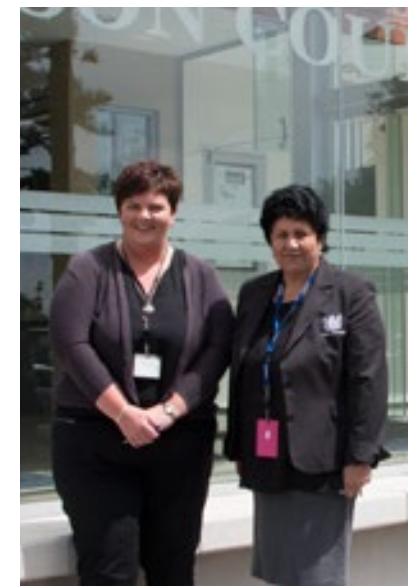




Justice: our people, our communities





**MINISTER OF JUSTICE
AND COURTS**

Amy Adams

A message from our minister

We've been challenging ourselves to think differently about how we tackle some of the complex issues facing our justice system, and I'm proud of what the Ministry of Justice and the Government has achieved to date.

The initiatives in this booklet provide evidence of the breadth of fresh thinking and talented people working across the justice sector, and I'd like to acknowledge their outstanding contribution.

It's especially pleasing to see how people are working together – across regions, within communities, between justice sector agencies, and between staff and members of the judiciary.

Collaboration is vital to improving New Zealanders' experience of our courts and justice system, and to achieving our courts and justice sector priorities.

There are two key priority areas that I'd like to highlight given the focus of many of the stories in this booklet.

One is addressing family violence and sexual violence. New Zealand has some of the highest reported rates of domestic violence and child abuse in the developed world. It is therefore critical that the Ministry and Government are heavily involved in this area, such as through the support it provides to victims, the Sexual Violence Court pilot, and our recent appointment of a Chief Victims Advisor to Government.

The second is improving Māori justice outcomes. It's well known that Māori are over-represented in the justice system as both victims and perpetrators. The Rangatahi Courts and the Matariki Court aim to improve the outcomes for young Māori and Māori, partnering closely with local iwi and building on the strengths found within the community.

The Government is committed to continuing to improve our courts and justice system, and it's fantastic to see the ways in which people at the frontline are using technology and other tools to enable services to be provided in a more efficient, effective and timely manner.



**CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND
SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE**

Andrew Bridgman



A message from our chief executive

The Ministry of Justice is on a journey to provide modern, accessible, people-centred justice services that deliver better outcomes for New Zealanders. We've made a lot of changes to the way we do things.

Sometimes that change was thrown upon us, such as the recent 7.8 earthquake. It may have affected our physical surroundings, but with a little spontaneous collaboration, we kept calm and we carried on delivering justice services.

But most of the time that change has been about us. It's about people who work at the frontline, who come up with ideas, take action and make a difference.

This booklet shares their stories.

It showcases people and initiatives that are making a difference to the people who use courts and other justice services. And it highlights smarter ways of working and people working together – between justice staff and the judiciary, across the justice sector, across regions and within communities. The way we deliver

justice needs to be owned by our communities and the court system needs to reflect them, otherwise people aren't going to see it as fair.

Some of these initiatives are a product of innovative thinking to address a local issue, while others are happening across the country. Both are focused on achieving better outcomes for our customers, and so both are important to helping us deliver on our strategy.

Timeliness is a common theme across many of the initiatives. It's great to see judges and staff coming together around a common goal of speeding things up for our customers, by improving processes and working in different ways. Timeliness is essential to the rule of law.

The stories captured in this booklet are diverse and show the huge scope of what we do at the Ministry of Justice. But it's just a snapshot – there are a lot of other things happening, and I want to acknowledge all of this fantastic work.

This publication builds on a similar publication released in 2013 *Innovation on the frontline*. The energy and enthusiasm among staff that's evident in the following stories certainly suggests it won't be the last publication of this kind.

I hope this booklet provides an important reminder of the need to pause, reflect, celebrate and share our stories. Everyone can be very proud of what we've achieved, and look forward to our journey ahead.



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CCTV room refurbishment supports victims



People say it takes a village to raise a child. At Whangarei District Court, it's clear that the newly refurbished CCTV room for children and other vulnerable witnesses is everyone's baby.

'We're very proud of that room,' says Judge Duncan Harvey, who championed the cause to improve the environment for children giving evidence at Whangarei District Court, with significant backing from court staff.

'Once the decision was made to dedicate a room to refurbish specifically for this purpose, everyone just got busy, with judges and court staff all pitching in.'

A mufti day was held for staff, to raise money for the room. Judges and staff made donations to help furnish the room with games, books, beanbags, art supplies and toys. Staff found more comfortable furniture that wasn't already being used, from Auckland District Court and from other rooms at Whangarei District Court.

The local Harvey Norman store donated a television and provided a discount on an Xbox console and interactive game, aimed at getting children up and moving if they have to be at the court for a long time.

A local art therapist donated her time and expertise to advise on appropriate artwork for the room. And an ex-Whangarei student, now at an Auckland advertising firm, created a child-friendly poster.

Court Services Manager Carla Campbell and Victim Advisor Katherine Heta show a similar sense of pride to Judge Harvey as they explain why and how they went about setting up the room.

'Previously children and vulnerable witnesses had to sit in one of our unused jury rooms, which was a pretty sterile and cold environment.

'By changing the décor and furniture, we knew we could make it a more comfortable and relaxing environment for children giving evidence at the court,' says Katherine.

One wall of the room is covered by a large, colourful image, which looks a bit like a giant etch-a-sketch drawing on a glossy white background.

Carla explains. 'It's intended to relax the mind. We had to be careful about using specific images or cultural references, because they might carry negative connotations for a victim.'

At the back of the room a brightly coloured poster hangs loosely. 'Take your time', 'tell the truth', 'don't guess or make up answers', 'it's OK to ask for a break' is the advice set out in speech bubbles on the poster, to remind children of what's important when giving evidence.

Two computer screens are set up back-to-back in the centre of the room. Katherine explains how the screen on one side is where a child might be waiting to give evidence, with tools such as colouring-in books and pencils to relax, while the other screen is the 'business side', where the child moves when the court is ready for them to give their evidence.

All of these changes are about making the environment as comfortable as possible for victims.

Katherine recalls one case where a mother refused to allow her children to give evidence because she was worried that coming to court would cause them further trauma.

'After we showed her the new CCTV room she immediately relaxed, and convinced herself it would be OK.'

The changes to the CCTV room were done at the same time as Judge Harvey was developing and launching guidelines for dealing with child witnesses in court, which have now been picked up in other courts throughout New Zealand.

Judge Harvey says the guidelines have been a huge success, and have reduced stress considerably for child witnesses.

Based on overseas research, the guidelines aim to 'smooth out the process' for victims as much as possible, and include features such as the judge meeting the child ahead of time to help them feel at ease, not having child witnesses appearing in the afternoon (because children are often too tired), providing regular breaks, and keeping a close eye on the way questions are being asked.

'All of these things are designed to make the experience as stress-less as possible for children, while preserving the defendants' right to a fair trial,' says Judge Harvey.

He sees the CCTV room as supporting the child witness guidelines.

Whānau Protect



In July 2015 the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges began a nationwide rollout of the Ministry of Justice-funded National Home Safety Service, building on a pilot programme that had been running in three centres.

'We call it Whānau Protect to give it a bit of a Women's Refuge flavour,' says Kathy Phillips, Contracts and Service Development Manager from Women's Refuge.

'Women's Refuge is about keeping women safe ... this service is considered to be a very important part of that package.'

The service assists victims of family violence to remain in their home by making it safer from intrusion. This includes practical measures like installing security lights, replacing locks and repairing broken windows. The service also connects people with other support agencies in the community that might be able to help.

'It's amazing really when you think of people and what they might have done beforehand,' says Sonya Ford, Coordinator of the National Home Safety Service from Women's Refuge.

'They either would have had to take a risk on their safety, or they would have had to uproot their family and move somewhere else.'

There's a lot of thinking outside the square, with Women's Refuge 'doing what needs to be done' to make sure clients get what they need to feel safe.

Sonya recalls one client who felt afraid every time she heard the gate open.

'Building a whole new fence and gate wasn't going to work, so instead we looked at paving the pathway with noisy stones so she could hear well in advance if anyone was approaching.

'It's great that we're able to take such a flexible approach. It also helps that we tend to use a lot of local tradespeople – they're clever and can make things happen.'

In the first year, 237 homes were made safer, enabling 237 adult victims of family violence and 517 children to stay in their homes with much less risk of harm. Women's Refuge is contracted to do 300 assessments of houses in year two (2016/17) and 400 in year three (2017/18).

'We've heard lots of positive stories about the impact it has had on children,' says Sonya. 'One client said it had a huge affect – they were happier, sleeping through the night and being good at school.'

Kathy adds: 'The kids are happier because mum is happier too.'

'To me the service provides a comprehensive solution,' says Kathy. 'It's not just about mum, but looking after the kids, the pets and the property. Our advocates are able to help clients with other needs as well, so there's a real flow-on effect in terms of providing a wraparound service.'

The service is one initiative aimed at reducing family violence and keeping victims safe as part of a cross-agency work programme. The programme is overseen by the Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence, which is co-chaired by Justice Minister Amy Adams and Social Development Minister Anne Tolley.

Strengthening safety services



Often the most dangerous time for a victim of family violence is when they're applying for a protection order, when they're considering applying, or when they're waiting to receive one.

Previously, there was nothing in the system for them.

'We recognised there was a gap, and we decided to do something about it,' says Justice Senior Advisor Bryan Fox.

Introduced in 2014, the Strengthening Safety Services programme provides initial support to victims of family violence. Victims are referred typically by a Victim Advisor as a result of domestic violence-related charges before the Courts, or by a Family Court Coordinator when an application for a protection order is set down for a hearing. With the consent of the victim, their details are referred to Ministry of Justice-funded providers across New Zealand, who get in touch to see if they can help.

One of the providers, Wellington Women's Refuge, says the service enables support to be provided to victims sooner.

'It's a win-win for us and for the Ministry,' says manager Philippa McAtee. 'Many of these clients might have come to us eventually anyway, so this is an acknowledgement of the work we do. It's not just about providing a service. We can focus on the victim, and on her needs more broadly.'

Te Whare Rokiroki (Māori Women's Refuge) manager Ange Chaney agrees. 'Some of the clients we already know, but we've made contact with many women through this service who aren't already known to us. This gives an opportunity to engage with them and to provide full wrap-around support.'

Community social worker Rita Harris explains that when she first gets in touch with a victim, the focus is on her immediate needs and 'to see where she's at'. Then they might make a time to meet, and to develop a safety plan.

'The safety planning process enables the client to identify all aspects of the abuse they are experiencing and also to consider all areas where safety can be enhanced,' says Rita. 'Often this is the first time a victim has seen the violence presented and explained in this way, and it can be very powerful. There's often quite a shift in thinking at this point.'

'The women who have gone through this process have found it really valuable. If we get things right, it can be life-changing for them.'

Since October 2014, around 2500 victims have got support through the Strengthening Safety Services programme.



Louie the Labrador

He hasn't been at Tauranga District Court for long, but already Louie has quite the following. The 400+ likes on his Facebook page are a testament to that.

Meet Louie and you'll understand the attraction. He's a beautiful black Labrador, and when he's on duty at the court, he wears a special blue jacket that clearly identifies him as the Tauranga Court Dog.

He belongs to Gail Bryce, Victim Advisor at the court. Her idea to bring Louie into the court initially came from a desire to do something more to help two girls relax before they needed to give evidence in a trial.

'I had the perfect dog in Louie - he loves children, and he has worked in similar roles visiting people in hospital and in aged care homes,' says Gail. 'So I rang the detective to see if the girls liked dogs, which they did.'

The court environment can be intimidating and scary, particularly for young victims and witnesses. The goal behind Louie is to help them keep calm, to make it easier for them to give clear and accurate testimony.

'Louie has such a gentle approach. He'll do the rounds with everyone in a room. He might put his head on your lap or will lie at your feet. He can definitely sense when somebody is upset.

'He's had so many tears through his ears.'

Louie comes into the court a couple of times a month, specifically for cases involving child victims or witnesses. He stays with children in the crown waiting room during a trial, and he also stays with children in the CCTV room if they're giving evidence remotely.

When he's not on duty, he's lying by Gail's desk or relaxing with staff in the registry area.



Harper



Associate Judge Osborne admits 'she's not a proper court dog', but Shih Tzu Maltese Harper is giving Louie a run for his money in the cuteness stakes. She often joins Judge Osborne for the day at the Christchurch High Court.

Eight-year-old Harper isn't highly active, which means you can find her settled atop her favourite blanket on a chair in the Judge's chambers. She was 'specially groomed' for today's photo shoot, reveals Civil Caseflow Manager Rebecca Fahey.

The Christchurch High Court registry staff have come to know Harper well, as Judge Osborne has been bringing her in since the team moved back into the Durham Street building after the Christchurch earthquakes in 2011.

Judge Osborne says the period following reoccupation into the building was particularly unsettling for staff and it's been 'quite a peculiar time'. Harper provides a calming influence and a boost to staff morale.

'The registry staff seem to appreciate her,' says Judge Osborne. 'She's over the moon about having people contact too.'

'But her main quality is that she's chilled out. For a court dog, she has to be.'

As with Louie, Harper also has an innate ability to make people feel at ease.

Judge Osborne recalls the time he brought Harper in for a sensitive settlement conference involving a dispute between family members, which involved a 14-year-old child.

'She [Harper] helped break the ice. We had our introduction, talked about what we needed to talk about, and life carried on.'

At the end of the day, Judge Osborne and Harper share a 40-minute walk home through Christchurch's Hagley Park.



Kotahi Tatou, Kia Mataara



‘Kotahi Tatou, Kia Mataara – Together as one, ever vigilant – is our court security motto,’ says Regional Security Manager Eastern & Central Regions Jackie Lander. ‘It sums it up – what we do and how we do it together.’

Jackie has a passion for keeping people safe, so it’s fitting that she found herself in a court security role after working for NZ Customs, Police and the Ministry of Justice for a number of years.

In a male-dominated industry, Jackie admits it can be a challenge as a female – she’s one of a few women working for the Ministry of Justice in court security across New Zealand. However, she brings different qualities to the job.

‘Some of the situations we experience can be highly emotional and extremely volatile,’ says Jackie. ‘As females, we can help diffuse situations in different ways.’

It’s obvious Jackie is speaking from experience, as she has a few hairy tales to tell. She describes her role as exciting and enjoys the challenge of something new every day. If that day happens to be a list day, it’s a melting pot.

‘We only have one list day in our courts – we don’t have a red list day and a blue list day – so this means that quite often we will have rival gangs meeting right here in our foyers.

‘Most people who come into the courthouse don’t want to be there. How we deal with them at the front door makes a huge difference. If the first face they see when

they enter the court doesn’t treat them professionally and with respect, there’s a good chance we’ll have a problem for the whole day.’

Assessing risk is an inherent part of the job.

Court security teams around New Zealand are now taking a more formal approach to assessing risk, to enable resources to be better prioritised to where they’re needed most.

For Jackie’s team leaders this involved stepping out of their comfort zone.

‘Our team leaders are security minded. They’re good at looking after our people and our customers. They’ve been making these decisions for years; it’s what they do. We’re now asking them to think differently, to predict, plan and prioritise – to put pen to paper and tell us why they do their job the way they do.’

But now the new way of working is in place, it’s obvious why it’s important.

‘The risk assessment helps us work smarter,’ says Jackie. ‘One of the benefits of working as a region of security teams is that our pool of staff is bigger, which means we can pull people from other courts to help out if need be. If we didn’t have that camaraderie, that whanaungatanga and the “want” to look after each other, we’d be up the creek.’

Jackie recalls one example where the risk assessment worked well at the Wairoa District Court, where rival gang members were inadvertently scheduled to appear on the same day. The team leader had completed an assessment and saw the upcoming risk, which enabled the team to contact Police and deploy court security officers from around the region to provide support.

Roadblocks, armed police in and around the court and court security searching people on the steps leading into the courthouse helped the court hearing proceed safely.

‘Gang tensions were high after recent gang clashes in the small town,’ says Jackie. ‘We were well supported by the Police, so we didn’t have any trouble. Nobody could get close enough to the court to cause an issue.’

On those big days, Jackie admits to getting a bit of an adrenalin rush.

‘I feel physically ill until I get that call to let me know that everything is okay. I’m always hanging out for those updates. Safety of our courts and our people is a huge responsibility.’



Journey to recovery

‘Homicide involves a sudden death, but also often a violent death,’ explains Homicide Family Support Worker Andrea Sutton. ‘It’s a complicated death, and there can be a lot of grief and trauma. Family members experience great sadness, but there can also be a lot of anger. It’s an incredibly hard time for families.’

Based at Counties Manukau Police Station, Andrea is one of three full-time specialist homicide support workers for Victim Support (the other two based in Auckland and Christchurch), to which the Ministry of Justice provides funding. The service was initially introduced around three years ago as part of a pilot scheme, and was incredibly successful, receiving overwhelming support from victims, stakeholders, Police and other agencies.

Andrea’s role is to provide intensive support to homicide victims. This includes emotional support, as well as practical and informative support, such as how to access financial assistance.

Every case is different, and the victims guide their own support needs and the pace they want to go, says Andrea.

‘We’re always led by the family, and by the things they tell us are important. But at the same time, they’ve probably never been in this situation before, so it’s our role to make suggestions and to make sure they know their rights, and to ensure we uphold them.’

Andrea explains that her role is about ‘supporting them to get the support they need’, which involves helping victims deal with all of the different agencies involved.

‘We liaise with Police, courts, victim advisors ... help them with any cultural needs, make sure they know their rights, make sure they have what they need at the mortuary or at court (such as being able to use the whānau room) and we can even liaise with funeral directors on their behalf if they want us to.’

When Andrea first enters a victim’s life that’s when the support is most intensive, in the first few days after a homicide has occurred. Sometimes she’ll be required to go along with Police when they notify the family, so she can be there ‘right from the beginning’.

She emphasises that face-to-face visits are important: ‘You can’t just support people over the phone’.

‘For us, it’s about assessing needs. The more we talk to families, the more we can suggest different things. It can be really intense in those first few days ... we just need to be there for them.’

Helping victims understand and participate in the court process is also an important part of Andrea’s role.

‘The court system is based around the notion of innocent until proven guilty, and obviously it’s important for the defendant to get a fair trial. It can be hard for families to see it that way though – they will often say that it looks like the court is completely focused around the offender.’

‘It’s really important for them to participate in the court process, if this is something they chose to do, so that when it comes to the trial they have a better understanding, and feel like a valued and important part of the process.’

‘Seeing families strengthened in their journey to recovery is what gives me a sense of satisfaction. Plus, the privilege of walking with someone through such a horrific time in their life – that’s why I do what I do.’

**It's not
like on
TV**



Every year thousands of victims enter the court system. Victim Advisors, like Amber Lehndorf at Auckland District Court, are there to support them and to help them navigate through the court system.

'Most of them have never experienced the court system,' says Amber. 'The only experience they have is what they've seen on TV. It can be confronting and intimidating. They might feel vulnerable and scared. My role is to make them feel as comfortable as possible and to facilitate their involvement in the process, if that's what they want.'

Amber works mainly with victims of sexual violence, but has also worked with victims of different types of crimes. She stresses that it's definitely not a 'one size fits all' approach.

'All victims are different. For example, in a home intrusion situation, one person might not be particularly affected by the crime – they'll just want their money back. But another person might be really traumatised and in need of counselling or other support. We can point them in the direction of where such help is available.'

With victims of sexual violence, Amber will invite them to come into the court a week or two before the trial begins for 'court familiarisation' and to explain the court process. She'll let them know about where

people will stand in the court room and assure them that lawyers won't yell and stand over them like they do on TV.

'I've found that this really helps people feel more at ease going through the court process,' says Amber.

For child victims, Amber has a little pack to give them that includes games, activities and a colouring book that helps them learn about the court.

'The activity pack is a nice way of engaging with children – it helps open up the lines of trust and communication. When children first come in they tend to be fairly stiff and quiet but by the end they're colouring in and chatting.'

The role of a Victim Advisor is multifaceted, and includes providing information to victims about what's happening with their case, advising them about their rights, helping them understand and participate in the court system, and letting them know about services and financial assistance available to them.

Amber explains that in Auckland they have a private waiting area for clients that's 'sheltered' from the rest of the court.

'No defendants are allowed in this area. This is a space where victims can relax, have a cuppa, do a puzzle, and have a bite to eat while waiting. It's great to be able to offer facilities like this.'

Amber pauses for a moment as she thinks about what sort of qualities are needed for the role, a role that she obviously takes very seriously.

'Listening ... empathy ... just being open. Also you really need to have that passion, that yearning to help people. I get so much satisfaction from that.'

Amber's own experiences with the court system while working for Victim Support were a catalyst for her move into the role. She explains that she really wanted to help people, 'to make the process a more empowering experience, instead of re-victimising'.

'We always say to victims, keep your shoulders back and your head high, because you've done nothing wrong.'

'The hardest thing is at the end of a trial, saying goodbye – it's hard not to feel a sense of connection with a victim. But it's very rewarding to see them come through to the end of the process, it's really empowering for them – just knowing they've done their bit, regardless of the outcome.'

Victims first



With 30 years' experience working with victims of sexual and family violence, Dr Kim McGregor was appointed to the newly created role of Chief Victims Advisor to Government in November 2015. One year on and she's still gushing about the job she 'never ever, ever, ever' thought she would get. It's a job she's obviously very passionate about, given the stark statistics that she's only too familiar with.

She speaks from a place of considerable knowledge, having worked across the victims sector as a researcher, advocate and therapist. As Chief Victims Advisor, she's responsible for providing the Government with independent advice on legislative, policy and other issues relating to victims of crime.

The role was set up as part of a wider set of Government-led changes to address family and sexual violence and to help make communities safer.

Kim says one of the most important things is the independence of her role.

'I can research and consult widely, form opinions drawing also on my own knowledge and experience, and provide my advice directly to the Minister,' says Kim.

'My office is solely focused on victims' issues especially improving systems and services for victims in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Minister and I have free and frank discussions demonstrating that my office offers a fantastic opportunity for victims' voices and perspectives to be heard at the highest level.'

Kim has spent her first year scanning various parts of the criminal justice system from a victim's perspective. She has talked to court victim advisors and victims' advocates, has visited a range of treatment courts, and has provided advice to the cross-sector group working on strategies for improving Māori justice outcomes. She has also observed parole board hearings, and is involved in several high-level interagency boards.

Kim is just a phone call away if the Minister wants advice on something that may relate to victims.

'Anything we can do to increase support for victims is positive ... to help them get through the often lengthy, complex and confusing criminal justice system, when their emotions are likely to be running high.'

Kim is particularly keen to find out what information is currently collected about victims as they engage with the justice system and has commissioned research into this area. She is especially interested in what supports victims have, and when and why some drop out of the system.

'The ultimate aim is about keeping communities safe and preventing further crimes,' says Kim. 'If victims' voices are well heard through the justice system,

everybody can benefit. We need victims to speak out and let us all know about crimes they experience so that we can support them, help them with their justice needs and focus on how we can prevent similar crimes in the future.

'When asking victims to speak out we are asking a lot from them – they have to make a statement, go through a Police interview process and sometimes they are also intensively cross-examined. Victims often need support to get through these processes to avoid them being further traumatised.

'If victims have specialist support and are well prepared, they feel valued and respected by the system, and they can give better evidence. Supporting victims to speak out benefits us all.'

She stresses the importance of looking at all aspects of the criminal justice system from the victim's perspective, and in the potential benefits 'not just for the individual, but for all communities'.

chiefvictimsadvisor.justice.govt.nz



Look back to go forward

National Sexual Violence Survivor Advocate Louise Nicholas battled her way through the court process seven times – two deposition hearings and five court cases, from 1993 to 2007 – with little support. Her personal experience, and her experience of the system, was what led to her wanting to support others. It started out informally, as she began receiving letters, calls and emails from survivors of sexual violence, asking for help.

Louise's role as a National Sexual Violence Survivor Advocate was formally established in 2008, funded by the Ministry of Justice and ACC. The role is fully independent, enabling her to 'say it how it is' and to support victims before, during and after the court process, including through direct engagement, psycho-social support and helping victims navigate other services.

Louise helps complement the work done by the Ministry's specialist sexual violence victim advisors.

She has close relationships with Police, specialist agencies and court advisors, who get in touch when they need her support. She also gets direct requests from survivors.

Her role, she says, is about supporting survivors of sexual violence and their families 'through whatever process they need to be going through, and to help them navigate through the system that will help heal them from whatever they've been through'. She also dedicates her time to advocacy work and public speaking.

It's obvious that what drives her to care and to help others runs deep. She knows. And she knows the system, having experienced it for herself.

That being said, 'every survivor is unique in their journey - they're the expert', says Louise. 'I'll typically approach them by having a sit-down conversation,

explaining to them that I'm not a counsellor, but I have a huge understanding of what they're going through and where they're heading. That way we get to know each other.

'I find that people are generally so open and honest ... a bit like an onion peeling the layers back, but they do this for themselves, because there's a lot of trust. They just need to be allowed to talk.

'A lot of people are worried about whether they'll be believed and I always say to them, "you know what sweet, at the end of the day, you wouldn't be in this process if they [the Police] didn't". This is the biggest thing for survivors - having people believe them.'

Louise supports survivors for as long as they need, which is necessary given the potential for delay in the court process.

'It's important to stay with them because 99.9 percent of the time, there's a delay. It's important to stick with them and to keep them in the process, because every time there's a delay, it's much easier for them to say "that's it, I'm out of here".

'Many of them get worn out. They can't move forward when they've still got this thing sitting over them. Stress and emotional levels are through the roof.'

She still receives emails from survivors she's worked with in the past, who sometimes just want to talk and to tell her they're having a bad day.

'I always pick up the conversation. I remind them that even though they've gone through the process, they'll never forget what happened to them. Sometimes you have to look back in order to go forward. That's what got me through - I kept looking back, and thinking "I never want to go back there again" - I wanted to move forward.'

Louise emphasises that it's especially important for a survivor's family to be well supported and to understand the process.

'At the end of the day I'm only there for a limited time, but the family are there all the way through. It's important that the family understand the triggers and emotions, so that they can provide support.

'I find that if a survivor and their family have support going through the police process and the court process, then regardless of the outcome, they walk out of that courtroom with their head held high, even though it was bloody hard, and they wanted to give up so many times.

'I get to see them grow - this is what keeps me doing it. I can see that it makes a difference to them and their families.'

Court to custody AVL



Rotorua Police Station is just around the corner from Rotorua District Court. But it's not a trip that's always easy to make.

So there's now an audio-visual link (AVL) between Rotorua Police Station and the court, the first 'court to custody' link of its kind in New Zealand. The approach is a clear byproduct of a collaborative, cooperative relationship between the two agencies that goes back a number of years.

At this stage, the AVL is used for virtual appearances in court for centralised arrests.

Central North Island Service Delivery Manager Dan O'Brien explains. 'A few years ago we were having some issues with processing immigration matters through the court. The clock starts ticking from the time they're first arrested; they must appear in court within 96 hours. We were struggling to process them in time.

'So Immigration, Crown Law and Police decided that all immigration arrests would go through the Rotorua Police Station instead, which led to a significant increase in the numbers coming through the Rotorua Court.

'At the same time, we were experiencing increased volumes in other areas, dealing with arrests, lists and remand, with only six cells out the back. As a result of centralising arrests through the Rotorua Police Station, we were now having arrests that occurred in Tokoroa, Taupo and wider afield appearing in the Rotorua Court.

'We were finding it increasingly difficult to segregate prisoners in custody – male/female, youth/adult, different gang members (sometimes we might have three or four on one day) and those deemed to be high-risk. It wasn't easy – our cells simply didn't have the capacity.

'So we got together with Police and started talking about how we could address these problems. The ideal solution was to enable lawyers to meet with their clients at the police station. Because they saw their clients before they were transported to the court, there was a bigger window of time to get instructions.

'There were other advantages like easier access to documentation and prosecutors, a better design in terms of cell layout, more staff to manage prisoners, more capacity, and generally just a safer, nicer environment.'

Tere Rei, Senior Sergeant, Acting District Custody Manager, helped get the new approach up and running at the Police end.

'There were some initial concerns about privacy, so we decided to trial it for three months and then reassess. At the end of the trial, we only had one complaint – about our seats being too hard,' says Tere.

'We were acutely aware of the optics regarding privacy and integrity of communications between people in custody and their lawyers,' says Bay of Plenty Operations Support Manager, Inspector Kevin Taylor.

'We completely understood this was sacrosanct and we bent over backwards to ensure privacy. It has never been an issue.

'The business process flow improved immeasurably. Police staff were able to prepare disclosure documentation earlier, and duty solicitors found it much easier to do documentation at the police station because it was all on hand.

'All conversations were had, everything was disclosed and ready to go at 9.30am for a 10am start time.'

Still, while the process had been improved considerably, the issue of physical numbers remained.

'We still had massive volumes. The number of people – and the calibre of people – were difficult to cope with. So we sat down with Police again and started toying with the AVL idea and thought yes, we can make this work,' says Dan.

Police and Justice funded the installation of an AVL facility at the Rotorua Police Station, with help from the Department of Corrections. All arrests now appear via AVL to the Rotorua Court.

'The safety benefits are huge,' says Kevin. 'If we're able to use AVL, it significantly reduces the opportunity for assaults. Previously it was a staff safety issue having to move prisoners around for court appearances. Now, we can provide a safer, contained environment.'

The defendants seem happier with the new approach too. The cells are nicer at the hub and their appearances are first thing in the morning, so if they're bailed, they can be released before lunch. Previously they could still be waiting for their appearance at 4pm. It also means they're not being moved around as much.

The project is being trialled for three months and early signs are positive. The next stage will involve immigration matters being heard via AVL in Tauranga, and Tokoroa and Taupo arrests appearing via AVL in their courts.

'This was a local solution to a local issue, but it's likely to be scalable and transferable,' says Kevin.



Beyond the bars



Criminal Court Services Manager at Rotorua High Court & District Court, Amarnda Nicholson knew there was more she could do about youth offending in the community.

This was the logic behind Beyond the Bars, an initiative at the court that gives young people an insight into the justice system 'from both sides of the bar'.

The students experience a realistic simulated arrival of prisoners at the court, before moving to a mock trial, where they can act as judge, prosecutor, defence lawyer, court taker, juror, victim and defendant.

The visits are made possible with the voluntary support of court staff, local Police, lawyers and the judiciary.

'Everyone is assigned different roles to play,' says Amarnda. 'We try to give them as much of a realistic experience as we can. It's full on – some of the kids get pretty scared when our "prisoners" start kicking off in the cells. We don't deliberately try and scare them, but we do want the kids to know that this is what it could be like if you end up in the cells.'

'We then take the students into the courtroom and our volunteers talk about their jobs, and how they got into their line of work. Then when we do the mock trial, the students all take part and are buddied up with one of the volunteers.'

'So it's not just about the students getting a tour of the court – it also gets them thinking about different career options.'

Dan O'Brien, Central North Island Service Delivery Manager, says it helps reinforce that there are two ways into the court.

'The front door or the back door,' says Dan. 'They decide.'

Dan continues: 'It also helps break down perceptions – many of them come from families where anyone working in a justice-related role is considered the enemy. We've had lots of feedback from students who have said they didn't know courts and court staff were here to help them.'

The initiative, which has now been running for around two years, also helps educate students about the potential consequences of their actions.

'We give them realistic examples of things we see all the time and that they can relate to, such as a careless use of a motor vehicle charge arising from texting while driving,' says Dan. 'Some of them had no idea that the consequences of a silly decision could cost them their choice of career or prevent them from travelling overseas if they end up with a conviction.'

The initiative is designed to target young people at the point at which they're likely to be exposed to crime (15-16 year olds), although Dan says they seem to be getting younger and younger.

'We're trying to make a difference to the next generation who aren't in the system yet.'

'If one kid leaves a Beyond the Bars session and tells a mate, a brother, a sister or a cousin about the experience, and it makes them think about things they're doing that they shouldn't be, then all the effort is worth it,' says Amarnda.



Working together to respond to family violence



Multiple agencies working together to achieve a common goal is more challenging than it sounds – each agency has their own responsibilities and functions. However, when all agencies are focused around achieving the same outcome and can share their strengths, great things can happen.

In Christchurch, the Integrated Safety Response (to family violence) pilot got underway in July 2016. The initiative sees more than ten different agencies and groups working together – to provide services for victims, perpetrators and whānau involved in family violence.

Canterbury District Commander, Superintendent John Price says the Integrated Safety Response initiative provides focus in the relationships between agencies, and has enabled them to build up a lot of trust.

‘The Integrated Safety Response provides a more structured vehicle for sharing information, whereas before it depended on individual relationships.’

Justice Canterbury Service Delivery Manager Rose Cavanagh agrees. ‘Previously all of the agencies had their own information, their own plans and were working away separately. Now we have everything pulled together in one view.’

Police report family violence cases and Corrections refer cases pending prison release to a Safety Assessment Meeting, which takes place daily. It’s here that agency partners meet to discuss and share information about each case, do a risk assessment, develop a Family Safety Plan and agree and assign actions.

Agency accountability is key.

‘We take the strengths of each agency to spread the load, but one agency takes the lead on the Family Safety Plan and is accountable for that plan. They coordinate with other agencies to make sure things have been done and they report back to the group on the plan,’ says John.

Another key principle of the initiative is its focus on families and whānau.

‘It’s important to look at both the victim and the perpetrator,’ says Ben Clark, Southern Regional Commissioner for Corrections. ‘They are two sides of the same coin – both have issues and need support. And there’s a ripple effect for the wider family.’

This was also an important aspect for Police involvement in the initiative, together with it being demand-driven – the group currently meets six days each week, but will be moving to a seven-day model.

‘It makes operational sense – fifty percent of applications tend to come in over the weekend, but at the moment agencies don’t tend to work over that period. We need to be covering seven days, to cope with demand,’ says John.

He shares a story that illustrates how the initiative is helping Police play a more preventative role.

‘We knew of a guy who was going to be released from prison, and all indications were that things hadn’t changed for him. Information flowed through to and from Police and other agencies on the group, which resulted in Police putting surveillance in place. As soon as he was released from prison he went straight to the victim’s house – we were able to follow him there, and get to him before he was able to cause any harm.’

‘Previously, we only had our own information to rely on – just one piece of the cake. Now we can get a total picture of what’s going on.’



Getting back together



The Christchurch Justice & Emergency Services Precinct is the first major government building to be built in central Christchurch since the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes.

It's a busy place – at the end of 2016 there were around 540 contractors on site on any given day. And it will be even busier from mid-2017, when agencies begin to move in and an estimated 2000 people will work in or visit the precinct every day.

The precinct will be the regional headquarters for the Ministry of Justice, New Zealand Police and the Department of Corrections, along with the New Zealand Fire Service, St John and civil defence agencies. The judiciary will also be housed in the precinct in a way that recognises and ensures its constitutional independence.

Amanda Hadlee is the Justice Transition Manager, responsible for leading and coordinating work to move Ministry of Justice staff into the building.

It's no small task – staff are currently based in different sites across Christchurch, including the Christchurch District Court & High Court in the central city, the civil team on Orchard Road, the Māori Land Court in Burnside and Coronial Services, Collections and National Transcription Services in Sockburn.

Court Services Manager Kelly Campbell-Mears is looking forward to everyone getting back together in the new building.

'Everyone's been through a lot, and we're excited about the change ahead,' says Kelly. 'I look back sometimes and think gosh we've come a long way – this really is down to the strength of the team.'

'I was a manager before the earthquakes and I always knew it was an important job, but after the earthquakes it really hit home. No matter where we go, we'll be fine, because we're working together as a team.'

The building itself has received both local and national interest, says Senior Advisor Rachel Homer – interest in the building itself (which is an impressive 42,000 square metres) and also in how it will bring together so many agencies.

'It's one of the first examples in Australasia where all justice agencies will be in the one place,' says Rachel.

But at the end of the day, it's just a building.

'It's what the people do in that building that makes a difference,' says Court Services Manager Phil Miles.

'This is our focus – the building provides an opportunity for us to work more closely together for the same cause. This is a big deal if we get it right – a really big deal, because it means we'll be getting the best result for people.'

'But it won't just happen. We have to work on building those relationships. There's a bunch of stuff we're already working on because of relationships we've already got. We're not waiting until the doors open.'



The missing middle



Community Law Canterbury is the biggest law centre in New Zealand, providing free legal help to people in Canterbury and the Grey and Westland Districts. Its 28 lawyers see around 20,000 people each year, with many wanting help with family justice matters.

So they turned to the local court to see what could be done to help cope with increasing pressure on their services.

Louise Taylor from Community Law Canterbury got in touch with Sally Croy, Court Services Manager at Christchurch District Court, to talk about setting up a weekly drop-in clinic at the court.

‘The project is one that reflects genuine collaboration,’ says Louise. ‘Sally and the other court staff have been phenomenally responsive.’

It’s obvious from the smile on Sally’s face that the feeling is mutual.

‘We’ve partnered with a particularly energetic organisation,’ Sally says of Community Law Canterbury. ‘It’s a great thing both ways. People are getting the help they need.’

The service, which has been operating since July 2016, involves three lawyers from Community Law Canterbury, six student interns from University of Canterbury and two family court registrars at each clinic.

The team provide a service to people who may or may not qualify for legal aid, but can’t wait to find out and can’t afford a lawyer in the meantime anyway – ‘the missing middle’. They’re looking for advice on family matters, such as care of children and domestic violence. Often, they just need help to fill in a form.

Rosa Bellolio, one of the court registry officers on the team, explains that the drop-in clinic provides an opportunity to help.

‘One woman came in recently with a mobile phone that held evidence, but no way of downloading and printing that evidence to support the application she wanted to make. We had the opportunity and the time to help her, so we did. She was so happy – crying and hugging us before she left.’

Patrick Keen, another court registry officer on the team, says the clinic’s hours – from 3.30pm until around 6.30pm – means people can get advice who otherwise might not be able to during the normal working day.

The team is clearly proud of the initiative, eager to share stories about how they’ve helped people in need and to explain the benefits.

For Community Law Canterbury, this includes giving advice to more people, and a slightly different demographic of people, with more Māori, Pacific Island and female clients visiting the drop-in clinic than other venues.

Sally says that people have been overwhelmingly positive about the service they’ve received.

‘Because my role isn’t hands-on like the rest of the team, I get to stand back and observe, and it’s such a joy. The team are very friendly, and we’re providing an extremely relaxed service, doing whatever we can to help people in need. Walking through the hallways during the drop-in clinic hours, you can hear a barrage of friendly exchanges. Someone starts to smile and away you go – it’s a very different service.’

Art in court



Whangarei school students were somewhat surprised to discover that the court isn't just a place for criminals.

Victim Advisor at Whangarei District Court, Katherine Heta recalls the visit by the schools to the court, explaining that it gave the students an insight into the variety of people who come into the court – and a better understanding of the role of the court in the community.

The visit was part of an initiative by the Whangarei District Court Customer Focus Group, a group of six court employees from different jurisdictions and roles, dedicated to improving customer service and the customer experience at the court.

The group had identified a need to change the look and feel of the courthouse so that waiting areas were less 'clinical' and intimidating for people visiting the court.

And so the Court Art project was born, with an invitation going out to a number of Whangarei schools to create artwork for the courthouse. Three schools quickly jumped on board: Kamo High School, Kamo Intermediate School and St Francis Xavier Catholic School.

The schools were closely involved in the project from the beginning, starting with a tour of the court, to get a feel for the environment and to choose a space for their future artwork.

'We explained the court isn't just a place for criminals, but for jury members, victims, and families of victims and defendants, so they had to create their artwork with this in mind,' says Katherine.

'The students were really excited about the project and how they could contribute to making the courthouse a better place to be in. They were also pretty thrilled about the prospect of having their artwork immortalised on the walls of such a public place.'

Court Services Manager at Whangarei District Court, Carla Campbell, explains that the brief for the three schools was to create artwork centred around the theme 'community'.

'Even at the concept stage the quality of the work was impressive. And the final result is fantastic.'

Carla stands back to admire a triptych in the first floor foyer, produced by students from St Francis Xavier Catholic School. The painting depicts a number of different local landmarks, including the courthouse, the Whangarei Falls, the monument at the top of Mount Parihaka, and Whangarei Heads.

'Every time you look at it you see something new.'

Carla and Katherine are eager to share the feedback they've received about the new artwork.

'We've had so much positive feedback from people, including the public and stakeholders who come into the court every day, about the difference it has made to their experience of the court.'

Carla recalls overhearing one exchange between a woman and her friend at the court, after noticing one of the paintings in the waiting area they were sitting in.

'It was pretty neat. She was discovering artwork in other areas and saying, "There's another one in here! Come look, come look!''

As we finish our tour of the art displayed around the courthouse, Carla mentions that despite having been up for over a year, none of the artwork has been vandalised.

'This was something we were worried about at first, but people obviously really value and respect the work.'

The court may look at running a similar initiative with local schools again in 2017.

'We still have a lot of wall space,' says Katherine.

'There's definitely room for more.'

Further down the line in the East Coast/Hawke's Bay region, Service Delivery Manager Mick Lander is taking a slightly different approach to jazzing up the walls of Napier District Court. He'll soon be enlisting the help of artists who are currently inmates at Hawke's Bay Regional Prison, as part of a joint initiative with Corrections and local iwi.

Mick says the inmates will be designing artwork for a section of the court foyer, using the space to tell their story of justice in a way that means something to the people of Hawke's Bay.

'We want to use the space to tell a story to people who come into the court and come up the stairs ... to get justice, and to the people who leave the court feeling better about the process. That's what justice is all about,' says Mick.

As at November 2016, the project was in the planning stages.

Handwriting school



Self-confessed ‘geek’ Sarah Armiger-Wills, Court Registry Officer at Whangarei High Court & District Court has always had an interest in IT. What she’s also got in spades is enthusiasm – and a real passion for her work, which has seen her develop and roll out, with the support of Judge Murray Hunt, a tool called E-Box.

E-Box is an electronic system for ‘box work’ or ‘chambers work’, used in the Family Court.

Registry staff are able to create a ‘memorandum to the judge’ that gives information on the status of a file and asks the judge for directions to progress the file. This memo is saved on a network drive that both the registry and judiciary have access to. The judge is able to open the memo, type in their directions and re-save it. The memo can then be released to counsel or parties as required.

The system has been implemented in a way that mirrors the case officers’ physical approach to filing. If a physical file is placed in a ‘red’ bin in the filing area, it can also be found in an E-Box folder labelled ‘red’ on the shared network drive.

It’s a system that’s unique to the Family Court, due to the level of interaction between judges and staff through memos on files, which doesn’t happen to the same degree in other jurisdictions.

And it has made a significant difference in terms of timeliness.

‘In late 2014, it was taking around 2 to 3 weeks turnaround, from when a judge had finished giving a direction, to actually getting it out to counsel and other parties,’ says Sarah.

‘That’s two weeks of someone’s life, essentially in limbo, where they’re waiting for a decision from a judge such as in relation to a custody case, or a care and contact arrangement.

‘Now it takes around 4 to 5 days. Cases are progressing faster, which means quicker disposal of files.’

The previous process was time-consuming, with judges writing their decisions directly onto a physical copy of a memo, which case officers would then read and type up.

However, deciphering a judge’s handwriting could sometimes be difficult, and case officers would often have to go back to the judge to clarify a decision. If the judge wasn’t available, this meant waiting.

‘As someone who previously worked in a pharmacy, I often used to joke that doctors and judges went to the same handwriting school,’ laughs Sarah.

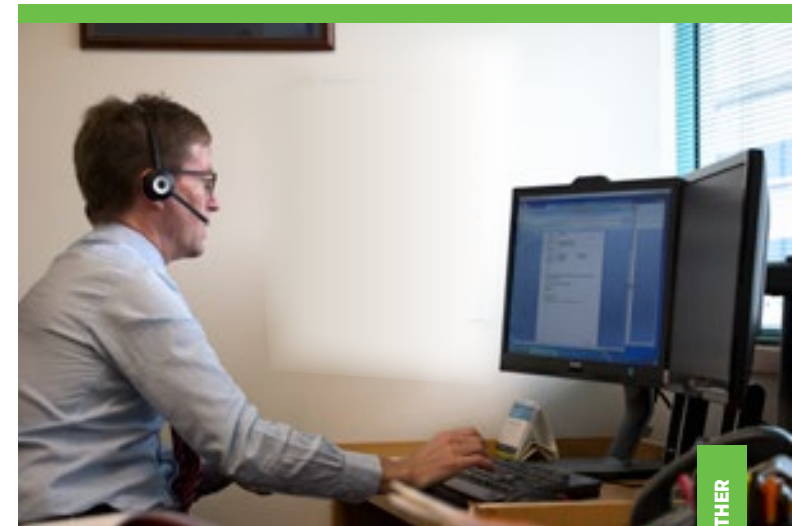
So she came up with a solution, E-Box, by ‘thinking about how we can make a difference within the system we already have’.

Judge Hunt was a trailblazer for E-Box, immediately recognising the potential of Sarah’s ‘number 8 wire’ solution and approving its implementation at Whangarei District Court, which took a mere few days. It has since been rolled out nationally.

He’s quick to demonstrate how it works, taking things a step further by using a dictation programme to convert his spoken words to print, through his computer.

‘Saving time and eliminating the potential for mistakes are two very worthy objectives,’ says Judge Hunt. ‘Further, the availability of an easy to use dictation programme, in combination with E-Box, allows the work to be dealt with more quickly by a judge.

‘Time is precious and timeliness is important.’



Process on point

'Why reinvent the wheel?' was the philosophy behind Judge Peter Callinicos' initiative on preparing preformatted electronic directions for memorandum preparation.



The judiciary and the registry staff supporting the Family Court were doing the same thing from scratch, time and time again. The work was repetitive and time-consuming, but necessary.

In the Family Court, registry staff create memoranda for the judge, which provide information on the history and status of a case, and ask the judge for directions on progressing that case.

Supported by the registry, Judge Callinicos developed auto-text shortcuts so court registry officers could insert recommended directions into the memorandum before it goes to the judge.

The intention was two fold: to reduce the time it takes for a court registry officer or judge to consider and produce directions for issuing to parties and counsel, and to ensure that directions are consistent in style and content – detailed enough to really get to the heart of a case.

‘There’s a short game and a long game,’ says Judge Callinicos. ‘The more detail the registry staff give, the more meaningful directions they’re going to get back from the judge, really drilling the case and giving you a better result. This means you will expedite the case faster.’

‘The time saving is about 30 percent of what it would take to type up directions on each case individually. This is a mammoth saving [in time] and in registry work.’

Judge Callinicos started using auto-text shortcuts for directions in early 2016, culminating in a *Judicial Directions AutoText and eDuty Resource Manual* published in July 2016.

Court Services Manager Jackie Yeo played a key role in helping implement the approach among registry staff.

‘At the end of the day, we’ve got a common goal, which is trying to get cases through the system as quickly as possible,’ says Jackie.

‘I like it – I’m a process-driven person. It speeds up the process and it sets clear expectations. With family law issues, it’s not always black and white. However, the directions provide a good base to start with, and we can adapt these depending on the case.’



Judge Callinicos’ focus on improving systems extends into a variety of other areas in the Family Court. A step-by-step guide for aged case call-overs is one, developed in 2014/15.

Judge Tony Lendrum had just come on board in Hawke’s Bay, and with Judge Callinicos, they started looking at old Family Court cases to see if there was a way of calling them on and dealing with them.

Registry staff played an important role in identifying the most aged cases, selecting 20 from Napier and 20 from Hastings. Judge Callinicos and Judge Lendrum then read through each case, preparing appropriate directions to drive each case to a conclusion. While doing so, they developed notes to guide others through the process, including templates and standard memoranda.

Judge Callinicos says the result for aged cases in the Hawke’s Bay was phenomenal, with a lot of cases folded, and a lot resolved.

‘We’re able to put aged cases under the pump, and have the power to call a hearing if necessary. There’s an obligation on us, and on the registry to do that, as is consistent with justice.’

He emphasises the importance of collaboration between the judiciary and registry staff on systems-based initiatives.

‘Every system needs to be developed alongside registry staff. It has to be both [the judiciary and the registry], otherwise nothing will ever work.’

COURT HOUSE

No one is an island



The Nelson Marlborough West Coast region's four courts may suffer from a fair degree of physical isolation, but that hasn't stopped them from working together. The Nelson, Blenheim, Greymouth and Westport courts happen to be closer than ever, collaborating and sharing tasks to work more efficiently and get the job done.

'We see ourselves as one big court,' says Blenheim Court Services Manager Debra Lowes. 'As a management team, we get along really well, and we all want to work as a team – we can see the benefits.'

It's this attitude that has driven a number of initiatives within the region. And that includes helping other courts out too.

PROCESSING WITNESS SUMMONSES

In August 2015 Nelson Marlborough West Coast staff began processing witness summonses for Auckland District Court. What prompted the idea was a need for speed, borne from pressures that Auckland District Court was facing in processing witness summonses.

So the Nelson Marlborough West Coast region decided to help.

'Without physically moving staff up there, we started thinking about how we could lend a hand,' says Change and Implementation Advisor Karyl Winter. 'It needed to be something we could do electronically.'

Karyl got to work on an implementation plan for processing witness summonses remotely, working with Rachel Foote at Auckland District Court. The new way of working was quickly given the all clear, with staff from around the Nelson Marlborough West Coast region rostered on to do the work on a daily basis.

Karyl says it was easy to set up and easy to implement, and feedback from staff and from Police has been very positive.

'Auckland staff are really appreciative that we're helping them get the work done – it means they have more time to respond to other work demands. And from our end, we're turning around witness summonses for Police sooner.

'It's a great way of reallocating resources, without having to move people around the country ... It's been a real team effort for the Nelson Marlborough West Coast region and Auckland District Court.'

What initially started as a pilot is now business as usual, due to the success of this initiative. Summonses are now predominantly processed by staff at Westport Court, with help from other staff around the Nelson Marlborough West Coast region.



PRODUCTION ORDERS

Christchurch was the first to start processing production orders through email, following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. Blenheim Court Services Manager Debra Lowes picked up the idea and expanded on it by introducing an electronic process for production orders across the Nelson Marlborough West Coast region.

A production order is an application by Police to the court to get information that may provide evidence of a crime such as telephone or bank records.

In most areas, Police apply in person by coming into their local court and handing over the paperwork. An issuing officer at the court then considers the application.

There are two issuing officers at Blenheim District Court, and production orders were, quite frankly, interrupting the day.

'Often we'd be considering applications on the spot, which meant dropping everything else,' says Debra. 'In some cases this meant court customers were kept waiting, or if we were too busy with customers, Police would have to come back later once we'd had a chance to look at it.'

So Debra decided to talk to Police about emailing their production orders. They set up a secure email system for Police to submit their applications, and Ministry of Justice issuing officers across the Nelson Marlborough West Coast region are rostered on to monitor the inbox and do the job.

The new way of working was introduced in June 2015, and they've never looked back. Police no longer have to make one (or two) trips to the court to apply for a production order. And by sharing the role across the region, issuing officers are able to give production orders their full focus when they're rostered on and are spared the interruption to their day when they're not.

'Police love it – they can see it's so much quicker,' says Debra. 'We tell them that we'll action them within 24 hours, but most of them we do within one hour. It also means that they can email their applications at any time, including over the weekend or when on shift work.'

'It's such a no brainer. It makes the whole process so much easier.'





WESTPORT WAY OF WORKING

With only two staff at Westport District Court and not as much counter traffic as other courts in the Nelson Marlborough West Coast region, Blenheim Court Services Manager Debra Lowes and Court Services Manager for Greymouth and Westport District Courts Elspie Mitchell got thinking about how the Westport team might be able to support the wider Nelson Marlborough West Coast region.

Introduced in October 2016, a new initiative dubbed the 'Westport way of working' sees staff at Westport District Court undertaking region-wide 'quick win' tasks including E-duty, witness summons, marriage licences and motor vehicle confiscations. Their case management duties were moved to Greymouth District Court.

It's a significant change in the way the region is managing its workload across the four courts.

'The main focus was trying to share the resources around, to better support staff, and making sure we maintain good customer service,' says Debra.

'As a region, we're always thinking outside the square and about what we can do differently. That's what we do around here.'

Elspie conveys a similar sentiment: 'We're always thinking, how can we make it work?'

It seems to be working so far – the initiative is estimated to save up to 12 weeks of court registry officer time across Blenheim, Nelson and Greymouth District Courts.

'It's made a huge difference for Blenheim staff. Because we're a multi-jurisdiction court, including High Court, District Court, Disputes, etcetera, we're really busy. It means that court staff can focus on their key duties and we can provide quicker customer service to people who come into the court,' says Debra.

Westport Court Registry Officer Lisa Brookes-Hateley thinks the initiative is positive.

'I still get to do the stuff that I think is fun, like taking court and doing data entry,' says Lisa. 'And I like the work – it suits my personality to get things done and get them on their way.'

'I get a lot of satisfaction out of it – every day I feel like I've contributed.'

FAMILY COURT E-DUTY

The region is also sharing the load when it comes to Family Court E-duty applications filed in the Nelson Marlborough West Coast courts.

Since the end of 2015, the team use a weekly roster that sees one court (the 'duty court') processing all urgent Family Court applications each day, for all of the courts across the Nelson Marlborough West Coast region.

Nelson Court Services Manager Lisa Vaile explains that in the Family Court, applications (such as for a Parenting Order or a Protection Order) are often urgent and need to be dealt with immediately. Each application was taking around 45 minutes on average to process.

'We wanted to be more efficient in dealing with them,' says Lisa. 'We still use the E-duty model, but we've centralised the process into one court on a daily basis, so other courts can carry on with business as usual.'

'The efficiency gains aren't so much on the applications themselves, because they're still considered a priority, but it means we're freeing up capacity at other courts.'

A virtual way of working



Three years ago, Collections Registry Officers started working from home as part of a pilot project. Back then, they were known as ‘Home Agents’ and it was a novel way of working. In July 2016 it became a permanent feature for Collections, and bailiffs have also started working in a virtual way.

Collections Service Delivery Manager Louisa Carroll explains that around 80 Collections Registry Officers now work from home across New Zealand, with another 20 soon to make the transition from district courts. Six collections managers based at district courts each ‘virtually’ manage a team of 17 people, who could be based anywhere around New Zealand (in their own homes).

‘Our pilot resulted in huge engagement, and a big part of this was to do with lifestyle,’ says Louisa. ‘Working at home provides flexibility – there are still parameters, but people are able to work their hours to suit their work/life balance, which is great.’

‘It also means that people don’t have to pay for parking, deal with gridlock or get up early to travel to work. There are huge benefits and people are happier. All this on top of taking care of our customers, ensuring high-quality outputs and delivering quality work quickly.’

The change for bailiffs isn’t so much about where they’re based, as they still work from district courts when they’re not on the road (which is around 60 percent of the time), but how they’re led.

Collections Manager Dave O’Shaughnessy explains that bailiffs are now organised into teams on a national basis and managed virtually. Based at Papakura District Court, Dave is one of three managers looking after a team of bailiffs located from Whangarei to Christchurch.

‘The only change is to how we’re leading our people,’ says Dave. ‘We have a national focus, and we have the ability to move bailiffs around to respond to demand.’

Connecting as a team and using technology to do so is an important part of this new way of working for bailiffs and Collections Registry Officers working from home, which the team seems to have fully embraced.

Collections Manager Judy Powell, based at Manukau District Court, says the technology enables the team to work smarter and to connect up.

‘The cool thing is, we meet every day,’ says Judy.

‘We’ve got that connection, and we make the spark happen when we’re in the moment, and then we follow through in different ways throughout the day.’

This includes socialising and asking work-related questions through their ‘virtual tea room’ Yammer (a social media forum).

‘Remember our people are based nationally and are geographically dispersed so it’s important to create a feeling of connectedness,’ says Louisa. ‘Being closely connected also drives a focus on standardisation and consistency, so the customer gets the same great service wherever they are in New Zealand.’

Louisa’s excited about the potential of this way of working for small-town New Zealand.

‘The talent pool is huge from a recruitment perspective, because we’re not limited to one physical location. And from an employee perspective, it means that people can choose to live in places where traditionally they might not have been able to get work.’

Shining a light on data



Justice Business Intelligence Manager Anton Youngman is shining a light on the Ministry's data. Data can often be confusing, he concedes. And that's precisely why he's taking a different approach.

'Previously, the Ministry had lots of data and lots of reports,' says Anton. 'But that data wasn't really being used effectively – it was often just data for data's sake.'

'We needed to stop talking about the data, and start storytelling. For example, we should be looking at our data and, where we see things changing, we should be asking why, and why does it matter?'

Anton's focus is on telling that story, and on providing insights that people can understand. Since joining the Ministry of Justice in April 2016 he's championed a number of different initiatives to help do this.

Once a week, Anton holds a meeting called the 'Understanding Performance Hour'. It's more exciting than it sounds – all of the Ministry's system data is displayed on the walls of the meeting room, with issues and emerging issues highlighted with post-it notes. Senior managers from across the Ministry attend, mingle and ask questions.

'It gives them a complete picture of all of the different parts of the courts system and how it's performing,' says Anton.

'It means that where there's an issue or an emerging issue, the responsible manager can filter the information back to their team and figure out a plan of attack. And it allows us to share information, so that all parts of the business can understand what's going on and have those important conversations.'

'If people don't understand the story, there's no point in doing the analysis. But if people do understand, that's where big gains can be made. It can help them make better decisions, and mitigate issues ahead of time.'

'If operations are running smoothly then people can get in and out of the system as quickly as possible.'

The meeting ends with a 'mythbuster' session, which involves Anton and his team proving or disproving data-related assertions.

'We often hear people making bold statements about how we can speed things up,' says Anton. 'However, when we do the analysis, it's usually not so straightforward. We often find that efforts would be better directed elsewhere in the process. Having the data to back that up helps change the conversation.'

Another change being driven by Anton and his team is to look at the Ministry's performance like a business does. This means combining data about people, processes, customers and financials in one view, to provide a more comprehensive picture of how the Ministry is performing.

'We've gone from having interesting data, to having useful insights,' says Anton. 'The next step is making sure that the data tools we have developed are embedded into the business, and are being used to improve decision-making every day.'

Open justice in real time



Nau mai, haere mai, ki te pae tukutuku o Ngā Kōti ā Rohe o Aotearoa. Welcome to the website of the District Courts of New Zealand.

The District Court is the largest court in Australasia. Most New Zealanders who go to court will go through the entire justice process in a District Court. Each year, 175 Judges in 58 courthouses deal with approximately 200,000 criminal, family, youth and civil matters. Judicial decisions from a representative sample of these cases are published here, with emphasis on significant decisions of particular interest. ** Selections are updated regularly in an independent process – overseen by an Editorial Board of judges. Alongside other background material, the publication of

It's hard to know where to start with the recent move to publish judicial decisions from District Courts online – it's such a good news story, says Chief District Court Judge Jan-Marie Doogue.

Ultimately, it's about openness. It means the public are able to access decisions simply by going online, without having to apply to individual courts. It speeds up the process for the media, and enables greater transparency about how and why decisions are made.

Chief Judge Doogue sums it up nicely: 'It means open justice in real time.'

It's hoped that providing a wide range of significant decisions online, in a timely way, will help to improve understanding of the court process.

For people who have a close interest in a case, they can go straight to the source for the decision.

The website, which went live in August 2016, is also expected to help inform decision-making and support consistency in sentencing, as it enhances access to decisions by lawyers and judges.

A publications unit in the Office of the Chief District Court Judge works with an editorial board of senior judges to select decisions for online publication. Decisions deemed to be of high public or legal interest are published, after vetting according to agreed criteria.

There's also a fast-track that streamlines the process even further, for cases that have a high degree of interest.

Where the editorial board sees a real public interest in a decision, they can prioritise it.

The number of website hits to districtcourts.govt.nz has increased significantly since the service was introduced, says Chief Judge Doogue.

'One recent decision was viewed over 1800 times. This was a case that had potential wider ramifications for corporate New Zealand, who had an obvious interest in the outcome – and in understanding the case for themselves,' says Chief Judge Doogue.

The editorial board sees a huge volume of cases – around 2500 decisions were published on the website in 2016, and around 4000 are planned for 2017.

districtcourts.govt.nz

**Small
change,
big
difference**



‘We all know about the relationship between timeliness and people’s experience of the justice system,’ says Chief District Court Judge Jan-Marie Doogue.

‘People involved in sexual violence cases have been telling us that their experience of the court process isn’t good, and timeliness is clearly an issue. The Sexual Violence Court pilot is an example of how we’re trying to change things.’

Research shows that the longer people are in the system, which involves having to keep distressing experiences fresh in their mind, the harder it is for them to recover.

The pilot, Chief Judge Doogue says, will be ‘us doing what we can, where we can, to improve the court experience, particularly for children and other vulnerable witnesses.’

Starting in December 2016, the District Courts will pilot new court processes for sexual violence cases in Auckland and Whangarei. The pilot will cover all serious (Category 3) sexual violence cases to be heard by a jury in these two courts.

The initiative will see like cases grouped together. It’s an approach that isn’t new to District Courts, and the aim is common: to help cohesive and consistent application of existing law.

In practice, it will see judges focusing on timeliness at all stages of the court process.

Chief Judge Doogue says this includes ‘pro-active, best practice trial management, an aim for a jury trial within six months of call over, and a sexual violence court coordinator dedicated to scheduling cases in a timely way.’

An education programme on sexual violence for trial judges is a central part of the pilot.

‘Drawing on the very latest and best research internationally, the education programme will upskill judges on the complexities involved in sexual violence cases. For example, linguistics, forms of questioning and supporting child and vulnerable witnesses to lessen trauma.’

The Chief Judge stresses that the pilot doesn’t depart from Bill of Rights principles relating to a fair trial.

‘It’s solely focused around the trial, and around the areas where judges can have the most impact.’

‘It’s a modest initiative, but it has real potential to make a significant contribution to improving participants’ experience of the court.’



**A nurturing place
to return to**

Maunga Pohatu is an 18.8 hectare block of land between Maungapohatu Mountain and Mangakahia River, on the outskirts of Whangarei. Aroha Shelford is one of over 500 owners of this land.

Her Papakāinga ('a nurturing place to return to') housing project proposes to develop the land based on sustainable living principles, including gardens, orchards and aquaculture, livestock and homes, to reignite whānau bonds and live off the land.

'Aroha's project provides a test case for new Māori land use provisions that now sit with the Whangarei District Council and Northland Regional Council,' explains Jared Pitman, Principal Liaison Officer at the Whangarei Māori Land Court.

The provisions enable the landowner to determine the appropriate use of the land, which means that every block of land may be different depending on the nature of the land itself.

Jared's role involves facilitating meetings with owners, assisting with their application to the Māori Land Court, liaising with the council, and advising council staff on Māori land use policy.

He has been involved in Aroha's project since the beginning, and at all stages of the process. He's 'just a phone call or a text away' for Aroha when she has a question or needs advice. It's obvious the two share a close bond, with meetings going back as far as 2009.

'Jared's involvement has been significant - if he wasn't there, I would have had to learn the whole process myself. Still, you'd be surprised at how many whānau know how to navigate Māori land, out of necessity - they're passionate about living on their whenua,' says Aroha.

Jared elaborates on the complexity. 'Landowners have aspirations for building housing on their land, but an obvious barrier right from the beginning is multiple ownership. If one block of land is owned by one hundred people, they need to start by establishing a trust.'

Aroha explains. 'Our block of land is smaller compared to others in the region. But still, it has 600 listed beneficiaries. The majority of the owners are deceased, with no succession plan. It's obviously been difficult to get all of the shareholders together - first to find them, then to find out whether they're still alive, and then to get them to come to a meeting.'

Aroha used social media to help her cause, setting up a Facebook page that all beneficiaries had access to, and asking for feedback that way.

She quickly set up a whānau trust and received agreement to take over the lease of the land, and to develop it based on sustainable living principles. Building housing on the land was a secondary idea, and one that has been slightly more difficult to get off the ground.

'We want to build sustainable, earth homes that are based on traditional thinking. It doesn't really align with resource consents, and other council processes.

'You can understand why people simply run out of energy - there's just too much process, especially for laypeople. All they want to do is live there.'

Early signs are that it's looking good for Aroha and her project, with a decision from the court expected. She plans to 'get straight into it' by building infrastructure and roading, and is hoping to have the first four homes on the land built by June 2017.

'Aroha's project is establishing a precedent. It's really exciting for other whānau around New Zealand, to see them thinking about how they can use their land,' says Jared.

A woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a black top with a vibrant floral pattern, is speaking into a microphone. She is positioned in front of a large, colorful Maori artwork featuring a central figure and intricate geometric patterns. The text 'Nowhere to hide' is overlaid in large yellow font on the left side of the image.

Nowhere to hide

There's a buzz outside courtroom 5. It's 1pm on a Wednesday at Waitakere District Court, and the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment (AODT) Court – Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua – is about to begin. Participants mingle outside, talking amongst themselves, with their legal representatives and with other support people.

It's one of two AODT Courts (the other is at Auckland District Court). Between them, they handle up to 50 offenders a year.

Set up in 2012 as part of a five-year pilot, the AODT Courts give defendants with substance dependency issues an opportunity to deal with those issues before they're sentenced. They still get sentenced for their crimes, but the effort they put in at the AODT Court can be taken into account.

At Waitakere, everyone enters the courtroom and it quickly falls to a hush as Judge Lisa Tremewan enters. Everyone stands for a waiata and karakia, and it's immediately obvious this isn't your typical court.

'The defendants are quickly settled by the waiata and karakia at the beginning, and they realise that this court is different. You can see the barriers come

down – you start to get a sense of who they really are, and so do they, without the drugs and alcohol,’ says Judge Tremewan.

Participants in the court must meet criteria that they are ‘high needs’ (in terms of their addiction issues) and ‘high risk’ (of non-compliance).

‘The people who qualify for the AODT Court have basically already had everything that the system has to offer, and it hasn’t worked,’ says Judge Tremewan.

‘They are in a revolving door within the criminal justice system.

‘They have an addiction, and research makes it clear that punishment does not change that. They require intensive management, and the court is an opportunity to provide that – and much better outcomes are achieved especially by having all of the agencies working together.

‘It’s not a soft option,’ stresses Judge Tremewan. ‘It’s really hard to work on your issues and meet all of the rigorous requirements of the court.’

Court begins with Judge Tremewan asking the people in the ‘A Team’ to stand as a group. These are the participants who have done everything required of them since their last court date. They receive a round of applause from others in the court, acknowledging their progress, before then being called individually to be acknowledged at their monitoring appearance.

The people on the ‘B Team’ haven’t fully complied with the programme since their last court date. They also get called to come forward individually, but not until much later in the day – making for a long afternoon for them. Continued or significant non-compliance will mean they will be exited from the AODT Court.

Judge Tremewan carries on with the A Team members, calling each of them up to stand before the court, not in a dock, but behind a podium facing the judge, court professionals and their peers.

Each participant’s progress is reviewed by Judge Tremewan, with some receiving medals for milestone achievements, certificates for phase advancement and praise for otherwise positive progress.

Participants are given the opportunity to respond so they can share their thoughts and advice for others.

Most of them speak. Quiet. Humble. All express gratitude – there seems to be a general acceptance that they’re the ‘lucky ones’ who have been given a chance.

‘If you think about the normal court system, defendants often spend years in and out of court, and they never have to say a single thing,’ says Judge Tremewan.

‘But they come in here and they have to speak for themselves. And if things aren’t progressing well they’ll probably not be looking forward to having that conversation, because it means they’ll be directly challenged and held to account.

‘There’s nowhere to hide in this court.’

Before the court sitting, there’s a meeting which includes the judge, defence, police prosecutors and expert advisors. Also present is the Pou Oranga – a role established to ensure that Māori participants, and the court itself, is assisted by a team member with expertise in tikanga and te reo Māori, as well as a lived experience of recovery and qualifications in the addiction field. Collectively, the team reviews each case and strategises, sharing information and referring to relevant research.

‘While the approach is relatively new to New Zealand, the United States has had courts like this since the late 1980s,’ says Judge Tremewan. ‘They have several thousand of these courts now – they have so many of them simply because these courts work. We’ve been fortunate to be able to leapfrog over two decades of their trial and error, straight to the cutting edge.

‘There’s a lot of research out there – we’d be foolish not to pick up on it. We’re able to “take the eyes out” of the research and apply it in a way that’s relevant to where we come from.’

The court is now coming to the end of its five-year pilot, and is being formally evaluated.



WENDY'S STORY

Wendy was in and out of prison and court. One day, she came before Judge Lisa Tremewan, who told her she wasn't getting bail. She 'flipped', before being taken down into the cells and breaking into tears. Here she was given some information about the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment (AODT) Court, and the offer to participate.

'I had no idea what I was getting into,' says Wendy. 'But part of me knew that I needed help. I had a bit of a light bulb moment, thinking if I don't sort myself out now, where is my life going to go? Probably nowhere.'

So, after it was established that she met the court's criteria, Wendy decided to join the AODT Court, but she had no idea what to expect.

'Remember I was a criminal, a drug addict, an alcoholic. I had a total fear of the unknown ... I had a wall up.'

Wendy went into residential treatment at Odyssey House, but it wasn't for her.

'So I ran away, and relapsed in a whole bunch of different ways. I had a lot of learning to do ... I needed to learn to reach out to people.'

When she came up in front of Judge Tremewan again she realised she wasn't going to have many chances in this court.

'This was a chance for me. I needed to look forward and see that these people were with me, not against me. It was different to when I came up against authority in the past – this time, I got the feeling that the judges really cared.'

So Wendy took the opportunity to develop a new treatment plan with her support team, and went into a residential treatment programme at The Salvation Army Bridge, which had more of a spiritual focus that better suited her. She admits it wasn't easy.

'One of the greatest things I learned is that there are so many challenges in life. It was a learning curve. I was so lucky I didn't get exited from the programme ... but it still took me about a year to surrender and to admit that I was an alcoholic (as well as a drug addict).'

'I've got away with a lot in my life, and I was disrespectful towards the court at first. But once I finally surrendered I felt so much freer ... I also had a realisation at this point that I needed to work harder. I had to prove myself.'

Wendy spent the next 18 months attending the AODT Court, meeting regularly with her sponsor, following a '12-step programme' which involved regular Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous meetings and doing voluntary community work for The Salvation Army. She also had lots of other commitments in the court, including regular and random drug testing.

'I had to do a lot of work myself. They [the people who support you through the AODT Court] work with you but they don't pull you along. We have to make our own decisions.'

Wendy graduated from the AODT Court in March 2014, and is now working for The Salvation Army and for a homelessness charity. She has also gained a qualification as a peer support worker. She continues to go to meetings, and is heavily involved with the court as an alumni.

She thanks the AODT Court for helping her 'open the door to a whole new world, and close the door to an old world'.

'If I didn't come into the drug court, I'd probably still be in the same lifestyle. I wouldn't have known how to leave that lifestyle at all. I'd probably be back in jail, or on the run.'

'It's really nice waking up clean and sober each day now and thinking I've got a full day ahead of me. And at the end of the day, it's great to look back and think wow, I've had a really productive day. It's taken me a long time [to get there].'

Referring to her experience at the AODT Court, she has some advice for others: 'If I can do it, anyone can do it. It takes a lot of balls. But it shows you how tough you can be in a lot of different ways. It's not a soft option, because everyone is watching you. But at the end of the day, you come in and do it on your own'.

**A court
process
steeped in
history**



The Mataatua Rangatahi Court takes place at Te Whare o Toroa (Wairaka) Marae in Whakatāne on the first Friday of every month. The marae sits at the Whakatāne River mouth, tucked under the hills and looking out onto the sand spit in the distance. Entering the marae, it's hard not to feel like you're somewhere special.

Rangatahi (young people) and their families and whānau are welcomed onto the marae with a traditional pōwhiri.

This is critical to the practise of the Rangatahi Court, symbolising the immediate and embracing introduction into the Māori world and Māori protocol. The hongiri (and harirū – shaking of hands) follows, before everyone gathers in the wharekai to share food and drink. Court commences shortly thereafter in the wharenuī (meeting house).

The first case is called and a young woman enters the wharenuī flanked by her whānau and friends, many of whom have made a long trip from the Far North to show their support.

She stands confidently to say her pepeha (a Māori introduction) as others look on proudly. This process begins each session for an offender coming before the Rangatahi Court – connecting Māori youth with their culture and identity is a key part of the approach.

The young woman has completed her Family Group Conference plan, and has paid her reparation to the victim. She sits quietly, smiling from time to time, as she receives praise and words of wisdom from each of the respected Māori elders who sit alongside Judge Peter Rollo. Judge Rollo is standing in today for Judge Louis Bidois, who typically presides over the Mataatua Rangatahi Court.

Judge Rollo is the last to speak, reflecting on the progress the young woman has made.

'You've made a 180 degree turnaround and that's because of you and your whānau,' says Judge Rollo.

'Now you need to focus on the future, with the support of your whānau around you. You've paid the utu – you've put it right, by completing your plan and paying the reparation. Now you can reach the goals you set for yourself in the future.'

The young woman and her whānau speak, thanking the judge and elders for giving her a chance, and a final hongiri takes place before they leave the wharenuī. There's an obvious sense of relief and hope for the future.

The rest of the young people are called, entering the wharenuī one at a time with their whānau and supporters.

Introduced in 2008, the Rangatahi Courts are a response to the disproportionate number of young Māori in the youth justice system. The courts support tikanga Māori culture but are open to young people of all ethnicities.

Young offenders must first appear at the Youth Court, but may be offered the opportunity to have subsequent hearings held at the Rangatahi Court, where social services, tikanga wānanga (cultural programmes), plus whānau, hapū and iwi resources are used to help guide young offenders from a life of crime.

Judge Rollo emphasises that it is exactly the same justice system, practised in a culturally appropriate way for Māori (and open to others).

‘Put simply, the Rangatahi Court is the Youth Court sitting on a marae, applying the same law as in the Youth Court (which is convened in a courthouse), but in a Māori way. This means practising tikanga Māori, involving appropriate use of te reo Māori, and applying Māori cultural concepts and core values to the decision-making process. Notably, that includes consultation and valuable input from respected Māori elders from that marae or rōhe (area). But as in the Youth Court, it is for the judge to collate the information and confirm the outcome.

‘Time allocated in the Rangatahi Court is much longer – we get very involved in each case, looking at relationships and causes, and providing the opportunity for whānau to speak to demonstrate support ... there can be great woe and anguish expressed. You don’t see this in a Youth Court.

‘Māori concepts resonate with rangatahi and their whānau and supporters. There’s definitely a lot of respect there. What we’re seeing is the playing out of the court process, steeped in history.’

In Whakatāne, as in other areas, there is huge support for the approach. The local kaumātua and kuia speak highly of their experience with the court, certain that it’s making a difference to young people’s lives. There’s also a feeling that the Rangatahi Court provides an important opportunity to reconnect youth and their whānau with the marae, where it may have been lost.

‘What happens when they come through that gate is that for the first time in their lives, they’re hit with a fistful of respect,’ says kaumātua Maanu Paul.

‘The introductory process enables the rangatahi to be sensitised to the environment of an enveloping, caring community, prepared to share their marae world with them.

‘We come with no preconceptions – we’re not saying “god, look at that one”, we’re saying “whose tupuna is that?”’

Rangatahi Courts now take place on 15 marae across New Zealand. Participation by young offenders in the Rangatahi system has grown from 28 young people in 2008/09 (when the courts were first introduced) to 290 in 2015/16.

Research suggests that Rangatahi Court participants are 15 percent less likely to reoffend and 11 percent less likely to commit new serious offences in the following year when compared to other youth.

Maanu stresses that even a small improvement in this area is a real positive step, and the Rangatahi Court plays a central role in helping to achieve these gains.

The work of the Rangatahi Court was recently acknowledged through the prestigious Veillard-Cybulski Award 2016 (which recognises outstanding work that advances the rights of the child) awarded

to Judge Heemi Taumaunu. Judge Taumaunu was instrumental in establishing the Rangatahi Courts, with strong support from former Principal Youth Court Judge Andrew Becroft and from the Ministry of Justice, led by Justice Director Māori Strategy Tony Fisher (previously General Manager District Courts).

The Rangatahi Courts were also recognised by the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration in 2015, and won the 2016 Institute of Public Administration New Zealand Excellence Award for Crown-Māori relationships.



The list

Following the Christchurch earthquakes in 2010 and 2011, all signs were pointing to a massive influx in earthquake-related cases being filed in the High Court. The Chief High Court Judge made a commitment that such cases would be dealt with ‘as swiftly as the Court’s resources permit’ and with that, the High Court established the Earthquake List in 2012.

Judicial Support Advisor Rob Ashton, who started managing the list in 2014, provides specialist legal and management advice to the Hon. Justice David Gendall and Associate Judge Osborne who oversee it.

Upon filing, earthquake-related cases (such as those regarding insurance issues, land issues and property) are referred to an Earthquake List Judge for a decision on whether they should be placed on the list.

There are certain prerequisites for getting on the list, says Rob, such as having a joint report by engineers.

Cases on the Earthquake List receive customised case management through to trial, and priority is given to cases that are urgent or that raise issues with precedential value, such as those affecting many homeowners or businesses and their insurers.

Rob explains that the list requires a lot of work to be done outside of the court process, so there are no surprises later down the track.

‘We’re doing more on paper, with work being done by lawyers before filing and before people need to appear in court, which saves a lot of time. Most cases settle before they even need to come to court.

‘From September 2015 to September 2016 only two decisions weren’t settled outside of court. In the meantime, 150 cases were settled.’

Rob says that one of the main benefits of being on the list is that it saves time.

‘For people with cases on the list, it means they don’t have to show up to court when it’s not absolutely necessary. It also potentially reduces their costs, because they don’t have to pay their lawyer to show up.’

The publication of the list online is intended to help facilitate communication among parties and counsel. A spreadsheet of all cases entered on the earthquake list and their status is updated on a quarterly basis.

[See the Earthquake List in the High Court section of courtsofnz.govt.nz](https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz)



A new window into justice



The Ministry of Justice website gets around 3.5 million visitors each year. People go there to get information, to download a form or to find their way to one of our courts. It provides a 24/7 window into the world of 'justice' – and it's recently been modernised to make it easier for people to do and find what they need.

The Ministry's former website was in serious need of a spruce-up, explains Senior Project Manager Kirri Lynn, who worked closely with the Ministry's Communications and ICT teams on the project.

'There was too much information on there, it wasn't written with the customer in mind and it was hard to navigate,' says Kirri.

The new website combined 22 old websites into 9 simplified sites – including justice.govt.nz – and reduced the number of pages from 10,000 to 1500.

This was all done with the support of staff from across the Ministry, who Kirri credits with the project's success. The project also had significant judicial involvement, which was critical.

'It was such a collaborative effort. You can't do this sort of thing unless you work with people. They're the ones who have to own it and love it.'

In developing a new website, the focus was on 'content, content, content' – and the customer. Content that was written for the customer, content

that was easier for the customer to find, and content that would work on a smartphone or tablet as well as a desktop computer.

So it made sense that the project started with customers, in mid-2015.

'We undertook a lot of customer research to help figure out what people were looking for and where they might typically search for it,' says Kirri.

'We got some really great insights. For example, one of the things that we discovered was missing from our website was what people can expect when they have to go to court.'

In addition to having 'fresh' content on the website, other content was updated using language that the average Kiwi could understand.

The new website also made it easier to find things, with improved search and navigation tools. 'Quick links' on the home page cover the most searched-for information, such as paying fines, separation and divorce, and criminal checks.

'Some customers can be stressed and emotional when they look for our information online, so they should be able to find what they need quickly and easily,' says Communication Services General Manager Suzanne Boslem. 'We also wanted to provide a better platform to develop the use of social media and other digital tools to allow customers to interact with us in new ways.'

Kirri says an important aspect was making sure the website could work on smartphones and tablets.

'Fewer people are sitting down at a desktop computer to look at our website,' says Kirri. 'Particularly on the weekend, they're accessing our website from their smartphone or tablet.'

The Ministry's new website went live on 1 July 2016.

justice.govt.nz

A man in a dark suit and tie stands with his hands clasped in front of a wall featuring large, rusted metal spirals. The background is a light blue wall with a white sky pattern. A yellow vertical bar is on the left side of the image.

Taking a different approach

Established in 2010 by the late Chief District Court Judge Russell Johnson, the Matariki Court in Kaikohe is a direct response to concerns about the rate of imprisonment of New Zealand's Māori population.

The statistics are hard-hitting – Māori make up around 50 percent of the male prison population and around 60 percent of the female prison population.

So the court takes a different approach. In the courtroom, that means a horseshoe-shaped setup, with the offender and his or her family sitting at the same table as defence counsel and other parties. Te reo Māori is spoken throughout the proceedings. And court begins with a mihi whakatau, waiata and karakia.

'It's a signal that we want to do things differently, while still ensuring the integrity of a courtroom and the court process are maintained,' says Judge Greg Davis.

As judge, he's still the dominant voice in the room. Strong, fair, and able to relate in a way that demands respect and humility. He questions carefully, giving each offender the chance to speak for themselves. The type of offending varies, but alcohol is a common denominator. Judge Davis reflects on the difficulty faced by many of these offenders and their whānau with Christmas approaching.

The court uses section 27 of the Sentencing Act, which provides an entry point to engage the offender and their whānau, hapū and iwi in the sentencing process, including the development of and participation in

a culturally appropriate rehabilitation programme. Progress against the programme is monitored by the court.

Ngahau Davis, who heads Te Mana o Ngāpuhi Kowhau Rau (an organisation that represents local iwi Ngāpuhi in the Matariki Court process), has been involved with the court since its establishment.

'Iwi involvement was so important because of those plain truths. The stats were ours, and we wanted to do this right,' says Ngahau. 'That's also why we wanted a genuine partnership with the Ministry of Justice.'

A decision was made early on that Te Mana o Ngāpuhi Kowhau Rau would sit outside of the court process, which was particularly significant as it enabled them to better connect with the offender's family.

'It was important that Te Mana o Ngāpuhi Kowhau Rau weren't seen as a government agency,' says Judge Davis. 'When a crown car pulls up to one of our houses, the blinds go down, the doors close ... but when whānau turn up, the blinds come up and the doors open. The whole approach is different.'

Ngahau chuckles as he reflects on his typical attire: not a suit. 'It might sound silly, but to the people we're working with, they see a suit and they associate

that with certain things. It's important that we can stand alongside them and be relevant and be real. That's the biggest thing, being real.'

To gain entry into the Matariki Court, an offender must enter a guilty plea as well as demonstrate a commitment to addressing the drivers of their offending.

'We're only prepared to deal with people who have said yes I did it and I want to put it right,' says Judge Davis. 'Te Mana o Ngāpuhi Kowhau Rau do the initial assessment with the offender, to identify the issues and to ensure they're genuine about engaging in the court process.'

Family and whānau are key elements.

'That's the beauty of this process,' says Judge Davis. 'Te Mana o Ngāpuhi Kowhau Rau have free reign to discuss...to hui with the community. It's a bit like double jeopardy – some people are being caned by their whānau and hapū on the marae, as well as in court.'

Ngahau elaborates. 'Through this process, they [the offenders] are putting themselves under the scrutiny of our community ... it brings accountability right across the board. It would have been a lot easier to go through the [normal] court.'



‘This is not a cake walk – if people think we’re just going to give them a whack with a wet bus ticket, then come again. It’s all about looking at how we stop this, and giving them [the offender] a chance to do the work ... but the punitive elements are still coming.’

If the offender successfully completes the rehabilitation programme, the court will take this into account when it sets the final sentence.

‘Ultimately, what we’re getting in great volumes is information. This is priceless when it comes to sentencing,’ says Judge Davis. ‘We wouldn’t have got this information without the additional effort being brought to the process by Te Mana o Ngāpuhi Kowhau Rau working with whānau and hapū.’

The court sits once a month and Judge Davis sees around 10 to 12 cases each day. Around 40 to 50 offenders come before the court each year, and most are under 30 years of age.

Glenis Purukamu from Te Mana o Ngāpuhi Kowhau Rau says that for some of the offenders they work with, the behaviours are so ingrained that it can take months before abuse issues are recognised.

‘When a young person first comes before the court, we don’t really know their needs,’ says Judge Davis. ‘It might seem obvious on the face of it, but when we scratch the surface they’re a lot bigger. We’re not just looking at the offender and their circumstances, we’re also looking at the wider whānau unit.’

He says they’ve seen a lot of whānau come to realise that the offender is simply doing what they learnt at home.

‘The best thing about it [the Matariki Court] is that we’re working with whānau, not just the offender,’ says Glenis. ‘You get to work with the wider whānau and you see the whānau all trying to deal with the drivers of the offending, including in their own actions.’

‘The issues are in the disconnection of whānau with each other, which can be put straight back to the disconnection from our culture and values base.’

Judge Davis acknowledges that there aren’t any guarantees with the Matariki Court. ‘But we’re increasing the odds,’ he says.

‘What worries me is that unless we can change the environment these young people are living in, we’re not going to change things.’

‘Our communities are dying to help ... there’s a lot of goodwill out there that isn’t being fully utilised.’

The Kaikohe Matariki Court is the only one of its kind in New Zealand.



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