

Te Huringa  
ō Te Ao

# Ako Insights

September – October 2025



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

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# Ako Insights: Rongo, Mōhio, Mārama, Mātau

Ako sessions provide a space to pause, reflect, and connect

Across September and October 2025, we connected with Te Huringa o Te Ao providers across the country through Ako sessions.

  
**~100**  
Attendees

  
**54**  
providers

  
**10**  
rohe

Ako sessions are active, relational spaces that support collective insight and connect local learning back into the system, to embed what works for whānau.

They offer the Community Design and Service Development team the opportunity to listen, identify shared challenges and better support providers to strengthen and grow services. Providers and kaimahi gain clarity on what's working and what's challenging and take away practical tools, ideas, and connections that strengthen service design and whānau-centred practice.

**Mā te rongo ka mōhio, mā te mōhio ka mārama, mā te mārama ka mātau, mā te mātau ka ora**

Through listening comes understanding, through understanding comes clarity,  
through clarity comes knowledge, through knowledge comes wellbeing.

# Wānanga 1: Rongo

## Purpose and activity

To surface shared, objective observations and elevate whānau voice by noticing what is happening in practice and in communities. Group discussion to share insights and draw out key themes.

## What are you hearing from tāne?

- A sense of disconnection to whakapapa
- Tāne want real connection with other men who are on their own change journey.
- There is an inherent distrust of the system. “We must continuously prove, prove, prove ourselves to a system that should be helping us.”
- Life is getting harder. The cost of living, working multiple jobs with long hours and sometimes not even making enough to pay the bills. Tāne want practical support – a job, ID, education, housing

***“Positive feedback that men want and need this kaupapa. A space for tāne to feel heard. Tāne want to be involved in the design of this”***

## What are you hearing from wāhine, tamariki, whānau?

- Wāhine are in survival mode and can become suspicious when they see their tāne start to change. ‘What’s going on here?’
- Some are unsure if they can trust the change they see in their tāne because they’ve ‘seen this from him before.’
- Many wāhine want to keep their whānau together. They don’t want the relationship to end, they just want the violence to stop.
- Wāhine wanting to learn the same tools at the same time as their tāne
- Tamariki wonder why Mum and Dad are always fighting but their friends parents aren’t. Mum and Dad breaking up brings uncertainty and that can be scary.

***“Wāhine want to learn the same tools,  
at the same time, as their tāne”***

What are you noticing in your mahi?

- Big gaps in access and equity – some communities lots of information and support while others have almost none. Long waitlists for other services like mental health and ACC. Not enough social media presence around services for men as an alternative way to reach men. Link between homelessness and violence isn't being talked about enough.
- How invested are we with our time, our consistency, the hours we provide service? Tāne are calling in the weekends for support.
- Tāne are carrying trauma and shame. Fear of rejection can stop men asking for help. Lots of tāne aren't comfortable talking in groups so want 1-1 until they build up their confidence. Lots of intergenerational trauma. Whānau whakama. Sometimes self-sabotage creeps in.
- Language is important. Being authentic enables men to comfortably be themselves

***"Culture isn't an add-on - it's the heart"***

- Trust is everything 'What's said on this whenua, stays here on this whenua'. There are many vehicles to build relationships and pathways to change. "The vehicle" to build relationships is key before getting into the mahi of change. It's important to have a vehicle that resonates with tāne - hands on activities like fishing, beach etc.
- Change is hard but possible showing tāne they can do it through lived experience.

*"It's about creating opportunities for men, not just creating a label for them – allowing them to be seen, to cry, and acknowledging them for being good people"*



## Wānanga 2: Mōhio

### Purpose and activity

Surface reflections and highlight real experiences. Identify shared challenges to act on and lay the foundation for deeper sense-making in the next stage.

### What's exciting about this mahi?

- Supporting tāne to rediscover who they are, building on strengths, and creating real pathways for change.
- Tāne complimenting each other without a 'jab' afterwards.
- Tāne want to be better fathers and partners. It's motivational.
- Valuing lived experience, mentoring, and uplifting practitioners.
- Long-term, flexible contracts that finally align with our values and aspirations. Freedom to design, adapt, and try creative approaches.
- Weaving kaupapa like mau rākau and kapa haka into healing spaces.

***"Watching tāne and whānau grow, make better choices, and show pride and hope"***

### What has felt challenging?

- High demand for services and most men wanting to start with 1-1 sessions. Large service delivery areas. Service design and delivery with 1 FTE. Rural and remote areas feeling isolated and disconnected.
- Want tāne to strive. Can be challenging when tāne have setbacks.
- Disconnect between agencies. Anxiety around what is happening with other funding lines.
- Kaimahi working to build relationships and collaboration with other providers but still facing barriers.

***"It's not really mahi – I didn't think I'd have had a dream job, but I do"***

## Wānanga 3: Mārama

### Purpose and activity

Make sense of what's emerging. Identify themes, patterns, and insights. Begin the process of sense-making. Connect reflections back to Te Huringa o Te Ao Framework.

### What key themes emerged?

- The central role of connection, culture, and whānau-led practice in supporting positive change for tāne and their whānau.
- Creating safe, indigenised spaces grounded in whanaungatanga, aroha, and kōrero enabling tāne to be vulnerable, reflect, and grow into their roles as fathers, partners, and leaders alongside their rangatahi and whānau.
- Healing understood as relational, intergenerational, self-determined and different for everyone, and grounded in aroha and a belief in potential and oranga.
- Lived experience, peer support, wānanga, and practical activities build readiness, confidence, and mana Motuhake.
- A shared frustration with rigid systems, limited funding, compliance barriers, and evaluation models that fail to capture wairua and real change.

***“Navigating new expectations and stepping into unknown territory”***





# Wānanga 4: Mātau

## Purpose and activity

Identify actions and enablers. Move from possibilities to next steps. Clarify provider commitments and MSD/system supports that will make the mahi easier and more effective.

## What's one thing you'd like to do differently?

- Create an advisory group of tāne to gather voice, utilise iwi and hapū to build rohe knowledge.
- Advise wāhine who want to keep whānau together that we have support for their tāne available.
- Share practical tools – referral guides, research. Policies. How learnings from the implementation of E2E and SOS have been incorporated in our practices and policies.

## What's your priorities?

- Weave mātauranga into services, revitalise cultural practices, refine referral processes.
- Create professional development plans to grow kaimahi, recruit passionate tāne facilitators with lived experience to strengthen our team.
- Work on our theory of change. Transition from design to delivery. Complete our service concept document.

## What could we do to make it easier for you to deliver effectively?

- The flexibility and long-term contract of Te Huringa o Te Ao (and Whānau Resilience) is valued, but reliance on 1 FTE creates burnout, silos, and limits impact. There was a unanimous need for more pūtea to meet demand.
- Significant barriers remain around administrative, contractual, and system barriers (e.g. benefits, ID, birth certificates, banking, court processes). A clear call for MSD advocacy and system change in support of community-based, culturally grounded solutions to improve access for whānau.
- Providers want clearer contract measures, shared theory of change models, better evaluation and research, regular communication and follow-up, and transparent sharing of contracts, insights, and resources to support long-term, effective mahi.



# Wānanga 5: Ora

## Purpose and activity

Explore how pūrākau can guide service design. Reflect on voices and values of tāne and wāhine in healing journeys. Link back to the framework and vision of restoring whānau wellbeing.

## Niwareka and Mataora

Ora is about wellbeing, balance, and flourishing. It's how our whakataukī closes – and it's also the vision of Te Huringa o Te Ao – to restore whānau wellbeing. Reflecting on one of the earliest pūrākau in te ao Māori that speaks directly to family violence and healing – the story of Niwareka and Mataora - we used playdough to help us shape and articulate what healing looks like for whānau. We heard about:

- **Niwareka** being flexible but strongly rooted rākau, her gentle strength, how she was holding and carrying many layers, her health of tinana, her ability, mana and aroha.
- **Mataora** being forgiveness of self, groundedness, aumangea (strength and resilience), aroha, protectiveness, humility, ulu o le aiga (head of the family) and hope.

*"Their intertwined pathways, finding the balance, and journeys as whānau"*



# Voices from across the motu

Thank you to everyone who participated and shared their valuable insights. We look forward to seeing you again at the next ako in March 2026.

"The more connected up we are, the better off our whānau will be"

- Northland

"We're not trying to change the wheel, we're saying there's heaps of different wheels"

- Northland

"Nobody cares about how much you know until they know how much you care"

- Northland

Listening to understand, to make men feel safe.

- Auckland

"I see the men come out eager – I think that's to do with our facilitators"

- Bay of Plenty

"The contract allows kaimahi to use their wisdom to make change"

- Bay of Plenty

"Listen to learn, learn to listen"

- Eastern

"Listen to men, talk to men, not at men"

- Eastern

"Our whānau and community are fluid, we need to be the same"

- Eastern

"We don't use the word funding, we say investment"

- Central

"Our guys are experts on themselves"

- Central

"Making sure we care for ourselves to care for others"

- Central

"Think outside the box,  
this isn't even that,  
this is get rid of the box!"

- Waikato

"Great men will build  
great men"

- Waikato

"We have lot of  
potential for lots of  
things, but it just takes  
time"

- Waikato

"If you fall off your  
horse don't let it gallop  
off, get back on it  
otherwise it's a long  
walk to where you're  
heading"

- Wellington

"Hot hangi stone out of  
the pit until it's safe  
enough to be around"

- Wellington

"Aspire to inspire"

- Wellington

"Building confidence to  
help other tāne  
to awahi other tāne"

- Tasman

"This is how men talk.  
Be real with them"

- Tasman

Tāne don't talk until  
they find someone they  
trust.

- Canterbury

Power of men working  
with men.

- Canterbury

"I want to be a good  
man for my kids."

- Southern

"Power is in the  
collective ".

- Southern

***These kōrero help shape our design mahi, ensuring the voices of  
whānau and providers remain at the centre.***

# Te Huringa o Te Ao Providers

## Northland

SafeMan SafeFamily  
Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services  
Aūpouri Ngāti Kahu Rarawa Trust  
Waitomo Papakāinga  
Koru Services  
Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua t/a Te Hā  
Oranga  
The Fono  
Man Alive

## Auckland

The Change Place  
CNSST Foundation  
Fathers for Families Foundation  
Fonua Ola Network  
MaiLighthouse  
Grace Foundation  
Living Without Violence (Waiheke)  
Man Alive  
Presbyterian Support Northern  
SafeMan SafeFamily  
Serenity Foundation  
Taulanga U  
The Fono  
Te Pā  
Te Tai-awa o Te Ora

Te Whānau o Waipareira  
Te Whānau Rangimarie  
The Friendship House  
The Whānau Ora Community Clinic  
Turuki Health Care

## Waikato

K'aute Pasifika  
Shama Ethnic Women's Trust  
Taumarunui Community Kōkiri Trust  
Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki  
Tuu Oho Mai Services  
Te Whakaruruhau Waikato Women's Refuge

## Bay of Plenty

Family Focus Rotorua  
Manaaki Ora  
Poutiri Charitable Trust  
Raukawa Charitable Trust  
Tauranga Living Without Violence  
Te Whare Oranga Wairua Māori Women's  
Refuge Taupō  
Tūwharetoa ki Kawerau Hauora  
Waiariki Whānau Mentoring  
Eastern  
Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga  
Kainga Pasifika  
Ngāti Porou Oranga

SafeMan SafeFamily  
Muka Whānau Services  
Tauawhi

## Central

Tūpoho Iwi Community and Social Services  
Te Oranganui  
Kapiti Living Without Violence  
Taumarunui Women's Refuge and Support  
Centre  
Raukawa Whānau Ora  
Te Manawa Family Services  
Tu Tama Wahine o Taranaki

## Wellington

ChangeAbility Counselling and Family  
Violence Services  
Kupega O Moana  
Porirua Whānau Centre  
Kōkiri Marae Keriana Olsen Trust  
Te Whānau o Te Maungarongo  
Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge

## Tasman

Pounamu Promotions Hawaiki Kura  
Maataa Waka ki te Tau Ihu  
SafeMan SafeFamily  
Poutini Waiora

West Coast Women's Refuge

## Canterbury

Aviva

He Waka Tapu

Vaka Tautua

Tū Pono Mana Tangata

Aranui Community Trust (ACTIS)

The Broken Movement

## Southern

Mana Tāhuna

He Waka Tapu

Lighthouse Southland

Uruuruwhenua Health

Hiringa Oranga o Awarua

Stopping Violence Services Dunedin

Ōtepoti Dunedin Whānau Refuge

