

Annual Review Arotake ā-tau 2020

Together it's possible



ODYSSEY

Ngā Take | Contents

Ko Ōtihi tēnei About us	02
Te Tumu Whakarae Message from the Chair	04
Nā te Tumuaki CEO update	06
He Whakarāpopoto Odyssey in 2020: Data overview	08
Titiro mai A closer look: Recovery capital at Odyssey	10
Ngā Kōrerorero Stories of Us	13
In this together: Talitha, Family Centre	14
A new sense of identity and place: Melody, Youth INtact	17
Focusing on the now: Fred, Youth Residence	20
Supporting access and connection: Laura, Pasifika Clinical Practice	23
Putting the pieces back together: Josh, Te Wairua North	26
Sharing what matters: Darrell, Haven and Auckland DTP	29
Te ao Māori made all the difference: Andre, Youth Services	32
He Whakamānawa A big thank you	34

Kia ora e hoa mā Hello friends,

2020. Where do we start? Such an unforeseen and demanding year, a year that has required so much of us all on so many levels – as individuals and employees, and within our whānau, communities and workplaces. Yet also a year that has provided unexpected opportunities for time with others, for appreciation of people and things that may have been unavailable to us in the past.

In whatever way this year may have landed for you, we hope that the positives have outweighed the challenges, and that 2021 brings good things.

Odyssey entered this year reflecting on how we might mark our 40th year. We wanted to gather together and acknowledge the many people who have connected with us over this time, the people who have stayed with us or accessed our services elsewhere, worked with us or partnered with us. As the year unfolded, it sadly became clear that the gathering part was not a viable option, but we do still want to take this opportunity to acknowledge everyone who has been part of our journey over the last 40 years. It has been a privilege and we know we are only possible, because of you.

In this special 40th anniversary Annual Review, we look back at some of our milestones as an organisation and share personal stories from current tāngata whai ora (people seeking wellness) and kaimahi about their journeys with us.

Thank you for being part of our story and best wishes for the coming year.

“Odyssey feels like a whānau. People are supported and valued for who they are and what they do. It is acknowledged that it takes everyone to create real change.”

– Kōrero during the Odyssey ‘Why’ Workshops, 2018-19



Ko Ōtihi tēnei | About us

“Hope is something I haven’t had for a long time, and I’m starting to have it now. Hope for myself, and for my kids.”

– A resident at Odyssey’s Te Wairua service

This is our ‘why’.

We wholeheartedly believe that everyone living in New Zealand should have the opportunity to live life to the fullest, to feel hopeful about their future, and to have meaningful relationships with friends and whānau.

Many people that we support have endured stigma, discrimination, or social exclusion. Similarly, they may have experienced disadvantages in education, housing, employment or access to social services, as well as being disproportionately affected by structural and historic barriers that hinder their ability to exercise their rights to good health.

None of these factors are supportive of sustained recovery, nor do they nurture strong whānau and communities.

We want to change this.

Since 1980, we have supported tens of thousands of New Zealanders whose lives are affected by drug, alcohol or other addiction challenges and we are known for providing effective, evidence-based services that support wellbeing. We do this in partnership with tāngata whai ora and their whānau, working together to build the lives they want.

Today, our 180+ kaimahi support around 4000 tāngata whai ora each year – in ways that work for them and in settings that work for them.

From our bases in Auckland, Whangarei and Hamilton, we support people from throughout Aotearoa in residential, community, school, custodial and other settings. We support parents to access residential services with their children and we support adults who are living with mental health challenges.

We work closely with whānau and we partner with a wide range of agencies to provide support options for tāngata whai ora and rangatahi to build on their existing strengths and move forward in their lives.

“I have learned so much here. It’s unbelievable. I feel confident that I can take what I’ve learned from here and take that out into the community and with a completely different me.”

– Joshua, Te Wairua North

Te Tumu Whakarae

Message from the Chair

Greetings,

In reflecting on our 2020 financial year and the six months since, I would firstly like to acknowledge the efforts of Odyssey staff and leadership this year, in adapting to new ways of working so quickly and generously, and also in the many new ways that you supported our service users and each other, during two lockdowns and over the ensuing months. Your flexibility and resilience have been outstanding.

On behalf of the Trust, I thank you.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to our funders who acted quickly and pragmatically to ensure that we were able to operate within a stable funding environment in these uncertain times. Your trust in us means a great deal.

I am pleased to report that despite the challenges this year has presented, we were able to provide services and support to almost



4000 New Zealanders for the year to 30 June 2020 (just a slight decrease on 2019 and largely due to the defunding of a prison-based brief intervention service in 2019). Over the same period, we were fortunate to increase operating revenue modestly by around 8% to \$21.8m. The majority of this increase is a result of the 2019 Wellbeing Budget uplift by District Health Boards for residential addiction services, to address historic funding disparities.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their continued dedication to Odyssey this year

and would like to especially acknowledge the contribution and commitment of two Board members who have retired recently – Robyn Reynolds, who retires from the Board after 22 years' service, and Dr Ann Hood, who has served on the Board since May 2012. We wish you both well.

It is with pleasure that I welcome Manu Sione (Ngāti Whātua, Te Taou, Te Uri o Hau, Samoan and Cook Islands-Pukapuka) as a Board member. Manu joined us in July 2020. We look forward to his knowledge and expertise within the public and NGO sectors to support our ongoing commitment to delivering equitable outcomes for everyone who accesses our services.

We have spent time this year reviewing and recommitting to our current Strategic Plan (2019-

2022). This review prompted some structural changes within the organisation which I believe will position us well for the new environment we now work in – an environment where the ability to be agile in how we support service users and in how we attract and grow our staff is paramount.

In closing, I wish you and your families the very best for the year ahead.

Regards,

Allen Bollard
Chair, Odyssey Trust

Nā te Tumuaki | CEO update

Tēna koutou,

What a year it has been. It has certainly been a year to reflect on what matters and to be grateful for the special people and everyday things that nurture and support us in what have been difficult months for many.

I am especially thankful for our wonderful team at Odyssey this year. At a time when the world changed dramatically and we were all looking inwards to protect ourselves and our whānau, our kaimahi looked out. They looked out for their colleagues and for tāngata whai ora in our services. Their compassion and dedication enabled us to continue to offer hopeful and safe spaces for people coming to us for support. Thanks to them, we were able to support 2387 adults and 1425 young people in the 2020 financial year (FY2020).

We also established several new services during the year. These services allowed us to support populations that may have been hard to reach in the past, and to develop more tailored responses for others.

In October 2019, we opened the doors at Haven, an exciting partnership with Lifewise, Mind + Body and Auckland DHB. Haven is a



peer-led service that operates after-hours and offers a drop-in support space on Karangahape Road for people who may be experiencing distress from substance use. It is designed for people who may need a safe, warm space to ease an immediate crisis, or to feel less isolated. Haven recorded almost 9500 visits in total over the weekends it was able to be open during its first year of operation.

We also launched our 'Te Ngāhere' strengths-based, intensive treatment programmes at Spring Hill and Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facilities, which supported 56 participants in the eight months to 30 June 2020. Aligned with Hokai Rangī (the Department of Corrections Strategy 2019-2024), Te Ngāhere seeks to humanise the prison experience,

placing a strong emphasis on whānau connection and involvement, and cultural identity.

Another highlight in FY2020 was the establishment of the Odyssey Café kai garden work training programme. Based at our main adult residence, the kai garden provides food for our residence and also for our Café in New Lynn and was developed to provide an additional learning and vocational pathway for adults staying with us.

I'm also pleased to note that following the successful pilot of the Citizenship Programme (a partnership with Emerge Aotearoa and Mind + Body) in 2019, we have received funding from Te Pou to deliver the programme in central Auckland in 2021 to support inner-city Auckland populations who may be experiencing multiple barriers to community membership and social inclusion.

In all of our work, I continue to be incredibly grateful for the advice, guidance and support of our kaumatua and kaukuia at Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei, and especially to Uncle Bob and Arohanui Hawke. Ngā mihi nui kia kōrua.

Many thanks also to our Board. It has been heartwarming to have your support this year and to work with you as we refine our services and structure to operate in a post-COVID world.

Recognition needs to also go to the Government, the Ministry of Health and DHBs throughout the country who provided an uplift in funding to residential providers to ensure sustainability of these services within the 2019 Wellbeing Budget. Thank you to all our funders for your continued commitment to our work in 2020 and beyond.

I would like to acknowledge everyone working in the mental health and addictions sector this year. It has been rewarding to work with you all and encouraging to see how we have come together to support each other and share knowledge and ideas in this challenging year.

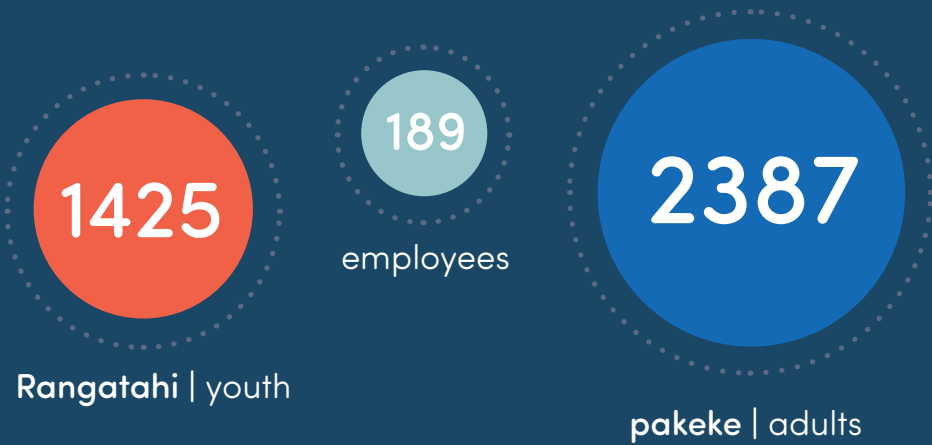
Finally, our 40th year has not evolved quite as we expected, but I have been so proud to see the way we have pivoted and adapted to support people in different ways, in what were unexpected circumstances. I am confident that we are well positioned for the next 40.

Ngā manaakitanga, with very best wishes

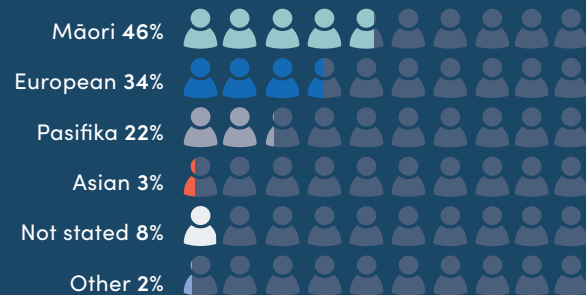
Fiona Trevelyan
CEO, Tumuaki Rangatira

He Whakarāpopoto Odyssey in 2020: Data overview

The final quarter of FY2020 included almost seven weeks when the country was in Levels 3 and 4 lockdown. Odyssey's residences remained open and we were also able to offer telehealth and other remote support options to remain in contact with people who would normally access our services via community hubs. Our services in schools, corrections facilities and our Odyssey Café work training programmes, including our kai garden programme were unavailable during this time.

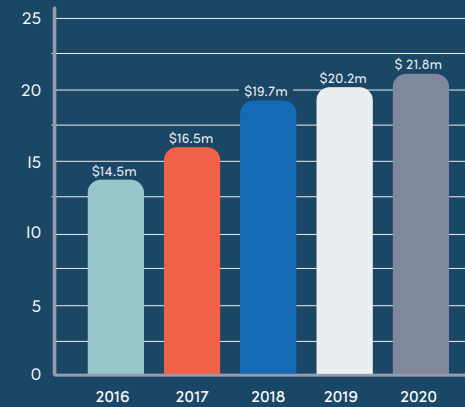


Ethnicity of people we supported



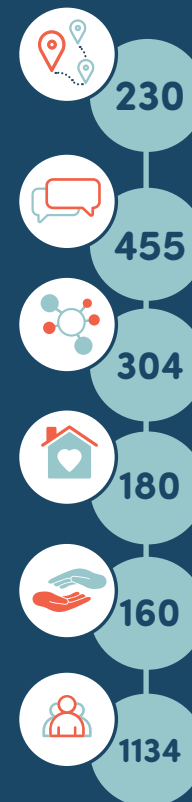
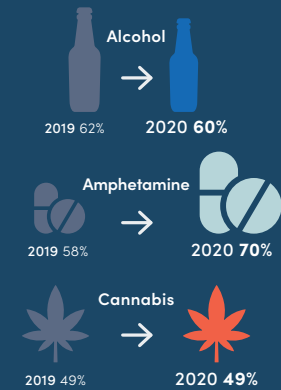
Unless otherwise stated all data refer to Odyssey's 2020 financial year, 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020. To view our full financial statements, please visit our website, www.odyssey.org.nz

Operational Revenue



Drugs of concern

% of adults surveyed who ranked these drugs as one of their top three drugs of concern



In Northland, our two Pou Whānau Connectors supported 230 people to access appropriate treatment options as part of the Te Ara Oranga methamphetamine harm reduction partnership led by Northland DHB and NZ Police. They also ran 10 Choice one-day methamphetamine workshops for Te Ara Oranga participants.

455 people participated in Odyssey drug treatment programmes at Auckland Prison, and Spring Hill and Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facilities in FY2020.

304 adults stayed with us across our five adult residential programmes in Auckland and Whangarei.

180 people participated in Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua (The house that lifts the spirit) | The Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court (AODTC)

We ran more than 160 SMART* Recovery and BE SMART support groups at our community hubs in Auckland and Whangarei. *SMART = Self-Management And Recovery Training

575 rangatahi participated in Stand Up! and Amplify services in schools or alternative education in South Auckland and 559 rangatahi accessed school or community-based services in Waikato through Youth INtact.

Titiro mai | A closer look: Recovery capital at Odyssey

Odyssey has been working with Professor David Best (Derby University) and PhD candidate Zeddy Chaudhry since June 2019 to support tāngata whai ora at our Auckland residences build on their strengths with the REC-CAP assessment and planning tool.

The tool, developed by Professor Best, supports a strengths-based approach to recovery, shifting away from former approaches which applied a problem-based or deficits lens. REC-CAP measures progress in building up personal, social and community recovery capital. It encourages tāngata whai ora to draw on

existing and develop new strengths, capabilities and connections as part of a personalised recovery care plan.

We are now piloting the use of REC-CAP in our prison-based services, and hope to offer it at Te Wairua North in 2021. Our early experiences with the tool have been encouraging, and feedback from tāngata whai ora has been overwhelmingly positive. But don't just take our word for it. Ted, a recent graduate from Te Wairua, shared the following reflections on the value of REC-CAP in supporting his recovery:

"The REC-CAP tool is incredibly helpful. In addiction it's easy to lose sight of the many things that wellness entails. REC-CAP shone a light on

"REC-CAP helped me make my hopes a reality... My life is busy and fulfilling. I have value and have meaning. I am my own hope now!"

- Ted, Te Wairua graduate

the elements of my life that I either took for granted or dismissed as not relevant. It highlighted those parts I was determined not to look at. By identifying what was important to me and what was lacking, I was able to, with support, start building up the various parts of my life that needed work. Eventually I created a more complete and robust whole - a life full of interest and meaning.

Wellbeing and recovery need to be safe and fun and attainable. REC-CAP assisted me in this, highlighting achievable areas and adding

specifics to set goals around. The results speak for themselves. I now lead a full, healthy, balanced life in recovery with numerous interests and connections; all adding value to me as a person. REC-CAP helped me make my hopes a reality. And for that I am grateful.

Thank you for showing me that life is there for the grasping, I just needed help to look in the right places. I now have a catalogue of reasons to get up every morning. My life is busy and fulfilling. I have value and have meaning. I am my own hope now!"

Recovery Capital

Definition: the breadth and depth of internal and external resources that can be drawn upon to initiate and sustain recovery
(Granfield and Cloud, 2009)

Personal Recovery Capital

Communication skills, coping skills, resilience, self-efficacy and self-esteem

Social Recovery Capital

Social networks, social identity

Community Recovery Capital

Housing, employment, community based assets

Ngā Kōrerorero Stories of Odyssey

We are exceptionally privileged at Odyssey to share in so many journeys each year, journeys of acceptance and growth, of aroha and connection.

For many people, connecting with Odyssey is a turning point in their lives. Accessing our services provides the space and opportunity for reflection and discovery, for learning and practicing new skills, for working towards goals that support wellbeing.

This is true for tāngata whai ora and also for kaimahi.

Together, we learn, grow and challenge ourselves to move forward - with tika | trust, pono | honesty, kaitiaki | responsibility, manaaki | concern and aroha | love.

To celebrate our 40 years, we wanted to share with you some of our stories - stories where people, whānau and communities are connected and supported to live the lives they want.

Together it's possible

In this together: reconnecting with parenting and building strong relationships at Odyssey's Family Centre

Talitha was around three months pregnant when she joined our adult residential programme in Auckland. When she moved to our Family Centre three months later, two of her children were able to join her, before she gave birth to a daughter later in the year. She and her three children are now living in an Odyssey transition house onsite and actively looking for housing in the community. She is hoping

to regain custody of her other children when she finds accommodation in the wider community.

"I was really excited when I was told I could come here," says Talitha. "I was like, yay! I knew I needed to do this, to get my kids back."

Talitha had been using drugs since she was 15 and had tried various times to get clean unsuccessfully when, at the end of 2018, five of her children had been removed from her care by Oranga Tamariki.

"If I'm struggling or if I'm upset I can check in with staff and friends, who know how to pick you up, but without alcohol or drugs."

The agency recommended rehabilitation through Odyssey, but she had reservations – "I thought I could do this on my own" – and her then partner was resistant to the idea too. But after another relapse and faced with the possibility of not being reunited with her children, Talitha joined the adult residential programme. By July 2020, she had progressed so well that two of her younger children were able to join her to live with her at Odyssey's Family Centre. "I was ecstatic," she says, of having her youngest children join her. The Family Centre supported her in her pregnancy, and in the care of her new daughter and her ongoing participation at Odyssey. Her three other children, who are cared for by family members, have also been able to visit regularly.

At the time of writing, Talitha was living in a house separate to but connected to the Family Centre and is being supported to find her own house. Once she finds one, she's optimistic that her other children will be returned to her care.

Having her children join her at the Family Centre has been crucial, she says. It has been a personal joy and has also motivated her to stick with and get the most out of the programmes and support that Odyssey offers.

It has also given her the chance to develop parenting skills alongside other parents at the Family Centre. She highlights the "Incredible Years" programme as being particularly valuable, teaching her and other parents the importance of providing 'positive praise' to their own and other children. She has also learned how to get her children used to a routine – including going to bed at a certain hour each day. She says she wishes she had been taught such parenting skills earlier.

Through the Family Centre she has developed mutually supportive relationships with other mums. Her children have been able to play with other kids in the Centre and have been supported to attend the local kindergarten. They have had, she says, more social

Odyssey Family Centre

In the year to 30 June 2020, Odyssey supported 28 parents and 35 children in our Family Centre, which offers a modified therapeutic community in a purpose-built residence for up to ten families at a time.

The median length of stay is 150 days. Parents living with us participate in the adult residential programme at our neighbouring residence and have similar opportunities to develop skills and strategies that will support their recovery when they leave Odyssey. In addition, parents in the Family Centre attend parenting support groups, as well as activities with their children.

activities, such as visits to the Zoo, than they have ever had in their young lives.

Odyssey has, through its Relapse Prevention Programme, also taught her to recognise the triggers for a potential relapse, how to reach out for support when she needs to.

“If I’m struggling or if I’m upset, I can check in with staff and friends, who know how to pick

you up, but without alcohol or drugs.”

“It’s like I’ve retrained my brain, knowing that the false high that you think you might get from a drug is usually followed by anxiety and depression. It doesn’t compare with how you feel once you’ve got clean, and have so much to look forward to, and the high of having my children back with me.”

Recovering a sense of identity, and a sense of place

Melody Nepe took up the role of Cultural Adviser for Youth INTact at the beginning of 2020 to provide cultural support and education for kaimahi and taiohi. She knows from personal experience the strength that can be derived from a sense of identity, a sense of belonging and place.

Melody grew up in Papakura, in south Auckland, where she says she had limited understanding of te ao Māori and not as much connection to her whakapapa as she’d like to have had, but began reconnecting when she started studying her Bachelor of Arts in Māori and Pacific Development at Waikato

University. She was increasingly drawn to her own marae. “I knew my pepeha, I knew my whakapapa, but only here at my marae did I really start to acknowledge the maunga, and feel the ground, and put my feet in the river.”

Melody initially started working in the AOD sector after leaving school, first at Whakatakopokai, a care and protection facility in Manurewa. “I left school without qualifications, but enjoyed that work so much I went on to study at MIT and AUT, and began working as a mental health support worker, as a community support worker and as a youth worker. Then I realised I needed to further my qualifications, that we could do better for Māori and Pasifika people.”

“When you realise that you are part of a bigger picture, you realise you’re not alone, and the loneliness that some of our youth feel starts to lift off. And they then start opening up to us as the support workers and to their whānau.”

Youth INTact Waikato

Youth INTact is based on a model of care co-designed with rangatahi. It provides alcohol and other drug (AOD) support and education in the community and at schools for rangatahi aged 12–19 years old across the Waikato region.

We offer mobile outreach and walk-in services, and we work with community, sports, church and cultural groups to ensure rangatahi are supported in places that work best for them. Odyssey has supported 1,468 rangatahi through Youth INTact since the programme began in 2016.

She was halfway through her degree when, in 2017, she and her family moved to Huntly. With five children, studying, and being a long way from her parents and immediate family in Papakura, it was a demanding time. She was encouraged by both family and University teachers, and by a growing sense of place. “Moving down here was like giving me back my home lens. That gave me the courage to apply for this job. I just told myself, ‘you can do it.’”

Working for Youth INTact has given her the chance to put what she

has learned into action, to realise her dreams for a better future for Māori and Pasifika. “I’m so honoured to be in this position,” she says.

Melody leads group sessions among rangatahi, often young people who have inherited the damage caused by inter-generational substance use. Her focus is on reconnecting them to their Māori identity, where and who they have come from, to make them proud of who they are, to make good decisions in their own lives.

“So it’s about showing them where Māori came from. The statistics show we are not where our people wanted us to be. They didn’t sign the Treaty for us to go that way. So I acknowledge all those that have gone before us and done so much mahi for us not to go that way.”

Among the groups she supports are the Te Rangimarie Girls’ Reference group at Huntly College that uses principles and practices of Mana Wāhine to empower participants, supporting them to build positive relationships and strong value systems. In October, she launched a fortnightly Kaupapa Māori drop-in group for young people in Hamilton to support learning of tikanga principles, mythology, purakau (stories), pepeha and visits to marae and other sites.

Her classes are aimed at educating young people not only of the consequences of drugs and

alcohol, but what it is to be Māori, in a fun and interactive way. Many of the young people she works with have grown up in Huntly, and their marae is nearby but they have had little connection with it.

Contemporary technologies have made this much easier than it once was. “I can use websites such as Māori Maps, so they can find their marae, their iwi identity, and then to learn their pepeha, and start learning about our people from there.”

Nurturing a sense of cultural identity is crucial in young Māori, she says, and young people love learning about it.

“When you realise that you are part of a bigger picture, you realise you’re not alone, and the loneliness that some of our youth feel starts to lift off. And they then start opening up to us as the support workers and to their whānau.”

“I knew my pepeha, I knew my whakapapa, but only here at my marae did I really start to acknowledge the maunga, and feel the ground, and put my feet in the river.”

Focusing on the now: A Q&A with an Odyssey youth resident

Fred was 17 when he came to stay with us in Auckland and stayed for almost six months before heading home to Masterton. We spoke to him a month or so before he graduated and share some of his thoughts about his time with Odyssey below.

What brought you to Odyssey?

I volunteered to come here, just to get a change, from the drinking, to see if I could stay off it. I wanted to break the pattern of drinking too much, stealing, ending up in court. I'd been in court since I was 13 or 14, mainly because of the alcohol. I'd been to a couple of youth prisons. I went down South for a while, to deep sea fishing school, a six-month course. I was trying to change my life down there, and eventually got a job on a fishing boat, but I would drink too much in-between trips and get involved in the law and stuff.

I was connected with a support worker, through OT [Oranga Tamariki], who referred me here, to Odyssey.

I was getting older and lucky I did come in here when I did, before it was too late, before I ended up in gangs. I knew it would be a big change. Better to change now, before it's too late eh?

Tell us about your experience staying with Odyssey

Odyssey is not for the faint-hearted. It is quite a tough programme. Living in the residence gives you a chance to get things sorted, structured, in what you do. It's quite a big responsibility. You learn lots and get assigned different jobs.

What are some of the most challenging aspects of living at Odyssey?

When new people come in it can be hard, people who have been on drugs, and who are also away from family. Being away from family is hard. You come to bond with other residents though. You've got to because you're living under the same roof.

The programme becomes more challenging as you move up the levels. Then you also have more of a mentoring role, making others feel welcome.

Do you have any advice for newcomers?

Everyone is different; you have to work at your own pace, try and figure out what people are struggling with, and how you can help. Sometimes it's challenging, but in the end, you've got to do it for yourself, you have to keep talking.

It's not easy to find ways to express how you feel, or to see how someone else is feeling. It comes down to communication, how you talk, how you seek support.

Anything else about your time here?

It definitely changes your life. It offers opportunities too. Like this café job training they run. It gives you work experience and credits. It means quite a lot of learning, baking and stuff, like cookies, cake – I made a vegan cake a couple of weeks ago. I've also been able

to help out with catering, making salads and stuff. Now I'm trying the coffee side of it. It's got a good social side. You're working with others and interacting with customers. You get a bit of time out of the house and get a certificate to use to get a job somewhere else.

What about plans for the future?

I've got to focus on the now. I'm confident that I can do this. I know that keeping busy is important and focusing on my own life.

Since I'm not local, I hope to go back to Masterton, and set up a good foundation and test out skills I've learned and hopefully set up connections with support workers. I need support and want to keep in touch with Odyssey.

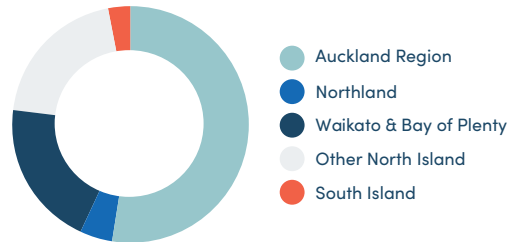
I've come a long way, and I'm ready to go back. I want to get a good job and try and remake what I've messed up I guess.

“Everyone is different; you have to work at your own pace, try and figure out what people are struggling with, and how you can help.”

Youth residential and community services at Odyssey

In FY2020, Odyssey youth residential and community services supported 134 rangatahi aged 13 to 18 years old.

Domicile



Ethnicity*

*People may select more than one ethnicity



Making it easier for Pasifika people to start and stick with Odyssey

Pasifika people are disproportionately over-represented in experiencing addiction and mental health challenges, yet they do not access support services at similar levels. Odyssey hopes to address this with the creation of a new role, Pasifika Clinical Practice Lead.

Laura Tongalea took up the position in September 2020, having started working at Odyssey in 2019 within our Assessments and Continuing Care team. Being Pasifika does nurture a sense of solidarity with other Pasifika people she says. "Any group that has experienced marginalisation, or

racism, we have shared pain with other minority groups."

They also have shared histories. "Pasifika people have an awareness of the sacrifices our ancestors made, moving to New Zealand often to work in low income labour intensive jobs to give their children and grandchildren a better life. So there is a sense of duty in honouring the people who have made that possible. That narrative is similar to a lot of other first generation New Zealand-born Pacific Islanders - a desire to serve our ancestors proudly, and willingly. I definitely derive a lot of pride from that."

Before joining Odyssey, Laura had more than a decade's experience

"Pasifika values of service, honour and respect can mean that Pasifika people often put the needs of others first, so there can be resistance among Pasifika people to seek help for themselves."

Supporting Tagata Pasifika

Odyssey is committed to working in a culturally responsive way with Pasifika whai ora and incorporate the three key themes of fanau, language and tapu in our work. We support Pasifika whai ora to participate in cultural and other activities that are informed by traditional, holistic approaches to wellbeing. In FY2020, we supported 800 Pasifika people (representing one in five of all Odyssey tāngata whai ora).

Pasifika employees make up one in seven of all employees, and this proportion rises to one in five within our residential services. Vai Ola, our Pasifika staff group, meets monthly to share experiences of their clinical practice in relation to their own culture. We value the richness of knowledge they bring and share with colleagues and Tagata Pasifika, who access our services.

of working in the AOD sector, first in a non-clinical role when she was aged 19 at a kaupapa Maori service in Te Puke, where she worked primarily with both Māori and Pasifika people. She worked there for more than four years, which supported her to undergo and complete her addiction studies at AUT. "I really value that time, working in a grassroots, community based intervention programme with a hard-to-reach population. I saw how effective certain approaches were, what worked, even with limited resourcing."

Laura's next move was to work at Bay of Plenty DHB for five years, where she was one of two registered DAPAANZ (Drug and Alcohol Practitioners' Association Aotearoa New Zealand) practitioners to work in a Child and Adolescent Mental Health service at the Tauranga Hospital, as part of a multi-disciplinary team. While there she was in regular contact with Odyssey, and would often refer whai ora. "The transformation that I'd see was remarkable, so I knew I'd love to work here."

A key focus of her role is to identify the cultural and social barriers that Pasifika people face in accessing addiction services, and how to address and remove them. She notes that, for instance, "Pasifika values of service, honour and respect can mean that Pasifika people often put the needs of others first, so there can be resistance among Pasifika people to seek help for themselves."

Also, turning to a professional service can be daunting for Pasifika people. One of her priorities is to help those working in the sector to understand that if a Pasifika person has built up the courage to seek professional advice "that it's a huge deal, and we need to respond in a way that will encourage them to remain engaged."

That means acknowledging the effort it took to get them there, to clearly explain what they can expect and how to get families involved. "It also means removing the power dynamic – so it's not 'I'm the expert and you're the client', but 'I'm a person and so are you'.

That means asking the client what they need, rather than being prescriptive."

It also means understanding the language barriers and cultural tensions, she says. "So it's about increasing awareness among those working in the sector, of the little things that will make a huge difference; encouraging Pasifika staff here to use a cultural lens when working with Pasifika people."

She also aims to combine the well-established and evidence-based therapeutic interventions used at Odyssey with a Pacific Health model – which encompasses the cultural values and beliefs of health in Pasifika peoples.

"That means fitting western modalities into the Pacific Health model, in a way that can be easily applied within any of the services, whether aimed at young people, mums, adults or people in prison. And in a way that is easy to train people up in. This will make huge differences in the effectiveness of our services."

Putting the pieces back together and starting a new life with confidence

Joshua had been in and out of prison for around 15 years and as a result of methamphetamine use had ended up in hospital several times before he came into contact with Odyssey through the Te Ara Oranga Methamphetamine Harm Reduction Programme, a partnership between NZ Police, Northland DHB and various service providers in the region.

Josh was accepted into Odyssey's Te Wairua North in February 2020. By November, he was ready to move out, confident about his future and looking forward to "doing fun things in the community, which I've never been able to do before because I've been a full-blown addict."

Josh had a difficult upbringing, having been removed from his biological parents when he was seven and put into foster care when he was ten. He began drinking and using cannabis in his teens, and then methamphetamine in his early 20s. That led to crime, such as car conversion, to fund his drug use.

In early 2020 he was facing another prison sentence when he was offered a chance to join the Odyssey programme through Te Ara Oranga. It was through this initiative that Josh was connected with Odyssey Pou Whanau Connector, Nina Stanley. She regularly visited Josh at

"You have to slow right down, throw everything that you thought made you 'you' out, and start at the bottom and rebuild yourself."

home, supported him through court processes and ensured he had a place at Te Wairua North. "She was a big, big help for me to get here," says Josh. "She's been great."

Nina presented him with a make-or-break chance of an alternative future, he says, one that didn't involve drugs or alcohol or "sitting in a cell".

Te Ara Oranga

The Te Ara Oranga (The Path to Wellbeing) methamphetamine harm reduction pilot was co-designed with Te Tai Tokerau communities and launched in October 2017.

A joint initiative between Northland District Health Board (NDHB) and NZ Police, its goal is to reduce methamphetamine demand by enhancing treatment services and increasing service responsiveness. Anyone who would benefit from treatment is offered the opportunity and contacted within 48 hours of referral. More than one third of tāngata whai ora, referred to mental health and addiction services through these new referral pathways, were not previously known to these services. Te Ara Oranga has resulted in closer working relationships between communities, health services and NZ Police in Northland. Odyssey is on the Te Ara Oranga steering group and has supported 589 people access methamphetamine interventions and support since October 2017.

The first weeks with Odyssey were the hardest. Adjusting to a more structured schedule was a particular challenge, such as going to bed at a certain time and rising before 7am. "I didn't know how to sleep. I got so little sleep in the last seven or eight years, I was afraid to go to bed."

Over the following months he learned a lot about himself, about his own sometimes aggressive body language and style of

communication, and how to address that. He also learned to be more sensitive to others and to what might be going on in other people's lives and minds. "And once I got a grip of that at Level One everything just started to like fall into place for me. Without the help of Odyssey I would have never figured it out."

Having worked his way up through the different levels in the Odyssey programme and up to Level Four, he

Sharing what matters and giving back: a peer support journey

says supporting new residents and being a role model to them has been particularly satisfying. "That's been huge."

He has participated in several programmes offered through Odyssey. He points to the SMART Recovery groups (Self-Management and Recovery Training) which helped him identify personal goals and set a plan on how to achieve them. One goal achieved invariably led to the setting and achieving of another, he says. "So you set yourself a goal, then ask yourself, 'is that realistic?' Then you set yourself a time frame for that goal. It's a really clever approach because it helps you to set yourself a goal, keep with it, and when you achieve it, set yourself another goal."

He adds: "I have learned so much here. It's unbelievable. I feel confident that I can take what I've learned from here and take that out into the community and with a completely different me."

"It's like Mike King says - 'I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired' and it's time for me to get back out there."

He will be returning to live with his foster father, and is hoping to train and become a Peer Support Worker, to work with and support others with addiction problems. "I have the practical experience. I know how it goes, so I think I'd be really good at it."

Josh compares his experience at Odyssey as being given the chance to rebuild a vase that has been knocked off the table. "It breaks into a million little pieces, and you have to glue all those little bits and pieces back together."

Advice to others entering the programme? "You have to slow right down, throw everything that you thought made you 'you' out, and start at the bottom and rebuild yourself."

"Supporting new residents and being a role model to them has been particularly satisfying. That's been huge."

Darrell Wilson came to stay at Odyssey in March 2018 and graduated in July 2019. He now works for Odyssey full time, at Haven and at Auckland Prison (Paremoremo) in the Drug Treatment Programme (DTP). Having been supported in his own recovery at Odyssey, a process that helped him identify what matters to him and helped him rebuild his own life, he is now helping others to do the same.

Darrell had been living for 40 years as a high-functioning and well-earning gambling addict when the cumulative impact of the addiction, as well as the death of several

friends and family members made life so dark he tried to take his own life.

Now, more than a year after graduating from Odyssey, he no longer gambles, has rebuilt his relationships with his partner and children and is finding meaning and personal fulfilment as a Peer Support Worker.

Odyssey was one of several recovery pathways he was offered. "It seemed the best option, as I knew I needed a long time to rewire, to fix the problems upstairs. I was right."

He joined Odyssey as a resident in March 2018, graduating in July 2019. It was a long and hard road to recovery, but ultimately a fulfilling, life-changing and joyful one.

"Rehab has humbled me. I don't have to be 'The Man' anymore. I can just be 'A Man'. Odyssey has shown me that."

“It’s not a job. It’s not something I do because I have to. It all comes from a place of concern, and that is a place I learned about through Odyssey.”

“I had grown estranged from my family, but I have regained them. I had a wonderful partner and adorable kids who, over my 40 years with high-performance addiction, had to endure hell.”

His work these days is a long way from what he used to do, roles that included working for a US company selling timeshares and as an operations manager in a large company in which he lead a team of 120. “The more money I earned, the more dangerous I became.”

He’s a different man now, in more ways than one. “Rehab has humbled me. I don’t have to be ‘The Man’ anymore. I can just be ‘A Man’. Odyssey has shown me that. I remember my clinical manager

saying to me, ‘it’s okay to be second’. That was powerful, and helped get me through treatment.”

He describes his roles, both at Haven and at Paremoremo, as a privilege. “How blessed am I to be able to support people?”

“We have more than 400 people coming through the door of Haven over a weekend, people who are the heart and soul of our community but who our society doesn’t want to know about. People who are not wanting to be here anymore. People who have had a life but lost everything, and are where I was prior to rehab.”

“We have to draw on everything we can to make sure that while

they’re there, we have an impact in some way. We’re not going to change the world, or people’s situation overnight. But we can say something that maybe they can take away for that day, and be okay with it. And for the time they are there, it might be the best five or ten minutes they’ll have that day.”

“And at Paremoremo we have 80 people who go through the Drug Treatment Programme every three months. That’s 80 people I can have an effect on, in a way that might not only change their lives, but those of their whānau, their tamariki, their wider community.”

“It’s all about giving back. There is no more selfish Darrell - which is what you are as an addict.”

As he tells the people he works with, he knows some of what they’re going through, having had first-hand experience. “It’s not a job. It’s not something I do because I have to. It all comes from a place of concern, and that

is a place I learned about through Odyssey.

As a Peer Support worker, he is able to share his story, the challenges, the happy outcome, and use that to encourage and inspire others to believe in and work toward their own future.

To have been given a second chance to rebuild relationships with his own family, is something he gives thanks for every day. “I talk to my children, almost on nightly basis. I remember when I lost my mum, how I felt, and the impact it had on me. As I came to understand, that’s what my kids had been through for 40 years. So to have that opportunity to be a present father, one who cares and loves them, is more than anyone could ever ask for.

“I feel like I’m a brand new father. I have that energetic playful feeling when I talk to my kids, it feels like they’ve spoken their first words, like they’ve said ‘Dad’ for the first time in their life.”

Peer Support at Odyssey

Odyssey has offered peer support since 2012 within Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua. In 2018, after developing our own Peer Support Framework, we established a dedicated peer support team for our adult residential service. Today, we have 21 peer support roles across eight of our programmes and services.

How connecting with te ao Māori made and is making a difference

Andre Matthews had spent much of his early adult life in prison but after entering a residential programme in 2009, then working and studying within the sector, he is now the Clinical Manager of youth residential and community services at Odyssey, demonstrating how a personal recovery journey can lead to a meaningful career.

Andre had spent almost 20 years of his life in and out of prison, before he was accepted into Higher Ground in Te Atatu Peninsula in

2009, from which he graduated when he was in his 30s.

That was also where he got his first bona-fide job, in 2010, working on what was known as the “graveyard shift”, which was also when he began studying. He studied and worked his way up, first as a peer support worker with Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua and then as a practitioner at Higher Ground. Then, having completed his Bachelor of Addiction Studies, he took up a role as an Advanced Practitioner at Odyssey in 2017, before being promoted to Clinical Manager, first in the adult residential service and now with the Odyssey youth service.

“Having a Māori world view in my leadership role in Odyssey is crucial, one which I can use to make a difference.”

Lived experience has given him an insider’s view of how things can turn against us, but also how we can transcend those difficulties and find a meaningful career helping others.

“I had a pretty unmeaningful life for a long time,” he says. “Odyssey and Higher Ground have provided career pathways. If you work hard and show them you’re dedicated, they do create opportunities.”

Andre is recognised as a Māori leader and champion of Te Ao Māori within Odyssey. “I grew up in Australia, and didn’t know anything about being Māori, something that I was quite embarrassed about.”

His cultural connections were ignited when he was at Higher Ground. “That gave me an understanding of aroha, and

the Māori world, and I really did connect to it.” He has since furthered his studies in tikanga and te reo. “From the age of five I grew up in Brisbane, and came back here at 30 knowing nothing about being Māori, but now I can do a mihi, say a karakia, support people to learn a Māori world view, and while I’m not yet fluent in te reo and have a lot to learn, I have a basic understanding.”

Te ao Māori has helped him understand his own ‘higher power’, he says, and to encourage others to connect with their culture and also to support staff to apply insights from te ao Māori.

“Having a Māori world view in my leadership role in Odyssey is crucial, one which I can use to make a difference.”

Aroha nui!

Thanks to Talitha, Melody, Fred, Laura, Josh, Darrell and Andre for so generously sharing your journeys with us.

Thanks also to Margo White for interviewing these lovely people and crafting the stories for us all to enjoy.

He Whakamānawa

A big thank you

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- Ara Poutama Aotearoa | Department of Corrections
- Auckland District Health Board (DHB)
- Bay of Plenty DHB
- Counties Manukau Health
- Foundation North
- Kai Whau
- Lakes DHB
- MidCentral DHB
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- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Social Development
- New Zealand Drug Foundation
- Northland DHB
- Oranga Tamariki

- Taranaki DHB
- Te Rau Ora
- Waikato DHB
- Waitemata DHB
- Whau Local Board

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Finally, thanks also to our Board of Trustees in their stewardship of our work, and to our Executive Leadership Team in what has been a challenging year.

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Tō Tātou Matakitenga Our vision

Poutia, Heretia

**Tuia te muka tangata ki te pou
tokomanawa ka tū mana motuhake;
ka nohohere kore i ngā waranga me
ngā wero nui o te ao**

People, whānau and communities are connected and supported to live the lives they want; free from drug, alcohol and other addiction challenges.

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