













Introduction

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a significant phase in the development of rangatahi. While challenging for most, this phase can be especially difficult for rangatahi who spent time living in the Care and Protection system, as they are more likely to carry childhood traumas, leave placement with little financial or social support, and move into inadequate housing. Compared with the overall population, care leavers tend to record less-preferable socioeconomic-related outcomes as adults.

Until April 2017, rangatahi 'aged out' of the care system when they turned 17. At this time, they lost access to some types of placements and their caregivers lost access to professional and financial support. From April 2017, the age at which rangatahi can remain in (or return to) a care placement increased by one year to 18.

This analysis used data from Statistics New Zealand's Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) to compare the outcomes (until the age of 20) of rangatahi who were eligible to remain in (or return to) placement until the age of 18, with those of rangatahi with similar characteristics, but who were not eligible (too old), as well as with those from a control group.

Results

	Change Indicator	Whole cohort	By ethnicity
 Benefit Use		Strong reductions between the ages 17-20	Strong reductions at ages 17-18 for all groups, reductions at ages 18-20 only for Non-Māori/Pacific-Peoples rangatahi
 Education		Improvements in gaining Level 2 or above educational qualifications by age 19	Increase in the likelihood of Pacific Peoples and Non-Māori/Pacific rangatahi to gain any educational qualifications (at ages 18 and 19). No change for rangatahi Māori
 Health			
 Pregnancy			
 Employment			Reductions in income earned at age 17-18 (Māori)
 Police/Justice			

Conclusions

While improved benefit and education outcomes were in line with the anticipated effects of RAC, no improvements in health, employment, teenage pregnancy, or justice related outcomes were detected.

The findings highlight the possibility that as a stand-alone change, RAC was insufficient to achieve all the improvements envisioned. In addition, the findings suggest that RAC did not benefit rangatahi Māori to the same extent as rangatahi from other ethnic groups. However, it is also possible that some changes may take a longer time to emerge than in the period examined.

Further analysis will be required at a later date to assess this possibility. The methodology used in this analysis could be applied to explore whether more recent (and comprehensive) initiatives improved the outcomes of care leavers transitioning into adulthood (e.g., Transitions Support Service).