke up and said they didn't understand, and from then on, the staff were really good at explaining things much better. He always felt respected on the programme and by Waipuna staff.

Kieran likes how the staff he's met are genuinely keen to help him, and support his interests. Since the course finished, he's been surfing with one of the staff and really enjoying getting back into that Waipuna have helped him

get his surf instructor ticket and are helping him look for work. He did get connected with a job but says he “stuffed it up”.

“I get along with the staff really well. I come in most days now just to come say hi to them, come catch up. They've been pretty good to me. [one of the adventure therapy team] - we go out surfing most days now, even in the winter, we love it, ...[even if it's cold] you don't really feel it paddling and that – you're usually pretty tired, so pretty warm. ...So they really seem like they genuinely think about the stuff, ... they're just real polite and yeah, just nice people to be around, and easy to talk to, because I'm not really a good talker. Oh, yeah, meeting people, I found it really easy just coming in here and connecting with them all.”

Kieran's Mum came along to one of the whānau days they had.

“They met my mum. She loved them. She loves the course, like she's seen the change, because she seen me at home every day, when I wasn't going to course, and then after the course, she's seen me, and she sees it's done me well, doing the things I love again, instead of doing things I don't.”

The adventure therapy course really helped Kieran remind himself that he is an outdoors person.

“I'm meant to be outdoors, like, they pushed me real hard to do the stuff I love when I first come in here, I thought I was just tough and, yeah, better than everyone else, Just like, I don't know, just like taught and just helped me change my ways of how I think, and just focus on the good things that I like doing. They helped me apply for jobs up on the mountains, the ski fields and all that. Just trying to keep me outdoors. Because once I go out, get into that indoor stuff and just no good - don't like it.”

It also really helped him improve his public speaking skills – his confidence speaking up in a group.

“I never used to be able to stand up in front of a group and talk and yeah, even just joking, talking one to one, but, you know, now I can happily get up or not happily, but like, still nervous, but I can get up and speak in front of people. And it helped me a lot. Like, yeah, I've always been real bad anxiety and that. And yeah, these guys helped me with my anxiety, just having to stand up every day saying how we felt. When I first come in here, like, from where I was to what I can do now is, it's crazy.”

Drug and alcohol use was a driver for his offending, and he feels that the Waipuna programme has made a big difference in that area of his life, although he still has work to do in that space. He seemed very committed to turning his life around.

“Yeah, it has, it's made a big difference. It's not like I've fully stopped it [drug and alcohol use] or anything, but the journey, they've definitely helped me out a lot. Through it, given me step by step ways to change. Yeah, stop it and you know, it has helped. ... [offending] I'm pretty good now, just like I said, I don't want to get stuck in the system again. Just want to come out good. It's a cycle – I don't want that to happen. I just want to get on top of it. Get a job, sort my life out. ... So before I was unfit. Not in a good place. And then come here, and I started going for runs. So I'd get up every morning. [Sorted out permission to do this while on bracelet], said I could go for runs, started getting into a routine, because that was my big thing, yeah. Didn't have a routine, yeah. And I told these fellas, yeah, that's what I want. And they just wrote me up a routine. What I had to do, get up, go for a run, stuck to it and still do the same. Like, hasn't changed now, still the same routine they gave me from the start.”

Thinking about other impacts of the Waipuna programme and support on his life, Kieran sees himself as looking more to the future, engaged with other supports (eg. about to commence counselling through Waipuna), experiencing a much better relationship with his mum, much more physically active, eating better and enjoying a good daily routine to each day and with experiencing much better overall wellbeing.

9. Analysis of internal data

Schools programmes

All participants in schools adventure therapy programmes delivered by Waipuna take part in a closure interview, which follows a structured format, around the following questions:

- *What will you remember about the Waipuna programme?*
- *If you had a collection of photos, what would they be of?*
- *What were the biggest challenges for you?*
- *What helped you to get through these challenges?*
- *What do you think was your greatest achievement?*
- *What strengths/skills have you used on Waipuna?*
- *Where else could you use these skills/strengths?*
- *What will you take away from this course?*
- *Having done this good work, what is next for you?*
- *Have you any words you could pass on to others about to start the course....?*

The Waipuna Community Development Manager randomly selected 30 participant from schools programmes over the past year, and provided the researcher with a de-identified copy of the interview notes, which are held in Waipuna's client database.

Response data for the following questions was thematically analysed:

- What were the biggest challenges for you?
- What helped you to get through these challenges?
- What do you think was your greatest achievement?
- What strengths/skills have you used on Waipuna?
- Where else could you use these skills/strengths?
- What will you take away from this course?
- Having done this good work, what is next for you? (i.e.. Goals)

All interviews revealed some degree of impact of the adventure therapy programme on the young people sampled.

Responses for each of these questions are presented below, presented in order of frequency of response.

Biggest challenges faced by young people on the programme	n
Activities that they found tricky / hard	10
Activities that were scary and required them to overcome fear (commonly of water, dark / confined spaces) and trust the process / the people around them	10
Getting along with others / getting to know new people – putting themselves out there	8
Listening and focusing	3
Own negative behaviour / swearing	2
Communication	1
Cooking	1
Getting up early	1

Biggest challenges faced by young people on the programme	n
Things that helped them get through these challenges	
Encouragement, motivation and/or help from others – staff, other young people – being part of a good team	12
Bravery / courage / determination <i>“Thinking like this will probably be the only time I get to do this so just not being too scared to do it.”</i>	5
Resiliency	4
Own positivity / positive mindset	4
Helping others / playing their part in the team	4
Not used to asking for help from others – developing interdependency <i>“Inter-dependence – I’m used to doing stuff on my own, not really good at asking for help. I stick to myself: sometimes it works, sometimes a bit of struggle. The group helped me through – the team building and help from others.”</i>	3
Trusting other people	3
Acting as a leader	2
Not wanting to let other people down	2
Knowing experience was safe	1
Patience	1
Confidence	1
Using body to calm self down	1
Talking to others	1
Focus and not letting self be distracted by others	1
Communication	1
Greatest achievement	n
Completion of the programme -sticking with it	8
Completing mentally hard activities with the help of others <i>“Having the courage to do it.”</i>	5
Achieving physically hard challenge	4
Overcoming a fear (heights, water) and learning to enjoy activities with this as a component (eg. a participant learning to enjoy being in water and realising that being in the ocean “spiritually strengthens” them)	3
Helping other people	2
Learning new skills	2
Leading an activity	2
Swearing less	2
Confidence	1
Making new friends – usually this is hard	1
Getting on with others	1

Strengths / skills used	n
Determination / perseverance <i>"Me pushing through; being active; learning; connecting with people. They were there already but I showed more of it."</i>	10
Helping others <i>"Leadership, communication; to be able to get two sides and put them together and be half-way in the middle, get through problems, help people make decisions; I cheer people up, support those who are nervous, if there were arguments I would bring support."</i>	6
Motivation	4
Connecting with others	4
Leadership <i>"I took the lead: leadership, a decent amount of time – I think that was me at my best and it helped me grow my leadership skills. I like leading; it was a great opportunity and achievement."</i>	4
Listening	4
Being kind/supportive to others	3
Courage – water-based activities	3
Resiliency <i>"Resilience: at coasteering I couldn't find a grip at the start of trying to climb across that wall but I didn't give up."</i>	2
Positivity / good attitude <i>"I'm my role model – I want to be the best me, do better than what I have, I look to what I want to be and seek to accomplish that; I can make my own decisions; I'm not influenced by others the same as I was."</i>	2
Teamwork	2
Patience	2
Being active / outdoorsy	2
Confidence	1
Cooking	1
Problem solving	1
Being organised	1
Self-control	1
Other places they could use / were using these strengths / skills	n
At school – prioritising school / getting back into school and enjoying it / taking it seriously <i>"Succeed in my classes; listening to teacher, not distracting others, finishing my work on time; listening to my parents."</i> <i>"School: just doing the work, getting along with others. I'm doing this a little bit more now; doing my homework – choosing to do something hard that I don't really want to do."</i>	10
At home – helping with chores	8
Getting along with others	6
In sports	4
Life in general - everywhere	4
Other places they could use / were using these strengths / skills	n
Listening to the views of others <i>"Listening here at school, at home; helping. If I listen to them, they will probably listen back; it helps. If I listen I will probably succeed in life. I want to be a pro mountain biker."</i>	3

Choosing to do things even when they are hard – NCEA, homework, big assignments	3
Talking to new people	2
Doing more with friends instead of just saying No	1
Getting self out of a sticky physical situation	1
Work	1
Job interviews – can describe and illustrate strengths	1
Negotiating	1
Relating to others – working on communication with family/siblings / peers / teachers	12
Courage and bravery – “ <i>being more open to new things because I know it will strengthen me</i> ”	7
Teamwork	5
Memories – experiences, places, people	4
More positive mindset	3
Looking after other people more	2
Increased resilience	2
Friends	2
Confidence	2
Skills - cooking	2
Relationships with Waipuna staff	1
New interests	1
Leadership	1
Sense of achievement	1
Help more at home	1
Fun	1
More trust in others	1
Being much more active and getting out in the outdoors	1
Next steps / goals	n
Completing school / succeeding in school – taking it seriously	6
Undertaking more outdoor activities <i>“I like being outdoors, actually like it. I’ve been waking up at like 6am and going for a walk around the block; but it’s really cold and dark at that time. I like it in the mornings when its frosty and there’s not many cars around. I think I’ll keep doing that.”</i>	5
Listening more to parents	3
Joined sports team / pursuing sport	3
Doing more things that are uplifting	3
Getting a job	2
Sharing experiences with family	2
Keeping calm at school and keeping out of trouble – in trouble a lot less than before	2
New school	1
Thinking about career where can help others	1
Staying out of the drama at school	1

Ara-Poutama and MSD-funded programme participants

Two staff members involved in delivery of their adventure therapy programmes independently rated the progress of 30 randomly selected participants in the most recent Corrections-referred programme cohorts. Ratings were made on 9 attributes/domains on a 5-point scale (1=not at all, 2=a little, 3=moderate, 4=quite a bit, 5=a lot), drawn from the Theory of Change (refer Appendix B). For each of the attributes, the tool asked the staff members to each rate the rangatahi. For 19

of the 30 rangatahi, the two staff rated them the same, and where scores differed, they were always within one point of each other (but in 7 of the cases, the same person was rating a participant's progress on 1-2 attributes higher). There was relatively high inter-rater reliability, but it should be noted that the sample size was relatively small. Average overall ratings for the whole sample are presented in the following table.

Attribute/domain <i>'To what extent have you observed this rangatahi to...'</i>	Overall average score 1-5	Score range
demonstrate an enhanced capacity to be reflective	4.1	2-5
grow in confidence	4.2	2-5
be more physically active	4.1	1-5
make social connections – make friends and enjoy own activities alongside/with others	3.5	2-5
increase their connections to positive / wellbeing-supporting things in their community	3.5	2-5
improve their self-care	3.6	2-5
share their experiences with whānau	3.2	1-5
experience improved interactions with whānau – doing their bit	3.2	1-5
shown a readiness to engage with Waipuna post-programme + continue relationship	3.8	1-5

10. Waipuna staff perspectives

Reflections on team strengths and capacity and the kaupapa of adventure therapy delivery

The community development staff at Waipuna responsible for delivery of adventure therapy were all interviewed, along with two former team members and existing staff in other roles at Waipuna / St John of God with a perspective on the adventure therapy mahi.

Hearing from the team members, they are indeed a diverse multidisciplinary team, variously bringing to the teams backgrounds in teaching, social work, counselling, outdoor instruction career pathways, engineering, concreting, voluntary work with rangatahi, and work experience with a number of other adventurous activity and adventure therapy service providers, reintegration and youth services. Across the team, there are immense skills, talents and passions in a wide range of outdoor and sporting pursuits. The team themselves, and other Waipuna and St John of God stakeholders interviewed recognise the diversity of the team and see this as adding to the strength of the adventure therapy approach.

“One of the strengths, I think, when you talk about staff, is the diversity of staff, you know, across gender, sexuality, ethnicity, that's all in there, and that team, and that was very intentional.”

Across the team, there are decades and decades of experience and expertise. Various members carry instructor tickets (with annual training requirements) for the full range of adventurous activities the groups engage in. The team strives for a high level of compliance with the Health and Safety at Work (Adventure Activities) Regulations 2016, with audit systems in place. Strong professional development is in place to ensure this, with regular staff trainings conducted in-house, not only for the Community Development team members but in some cases also open to other Waipuna staff. Debriefs are a key means of continually improving the service delivery.

The theory of change built with input from the whole team characterised the adventure therapy community as a diverse team, commonly joining after having a taste of adventure therapy as delivered by SJOGHT Waipuna and comprising qualified social workers, counsellors, outdoor instructors and strong outdoor education / instruction expertise across the team. They identified shared values and beliefs, a strongly inclusive, empathetic and relational approach, passion about their mahi. They recognised their capacity to be vulnerable and reflective, to live well in chaos and the “grey area” – “being comfortable in the uncomfortable”, a need for significant goodwill and unconditionally holding hope for others.

Through the interviews, they reiterated all of these characteristics in the way they work and the skills and strengths of the adventure therapy team. Being flexible and being able to “go with the flow” and support a participant-led approach resonated as a key shared strength. So did the ability to connect and build relationships with rangatahi within a group context, and being authentic and staying true to who they are as individuals who have overcome their own

challenges. All of these things take time and experience to truly develop, and especially so to be able to work with the target groups in a way that creates substantive change.

Professional development was identified as something that is in part self-directed. The team members share a growth mindset, and a number of those interviewed talked of a real openness to personal and professional growth across the team, with all members continually learning from young people themselves as well as from each other and their respective professional networks / communities. A number of staff members have played active roles in Adventure Therapy Aotearoa conferences over the years, and staff are represented in both national and international bodies in the adventure therapy and outdoor instruction professions. Individual staff members have engaged in a wide range of further study / upskilling either during their tenure, or in periods of full-time study in which they have left Waipuna to pursue and subsequently returned (eg. Masters in Counselling, art therapy courses, de-escalation training, emergency care training).

The roles of team members were seen by other staff at Waipuna / SJOG as purposeful and “epitomising what Waipuna is all about”, with flexibility seen as key. Team members interviewed reiterated what they had shared in the theory of change workshop around the “grey area”; the role was seen as necessarily a bit “fuzzy around the edges” and not tightly prescribed. The team is diverse, roles are not tightly defined and the team lean on each other and support one another as needed as individuals and depending on the needs of rangatahi. Feedback from both management and staff indicated a high level of awareness of the load this type of work places on staff, and on their whānau, and the need to prioritise their own self-care and whānau wellbeing, to enable staff to sustain mahi which requires a lot of out-of-hours and weekend mahi.

The essence of Waipuna’s adventure therapy: Adventure therapy within the context of a wraparound approach

Across Waipuna’s services, the focus is on more vulnerable rangatahi. At surface level, adventure therapy is about a combination of adventurous activity and natural environment, a social group and therapeutic intent, but thinking about what the essence of their approach to adventure therapy is and what this looks like in practice, staff identified the following:

- Creating a safe, supportive space in a natural environment in which young people can find themselves and natural discussions can occur.

“I think Waipuna has got a very unique and special way of supporting young people. We're walking alongside them. Letting the mountains speak for themselves. It's like creating a safe environment where young people feel listened, supported, respected, and letting that environment create opportunity to let them find their strengths. ... You encourage them to take that step, but often through the support of the group. People naturally try to take that step, without you having to say too much, we tried to create a supportive environment for them to work in their own pace. And obviously, through a lot of the outdoor activities, a lot of stuff comes up from their natural life, naturally. And then it just becomes quite a, you know, rather than a forced discussion, a natural discussion of things that they want to do or change or create or do differently in their life. And I think with the group's kind of feedback - often that

can bounce off each other, so it's not like you're facilitating it - you create an environment for them to do the mahi themselves."

- Where young people can experience freedom from barriers and the inner child can emerge.
- Where young people can be active and in the process, engage in active counselling.

"Something about being in nature takes away the intensity of talking to somebody else."

- Open, honest relationships, and avoidance of power imbalances.

"The thing we're calling them into is a level of responsibility, rather than hierarchy, we're not setting ourselves above as an authority. We're working alongside to move together through this journey."

- Careful matching of activities / environments to the needs of the group, but also leaving space for therapeutic, participant-led moments to unfold – letting the environment speak for itself.
- A less formulaic, more organic approach than is often used by other providers.

"You see about the combination of something like adventurous activity and environment, natural environment, a social group and a therapeutic intent. ... How I see that unfolding here is we invite people into something that's going to elicit all sorts of stuff from them. We're not pre-determining what that is. Yeah, so we don't heavily invest a lot of time in setting up goals at the start of processes... I think the beauty of that is that we often achieve what's relevant for the person, ... because often they won't know at the start what it is they're setting out to achieve, and occasionally some of them will come out with some things that are really spot on, yeah, but that's great, yeah. But once they on the track, they find, actually, there's all sorts of things that I'm gaining here that I wouldn't have anticipated. So in that sense, it's kind of participant-led. They are determining what the outcomes are from this. The irony is that we talk about therapeutic intent, but actually the therapeutic intent is about creating the space for stuff to happen within. There's irony in that, right? There's a tension in there, ... but if we go in with and with predetermined outcomes in mind, almost all the good stuff that's happening, I call them tea towel moments, but all those, like, tea towel moments, where you're drying dishes, is the important stuff, ... checking at the start, and that formulaic stuff, ...that's the therapeutic containment stuff. But it's the tea towel moments that you can't determine. It's where the actual, the good stuff comes out of."

- Understanding what a young person needs in order to make change.
- Making sure workers are well-supported so they are well-placed to look after young people – good work – life balance.
- Role modelling – walking alongside rangatahi. One of the staff commented that you can help someone for a long period of time before you see change come about in a moment.
- Everything is built on a relationship of trust, and rangatahi have opportunities to connect over a long period of time.
- The team fosters a culture and environment that brings out the best in the participants.
- The adventure therapy is all delivered directly by Waipuna staff and is not outsourced – everyone delivering the service is invested in forming meaningful therapeutic

relationships with participants and has the capacity for rangatahi to connect with beyond the 'programme' itself.

- Young people are stretched, gaining new experiences many would otherwise never engage in.
- Te Whare Tapa Wha is embedded in the approach.
- Deepening connection to land, birds, trees, water.

Value of adventure therapy in a wraparound service approach or alongside Waipuna's other services

When asked what the main value of having adventure therapy alongside other service offerings at Waipuna, and why it is important, most commonly staff focused on the way **adventure therapy builds strong and unconditional 'heard' relationships**, founded on trust and respect. Adventure therapy was widely identified as **building deep relationships** both within groups and with staff, and this in turn was valuable for **enabling rangatahi to open up, including being open to appropriate supports and helping remove barriers to these**. It was identified as an approach very much embedded in Waipuna and adding value to "absolutely every other programme or service".

"I think there's just such a therapeutic nature to young people being able to experience the outdoors alongside people who really believe in them are passionate about the work. I even just, like I took my 14 year old tramping on the weekend, and at the end of the tramp, she said, 'I feel like that felt impossible, and I did it, and now I feel like I can do anything', and that's the kind of experience that the young people get. Like this experience feels too much for me, and then I did it, yeah, you know? And I think that the ripple effects of having an experience, a felt experience of this thing that felt too hard. I managed to do it with support. I think that ripples into all areas of their lives. ... So I think that's one of the experiences - them overcoming the physical things, and then there's like, doing that with their peer group, and learning to support each other in social ways, and getting to trust support people too, that they're trustworthy and respectful in the ways that they manage the work with them. Always think that aspect of the work when you've got young people who haven't really had an experience of trusting other people that much once there's a contact with an organisation who they can feel really respected and cared about with, then their openness to support from there is different, and that's huge. When I hear about young people being treated disrespectfully by agencies in the community, I think that's such a terrible shame, because they've actually closed the door on supports for them. You know, it's it takes a long time for young people to open up fully, and if you don't respect that process, you can lose that. It has such damage. That trust is so fragile sometimes, and you gotta be so careful with it. But I think the staff here are so respectful of young people, and they so believe the best in them all the time, and so that gives young people this experience of like, I am valuable and I am worthy of being respected."

"... Any programme around the country, around the world, I think you could take adventure therapy into it in some form, because it's just going to strengthen your group culture, the relationships people have with each other. It's going to remove barriers to other services or to them opening up in group rooms or counselling spaces, those relationships that can be built in the depth of that and the relationship with the staff, whatever their roles may be as well."

Adventure therapy was seen as providing an opportunity for rangatahi engaged in counselling or other therapeutic interventions to **practice the techniques / skills they were learning in a real-world setting or to rewrite one's own narrative**, deepening therapeutic outcomes of other services.

"It gives a place where you can practice stuff, yeah. So instead of like, being in a room like this, just a counselling room where a counsellor can be looking for a different narrative evidence to, you know, support that narrative of a young person, adventure therapy allows you to see it. You see the strengths of young people in action, and you can say, I saw you support others up that rock, which shows that you have the ability to lead, look out for others, all those sorts of things. And I think you just can't get that so easily from other things. You know, you get that hard evidence."

Examples were given where other practitioners at Waipuna were employing some of the active counselling techniques they have seen work well for the community development team.

A number of staff talked about the **open door policy** of the adventure therapy practitioners / community development team and their unconditional support for rangatahi as especially valuable. They cited multiple examples of young people who have kept in contact with the team for long periods of time, or reached out for support and re-engaged when they hit a roadblock in life or reached a point where they were ready to make substantive life change.

Other themes less commonly shared regarding the value of having adventure therapy alongside the other services at Waipuna were as follows:

- It enriches the life experiences of rangatahi, and especially those who have grown up without a dad, and in socioeconomically deprived circumstances – it develops life skills (eg. riding a bike, changing a tyre).
- It creates spaces for playfulness.
- Being community-based was identified as a significant asset. For the drug and alcohol services at Waipuna, it provides them the ability to deliver public health in a very grassroots manner.
- It centres on a cross-pollination between services, with a strong community of practice in place.
- It fosters a sense of hope – this as something that was seen as important to retain regardless of funding or political changes.
- It challenges practices across Waipuna as a whole, and ripples through everything, encouraging staff to get out of their comfort zone in the same way that they are often encouraging in the young people they work with, and supporting development of staff across the organisation.

"I guess here at Waipuna, like it's probably having adventure therapy in this building has had an impact on all other staff, yeah, in terms of them being challenged, yeah, in their practice, Us to look to, and I think it's just the people who flock to adventure therapy and want to work in that space or community development are generally able to get out of their comfort zone a little bit more. And I think that pushes other staff to do that. Definitely, some people in the building don't like that. They just want their comfort of but I just think of staff meetings. ...Putting pressure on people to get out of their comfort zone and role model. If we're asking young people to do it all the

time, you know, the comfort zones, then why are we continually not pushing ourselves and taking risk in those sorts of spaces? So it's definitely had a big impact on this whole building and how everyone works."

- It was also seen as influencing the larger organisation of St John of God, especially in terms of its cultural journey.

How and the extent to which cultural needs of Waipuna clients are met in the context of adventure therapy

In all they do, feedback suggested that the team take a very holistic, systems and collaborative approach, seeing the person as a whole. Collectively, the team members all know and understand the power of nature. Since inception of adventure therapy at Waipuna, there has been a conscious effort to employ bicultural practice, and the te ao Māori values of manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga were seen as particularly well embedded: the norm in how everyone operates, with staff seen to live the values. To some of those interviewed, biculturalism feels deeply embedded, while others see the team as on an ever-evolving journey of growing cultural competency, which began as cultural knowledge, grew to understanding and now sits as cultural empathy. Once former team member expressed the hope that this continues to be prioritised, regardless of who is in the team at any one time.

Staff informants noted that a restructure of St John of God Hauora Trust in 2021 really drove the organisation forward on its own cultural journey, with establishment of a Kaumatua role at that time really progressing Waipuna's capacity to effectively meet the cultural needs of its clients. Cultural supervision is in place for the team, identified as very helpful, and they reported having "constant cultural conversations". Culture was identified as an active consideration in service planning with the team taking a whānau-centric approach, with strong commitment to Māori participants. A former team member, Māori, commented that as a Pakeha organisation, they are a place where those Māori disconnected from their culture are more likely to reach out to first, and that young people need to be at the centre in the way they respond to their needs and support them on a journey of growth. Over the past 2-3 years, staff noted a push to get staff to meet their own cultural needs and to deepen their understanding of Te Tiriti and what it means for them / their relationship with it. Waipuna's cultural competency journey was identified as very much led by the Community Development / adventure therapy team, and St John of God Hauora Trust's by Waipuna.

The recruitment process for adventure therapy staff has always sought to understand applicants' perspectives on their own privilege and marginalisation, and what they have done with this as individuals.

Impacts of Waipuna's adventure therapy approach

Staff interviewed were very confident that the adventure therapy approach at Waipuna was achieving strong outcomes in terms of building feelings of self-respect and respect of others, feelings of connection, experiences of self-efficacy, courage, perseverance, overall wellbeing,

capacity for reflection (purposeful and fundamental to the approach), self-confidence, feelings of hope, strengthened whānau relationships, social and community support networks, self-care, and relationships with professionals.

“We pick four or five guys to actually go on the journey. And that's when it's really special. You know, that's where you can really get down to the whole therapeutic moment side of things. You know, there's a really cool story with it ... I think there might have been 10 guys, and we took them to an hour and a half drive out of town. And we had one guy, ['Tyson'], who was white power, didn't like black people at all, doing Nazi signs everywhere. And we had Māori people on the group, different gang members anyway, we staying out one or two nights. And then we packed the hut, We walked up this mountain, and we got to this little peak, and we had a group up there, and Dan says, we'll go away and have five minutes to ourself taking in the amazing mountains. We're up in the snow - it was wicked snow. It was just epic. And then we'll come back and bring something back to the group that you want to share, or don't, you know. Anyway, we do the rounds. And then it was actually pretty cool. And then this guy, ['Tyson'], who was white power, white supremacist, he said, he goes, I've never told anybody this, but I'm actually part Māori and I'm ashamed of it, but I really want to learn more about it. And that, for me, sums it all up. It was a safe space because we met him over four or five months, we took him out. He felt free or open and in a safe place on top of this mountain, and he brought out the inner shame or fear that was hiding behind the white power stuff. Yeah, for me, that sums up why -that was a magical moment. ... That, for me, is like the therapeutic moment stuff and adventure therapy to its core.”

“Let me just tell you a story of the subculture of connection, ... I was on a journey going to the West Coast ... in the middle of winter. By the time we picked up the kids, got over to Blackball, it was like four o'clock, perhaps four or five hours away. We're going to be there in the dark. I'm at the back with two that are slower than the others. The others are probably, you know, 500 meters up ahead, and we're just we've gone down across the swing bridge in the valley, ... then we're climbing up just a zig-zaggy ridge on the other side, and we got to the last light of day, and looking across the valley, we come to the ridge beyond that. There were three, huge, kahikatea, rimu sticking well above the forest canopy with the last light of light filtering through. Looked pretty cool. And typically, our kids, 'Faaar, look' and in my practice, ... I operate from therapeutic moments. So I look for therapeutic moment, and that is where there's a wee hint of reflection or a bigger world than themselves going on. And that was one, you might get 100 of them in a day. And then I invoke a reflective question or a therapeutic question into that conversation. And if something comes back from them, and we continue till they choose at the stop. ... Nothing came back. ... The next day we went up a another hill. And the following night it snowed.. In the morning, it was about that deep. We weren't going anywhere, and kids were all excited about being in a hut for a day, obviously not going anywhere. But then the usual thing, cabin fever, and there's a scrap in the hut, sort of late in the morning. So we sit around the fire with the talking stick to work it out. ... Then it was around teatime. I think we're preparing to eat something. One of these kids grabs the stick around the fire. Gotta gather around the fire. I'm there, and I'm going in my head, no idea why we're here, and this isn't my call, not my hui. And you know that I'm leaving it totally to them. He's got the stick he's tapping on, on the hot plate. He just says, 'I can't get over this size of those fucking trees the other night.' And I so wanted to get in there, but I shut up, and he tapped the stick like this, and then he just stuck it on top of the fire and said, nothing else. But then another one picked it up. He says, 'Oh, yes, you just think of all those trees out there, like 1000s of years old.' That's a therapeutic response, but I'm not saying anything, because it's not my show. So he put the stick down. ... Another one picked it up, and he said 'just think'. He said 'those trees are 1000s of years old, and they saw us the other night. Imagine what they saw.' So the trees had shifted from something that was a physical piece of wood

to something that can see. Then the Māori boys started to feel safe about bringing their stuff in anyway. They sat there for over an hour, and this conversation - just a collective spiritual story, in my world view, in the most natural of ways. ... It was the greatest workshop you could ever get, and here it was delivered by young people with immense wisdom. They sat in their whakapapa of connection going way back. ... When we left after six days, all the young people, the four who weren't with other two, they wanted to know where the trees were. So we got to the spot on the way. ... They just would chat to these trees like they were there mates in the most natural ways. ... it was all about connection. Now what I can guarantee ... those trees are still in the lives of those young people in their moments of need."

Connection was seen as the essence of the approach from day one, and a tangible signal of their respect for rangatahi was the trust to take them into the outdoors and to collectively look out for each other. All gave examples of growth in sense of self efficacy in participants, as they discover their strengths through the range of activities engaged in; low self-esteem was identified as common across all participants and especially those who have served time in prison, but succeeding in activities, getting a driver's licence and securing a job saw this improve markedly.

With all activities designed to stretch participants with elements of perceived risk but in a safe environment, they saw young people displaying courage "all the time", finding out about their personal strengths, often having to dig deep in themselves, especially in bad weather or when trying something new.

"There's definitely been a lot of courage on some of those adventure days, in a safe environment, even though, in the moment for the person, it could be really stretched, but yeah, it's actually a controlled, if you get what I mean."

"Some of the adventure days are kind of set up to overcome some of the fears, or, you know, barriers that we have. I mean, there's so many of the guys, are so scared of water. ... As they start coming out, it's just, I guess, being comfortable and uncomfortable. They're like a really big thing we would always speak about, yeah, but you know, if they don't have those experiences, how can they get comfortable in the water or, you know, in the sea, or wherever we are? So I guess, you know, that's where a lot of that connection comes from - the trust and everything starts building from, you know, all these experiences."

"I think confidence, resiliency, And I think, you know, even if they discover one or two strengths in themselves that they've never been, you know, maybe they haven't had people in their lives who have shared what their strengths are, that they see in and they've discovered in themselves, it's pretty powerful when they've been in the outdoors and they're like, Oh, I nailed that. And if they hear that and feel it themselves, numerous times during an outdoor activity, that kind of repetitive strength, feeling of the same strength, it's really gets ingrained more and more. Then they start believing it. And then that just spills over to so many different areas of their life, even on a daily basis..."

"They're sometimes not very keen to come initially. And, you know, they get to know us. But I think that's also how we've built the relationships being out there, and it gets a bit challenging. ... We were coasteering, and there was one boy, and he could, he was very good at doing back flips and all that, you know. And then I think another boy got inspired seeing that, and he actually did his first back flip off of a pole, you know. And he was just, you can see the stoke in them. And also, you

could see that inner child come out. And sometimes, especially with the boys we work with, they're not really allowed to show that sometimes, you know, they have to be tough."

"I think also we went up ice skating once in one of the mountain lakes. And one young man just completely, I don't know, just let go of all that kind of outside barriers. And he's like, Oh, he just brought out the inner child ... and he just looked so free and so happy. And I just felt like he had his own moment, just being playful again. And I think, you know, all of us as adults lose that playfulness, and I think it's helped so much with our wellbeing healing, everything, really."

Staff reported commonly seeing whānau take significant pride in the adventurous achievements of rangatahi. They saw rangatahi developing a reframing of their model of what good friends are through the relationships built via adventure therapy, and this commonly helps them disconnect from negative relationships and form pro-social connections. In terms of self-care, developing habits of healthy and active lifestyles was at the core of what they do.

Adventure therapy and the other services rangatahi are often connected to through this strive to reduce drug and alcohol use. This is challenging when rangatahi are resistant to change, but a big focus of the mahi is on harm minimisation, reducing use and shifting drug use from high risk substances to those presenting lower risk. Drug and alcohol use was commonly at the centre of offending for Corrections clients, so impacts of the mahi in this area commonly reflected in young people reducing offending behaviour, in combination with getting them engaged in physical activity and in paid employment.

The adventure therapy approach of Waipuna was seen by staff as beneficial to all young people, given the healing power of nature and outdoor activity, and the capacity / practice of Waipuna to adapt the approach to each group, to best match their needs. The approach was seen as best suited to males, and with Māori and Pasifika responding especially well to it, and especially powerful for people with more deprived upbringings, who have less experience of enriching activities.

Areas in which services could be enhanced in the future

Expressing their hopes for the future, naturally staff were keen to see the adventure therapy approach at Waipuna in its current forms continue to be funded securely, and staff continuing to be looked after in these roles. They see the power of the approach, and wanted to see this continue, ideally growing, expanding to include delivery to parents as well as young people, extending to reach more of Waipuna's counselling clients and moving into the ACC Sensitive Claims space to address trauma alongside other therapeutic interventions. Delivery to young people on cancer journeys was hugely impactful in the past through a collaboration with CanTeen, and some were also keen to see this mahi be offered again in the future, with others keen to see development of the approach for people with disabilities. There was also an appetite to reach into more schools if funding allowed.

The adventure therapy mahi of Waipuna was identified by several staff as having always "flown under the radar". A number of informants expressed a keenness for a communication plan so

that decision makers and politicians had a better understanding of what they do – for the adventure therapy story of Waipuna to be effectively told. Some concern was raised that from the outside, it does not look rigorous, even though those on the inside know how much they are delivering relative to funding, and the difference it makes.

Looking forwards, it was suggested that the adventures could be further enhanced with more incorporation of the cultural narrative of the particular places these activities are held – the sharing of Māori pūrākau - traditional narratives, stories and history of these places. Continuing to expand connections with te ao Māori was identified as a necessary priority.

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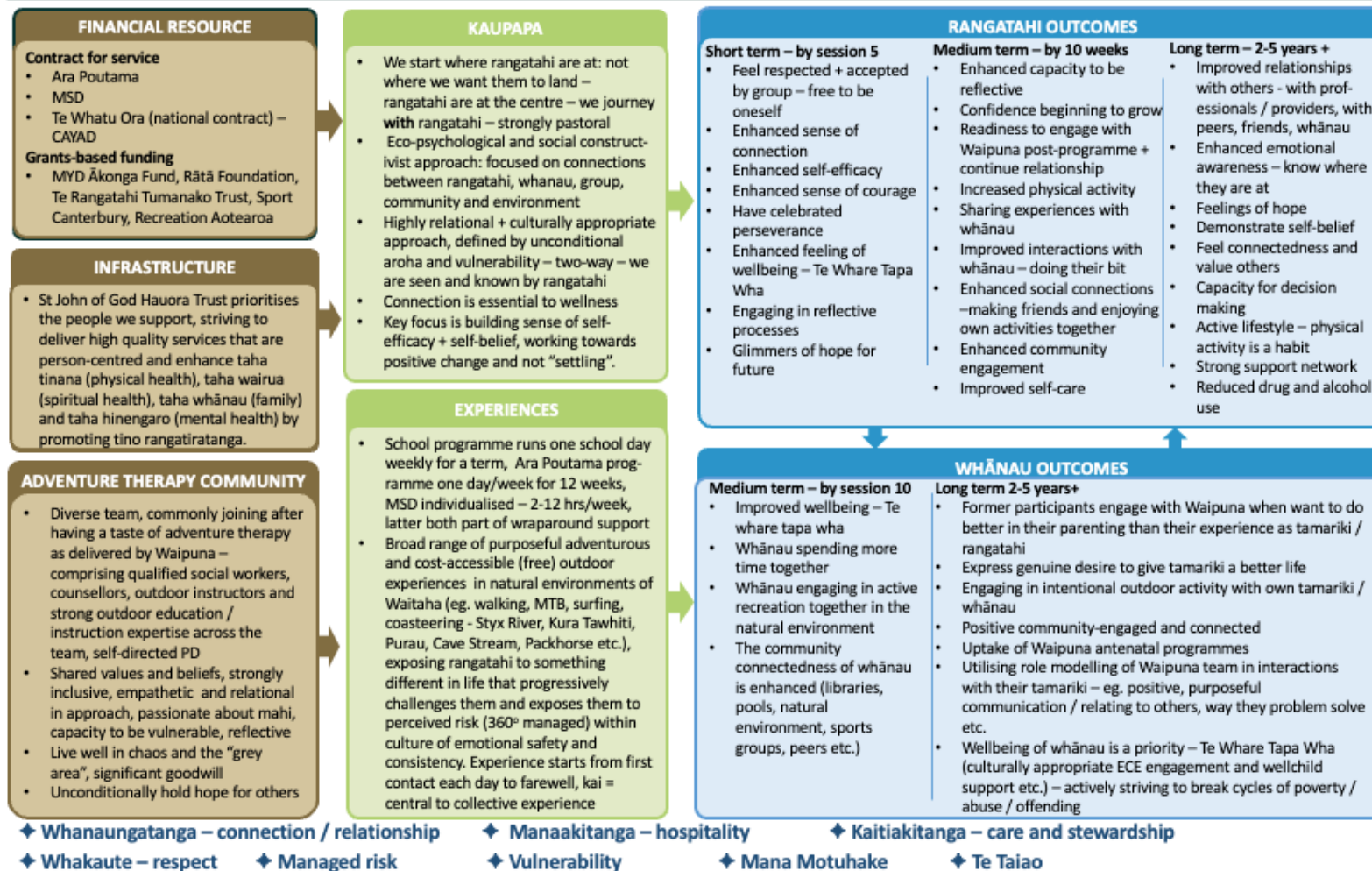
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Appendix A – Theory of Change for use of Adventure Therapy within Waipuna

Theory of Change for St John of God Hauora Trust – Waipuna Community Development use of adventure therapy



Vision: To foster healing, hope, connection, enhanced self-efficacy and courage in rangatahi by starting where rangatahi are at and enabling experiential learning through risk taking



Appendix B: Staff ratings of impact of adventure therapy programme for Corrections-referred participants

Rangatahi impact assessment: programme facilitator assessment of impact FOR THOSE PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE CONSENTED FOR THIS

Programme: _____ Rangatahi ID code _____
(coded as initials – where these duplicate between participants, use all initials and add numbers as necessary to distinguish (eg. ADG1 = oldest rangatahi with these initials)

To what extent have you observed this rangatahi to:

- **demonstrate an enhanced capacity to be reflective (circle)**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Moderate	Quite a bit	A lot
- **grow in confidence**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Moderate	Quite a bit	A lot
- **be more physically active**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Moderate	Quite a bit	A lot
- **make social connections – make friends and enjoy own activities alongside/with others**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Moderate	Quite a bit	A lot
- **increased their connections to positive / wellbeing-supporting things in their community (groups, places and spaces, local amenities, prosocial connections)**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Moderate	Quite a bit	A lot
- **improve their self-care**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Moderate	Quite a bit	A lot

From what they have shared with you, have they:

- **shared their experiences with whānau**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Moderate	Quite a bit	A lot
- **experienced improved interactions with whānau – doing their bit**

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little	Moderate	Quite a bit	A lot
- **shown a readiness to engage with Waipuna post-programme + continue relationship**

1	2	3	4	5
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Not at all

A little

Moderate

Quite a bit

A lot