

## Nights and weekends primary care cover using Ka Ora - Four week review summary

### Background

Ka Ora Telecare National Rural Telehealth Service was introduced on Tuesday 1 October across Te Tai o Poutini West Coast to provide after-hours primary care services. The service is available on weekends, weeknights and public holidays, and represents a significant increase in access to primary care services for the West Coast community and visitors. All West Coast primary practices are enrolled with Ka Ora. More info - [Ka Ora Telecare](#). For more information on why Ka Ora was introduced see section 11.

### Four week review summary for period 1 Oct – 27 Oct 2024

#### 1. Utilisation

Week	Date	Weekdays	Weekends	Total Week
Week 1	1 Oct – 6 Oct	13	41	54
Week 2	7 Oct – 13 Oct	22	52	74
Week 3	14 Oct – 19 Oct	34	41	75
Week 4	20 Oct – 27 Oct	30	40	70

**Data insight 1.1:** The numbers in this table reflect unique patient numbers i.e. patients who accessed Ka Ora. However the service levels provided by Ka Ora is actually higher given that many patients will speak with more than one Ka Ora team member as they escalate through the triage system.

For example in week 1, the 54 unique patients actually had 128 discrete interactions with Ka Ora team members consisting of 50 Kaiawhina contacts, 45 Nurse triage appointments and 33 GP / Nurse Practitioner / FACEM (ED qualified senior doctor) consultations.

**Data insight 1.2:** Utilisation during weekdays is higher than expected. Anecdotal feedback provided by members of Community Voice is that some community members appreciate being able to access primary care services on weekday evenings. (<https://westcoasthealth.nz/about/community-voice>)

**Data insight 1.3:** During the month of September (the latest month for which data collection is complete) across all West Coast practices there was a total of 8,867 primary care practice consultations. Of these 8,867 consultations approximately 50% were GP consults and the remaining 50% consults with other primary care team members such as Practice Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists, Health Improvement Practitioners, Health Coaches or Kaiawahina. The 8,867 patient



figure when contrasted with the Ka Ora October utilisation figures reflect that the vast majority of patients still access care during week day business hours.

Comment from Emma Boddington, Clinical Director, West Coast Health.

*“Ka Ora appears to be working as intended helping people access the right level of care quickly and easily on an individual basis. We are aware that it is still early days so we are committed to ongoing monitoring for the next five months”.*

## 2. Utilisation by geographic area



**Data insight 2.1:** Patient contacts from all Practice areas. Weeks 2 – 4 reflect similar utilisation pattern.

Comment from Hayley McConnell, General Manager, Ka Ora Telecare

*“Ka Ora wants to say thank you to the local health care teams and the West Coast community. After Ka Ora staff visited the West Coast prior to the 1 October changes we were further reminded of the importance of locally driven change.*

*The key component of Ka Ora’s telecare service is that we work in partnership with general practices as they know their enrolled patient demographics and their local healthcare services (e.g. pharmacy, laboratories, urgent care or hospital care)”.*

### 3. Utilisation by Enrolled Practice

Te Nīkau Health Centre is aligned with expectations as Te Nīkau has the highest number of enrolled patients on the West Coast. Westland Medical and Buller Health had the next highest user numbers followed by Coastal Health and Kawatiri Health. The smaller Practices - Reefton Health, South Westland Area Practice, and Karamea Clinic had the smallest number of users.

**Data insight 3.1:** Ka Ora contact numbers are aligning with the enrolled patient numbers of each practice.

### 4. Equity Utilisation

17% of Ka Ora users during the period 1 October – 27 October were Māori. Latest census data indicates that the Māori population on the West Coast is approximately 13% – 14% of the total population.

**Data insight 4.1:** On the surface this is positive news. However, further investigation is warranted to ensure that Māori are not using Ka Ora as an alternative because they may be experiencing barriers to accessing routine primary care appointments.

### 5. Percentage of Ka Ora Patients Referred to In-Person Service

Week	Date	Nurse Referral	GP / NP / FACEM referral
Week 1	1 Oct – 6 Oct	10%	14%
Week 2	7 Oct – 13 Oct	15%	9%
Week 3	14 Oct – 19 Oct	13%	13%
Week 4	20 Oct – 27 Oct	13%	12%

- FACEM = Fellow of Australasian College of Emergency Medicine (ED qualified senior doctor)

**Data Insight 5.1:** These numbers are broadly in line with proportion of calls that Ka Ora refers to in-person services nationally.

These figures represent patients who are advised to travel to an in-person service using private transportation i.e. not an ambulance. Reasons why a patient may be referred to an in-person service include the need for further diagnostic testing (i.e. blood tests, ECGs, x-rays).



## 6. Ambulance called by Ka Ora Clinician

Week	Date	Patient numbers
Week 1	1 Oct – 6 Oct	2
Week 2	7 Oct – 13 Oct	4
Week 3	14 Oct – 19 Oct	5
Week 4	20 Oct – 27 Oct	7

**Data Insight 6.1:** The number of ambulances called for patients by Ka Ora clinicians has trended upwards over the initial four week period. This number will be closely monitored in conjunction with Hato Hone St John to ensure that the number remains within the expected utilisation range.

## 7. Pharmacy Access

The number of urgent prescriptions that have needed to be couriered to patients in the designated delivery area (north of Hokitika to south of Granity) is very low with less than 5 prescriptions per Sunday needed to be delivered. However, a small number of Greymouth people have chosen to travel to Westland Pharmacy on a Sunday to pick up their prescription in person. Westland Pharmacy remains open on a Sunday from 10 am – 12 pm to fill urgent prescriptions for Ka Ora patients as well. West Coast Health and Te Whatu Ora remain grateful that Westland Pharmacy has accepted this responsibility.

Comment from Graham Provis, Pharmacist and Westland Pharmacy Owner Operator

*“I am committed to remaining opening on a Sunday to meet community need. I believe access to pharmacy medicine on a Sunday is a necessity for West Coasters and I am proud that my team and I can perform this essential service”.*

## 8. Impact on Te Nīkau Hospital’s Emergency Department

The tables below are a snapshot of presentations into the Te Nīkau Hospital’s Emergency Department (ED) for one weekend prior to the implementation of Ka Ora and one weekend post implementation of Ka Ora. The numbers are within the normal range and variability of ED presentations.



**Te Nīkau Hospital ED presentations for period 5 pm 27/09/24 to 12 pm 29/09/2024**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
27 Sep (Friday)	5 pm – 12 am (7 hours)	7
28 Sep (Saturday)	12 am – 12 am (24 hours)	33
29 Sep (Sunday)	12 am – 12 pm (12 hours)	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>47</b>

**Te Nīkau Hospital ED presentations for period 5 pm 11/10/24 to 12 pm 13/10/2024**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
11 Oct (Friday)	5 pm – 12 am (7 hours)	9
12 Oct (Saturday)	12 am – 12 am (24 hours)	32
13 Oct (Sunday)	12 am – 12 pm (12 hours)	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>

Comment from Mary Harrington, Operations Manager - Central, Te Whatu Ora

“We have been closely monitoring the number of people presenting to the Emergency Department (ED) at Te Nīkau Hospital over the last five weeks. We are pleased that there has been no discernible increase in presentations. Our ED team has been supported by an on-call GP during this implementation phase. The on-call GP has been available to see patients who have been referred from Ka Ora for a face to face consultation. We have also trialled having a Hato Hone St John Extended Care Paramedic as part of the team. Because the numbers of people presenting to the ED has remained within the normal range of presentations we have not been required to increase ED staffing levels. An example of our normal staffing numbers for the Te Nīkau Emergency Department are set out in the two tables below”.

**Te Nīkau Hospital ED nursing staff for weekend of 12/10/2024 – 13/10/2024**

Date	Shift	Staffing
12 Oct (Saturday)	AM (7am – 3:30pm)	4 Registered Nurses (RNs) 1 Associate Clinical Nurse Manager (ACNM)
	PM (2:30pm – 11pm)	5 Registered Nurses 1 ACNM
	Night (10:45pm – 7:15am)	2 RNs
13 Oct (Sunday)	AM (7am – 3:30pm)	4 RNs
	PM (2:30pm – 11pm)	4 RNs 1 ACNM
	Night (10:45pm – 7:15am)	2 RNs

**Te Nīkau Hospital ED medical staff for weekend of 12/10/2024 – 13/10/2024**

Date	Shift	Staffing
12 Oct (Saturday)	AM (8am – 4pm)	1 Resident Medical Officer (RMO)
	AM/PM (11am – 9pm)	1 Senior Medical Officer (SMO)
	PM (2pm – 10pm)	Covered by on-call Rural Hospital Medicine (RHM) doctor
	Night (10pm – 8am)	1 RMO
13 Oct (Sunday)	AM (8am – 4pm)	1 RMO
	AM/PM (11am – 9pm)	1 SMO
	PM (2pm – 10pm)	Covered by on-call RHM doctor
	Night (10pm – 8am)	1 RMO

Note: On both days between 8am to 8pm, there was also an on-call RHM doctor

## 9. Areas Identified for Improvement by Clinicians

- Feedback from Te Nīkau Emergency Department (ED) clinicians is that they would prefer that Ka Ora nurses referring patients to the ED complete an ERMS (electronic referral management system) referral. This would be difficult for Ka Ora to implement as it would require their clinicians to implement a West Coast specific process. Because Ka Ora is a nationwide service regional variation needs to be managed carefully to ensure that consistent processes remain in place for safe and efficient clinical practice.
  - OUTCOME: Conversation ongoing.
- Feedback from Te Nīkau Hospital's Radiology Department was that the radiology team had received insufficient information about how to manage radiology referrals from Ka Ora. This caused confusion about where to send the radiology results.
  - OUTCOME: Radiology Department given correct information about how to manage radiology referrals from Ka Ora. Radiology Department added to list of key stakeholders for future process improvements.
- Feedback from Te Nīkau Hospital's Phlebotomy Department was that patients were presenting to phlebotomy services with lab requests for self swabs. On the West Coast phlebotomy is a blood test service only.
  - OUTCOME: Ka Ora management team asked to remind their clinicians that on the West Coast self-swab kits should be accessed via the patient's enrolled primary care practice.
- Te Rau Kawakawa Acute Stabilisation Unit (ASU) team requested that the referring Ka Ora clinician ring the on-call ASU doctor prior to sending a patient for an in-person consultation at the ASU. This allows the on-call ASU doctor to determine whether they need to immediately attend the consultation. This is an extra step for the Ka Ora team and the ASU team expressed their appreciation for this consideration.
  - OUTCOME: Ka Ora clinician to ring on-call ASU doctor. Process will be monitored and reviewed periodically.

**Insights from clinician feedback:** The importance of having a weekly implementation review meeting has been reinforced as it has allowed the review group to quickly respond to clinician feedback and implement changes.

## 10. Patient stories / Feedback

- "I had a very positive experience with Ka Ora when reaching out about my 12-year-old's sore throat on a Sunday afternoon. My child had a very sore throat with possible pus on the tonsils, and I was quickly given an appointment time for a call from a Ka Ora doctor. Despite our patchy service at the time, connecting was seamless. The doctor conducted a thorough consultation with both me and my child, diagnosing a likely strep throat and prescribing antibiotics. They also provided clear guidance on what to do next and reassured me that starting antibiotics the next day wouldn't impact recovery. I highly recommend Ka Ora for its convenience and support, especially for parents who can't easily make it to a clinic."
- "I called Ka Ora on a Sunday evening after my child fell off a motorbike and complained of a very sore shoulder. The nurse suspected a fracture, quickly coordinated with Greymouth ED, all within 15 minutes. Fantastic, responsive service."
- Some patients from Greymouth reported that they were not advised that their urgent medications could be couriered to them on Sunday. They found this out when they travelled to Hokitika to collect their prescription from Westland Pharmacy in person. Westland Pharmacy staff passed this information to the Review Group and the Ka Ora management team reminded their team that this option was available to Greymouth patients on Sundays.

## 11. Why was Ka Ora introduced

Primary care practices nationally are faced with varying degrees of pressure to maintain sustainable services for their enrolled and eligible populations. Increasing patient complexity including chronic conditions, increasing patient numbers, and an ageing population are some of the pressures faced by primary care practitioners. In addition to this recruitment issues are impacting on West Coast primary care practices' ability to staff weekend clinics. This inability to offer a sustainable service is driven by a complex mix of financial costs providing primary care services and by workforce availability. The sustainability of high-quality primary care is critical for both our community and the health system as a whole, and this relies on supporting the teams that work in primary care. Ka Ora Telecare brings additional clinical resource into the West Coast System.