



ORANGA TAMARIKI

Action Plan

Oranga Tamariki Action Plan Six-monthly Implementation Report

July to December 2023



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Introduction

Oranga Tamariki Action Plan is a whole of government response

The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan (the Action Plan) and its Implementation Plan were endorsed by Cabinet in July 2022. The Action Plan is a statutory accountability mechanism which requires Chief Executives of children's agencies¹ to work together to achieve the outcomes of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy for the core populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki. There are agencies across the children's sector (i.e. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People) that are not defined as children's agencies in legislation but play an important role in making the work of the Action Plan successful.

The children, young people, their families and whānau that Oranga Tamariki are involved with often have multiple, complex needs, including the combined impacts of poverty, racism and discrimination, long term unemployment, low income, poor housing, unaddressed physical and mental health needs, alcohol and drug abuse, family breakdown and family violence.

Despite its name, no one agency is responsible for making the Action Plan happen. It is a collective commitment and accountability across the six children's agencies and Chief Executives, for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at most risk across Aotearoa New Zealand.

A number of initiatives have already been implemented

The Action Plan contains 11 actions. The Implementation Plan sets out:

- The commitment from children's agencies to collectively find solutions and do whatever it takes to ensure children, young people, families and whānau to get the help they need.
- The approach agencies will take to successfully deliver this change.
- What children, young people, families and whānau should expect to see when engaging across the system.
- The practical steps that agencies have committed to take over the short and medium term.

Our focus to date has been on completing short-term practical steps (Actions One and Two) and building an evidence-based picture of need (Action Three).

As part of Action Three, seven in-depth needs assessments have been completed which provide an evidence-based picture of health, education, and housing needs for both the in-care population and for young people transitioning to independence. Children's agencies

¹ Children's agencies are defined by the Act as Oranga Tamariki, New Zealand Police, and the Ministries of Education, Social Development, Health, and Justice. Other agencies can be involved, such as Te Puni Kōkiri, the Department of Corrections, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, Kainga Ora, and the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development.

have developed (or are developing) a response to each needs assessment. We have also developed evidence dashboards (under Action Five) to monitor system performance and track the effectiveness of initiatives.

Detailed updates on these actions were provided in prior implementation reports (June to December 2022 and January to June 2023), which are available to the public on the Action Plan website:

[Implementation | Oranga Tamariki Action Plan](#)

A summary of progress achieved by agencies between July and December 2023 is included in this report.

Summary of progress July to December 2023

Agencies are collaborating to understand and enhance health and education experiences of children and young people

Benefit: If implemented, changes to the Gateway Assessment process aim to reduce wait times, improve cultural responsiveness, and clarify accountabilities between agencies in meeting the health and education needs of children and young people

- The Gateway Assessment is a tool to understand whether children and young people have unmet health, disability or learning needs, whether they come into care or not.
- The review has been led by Oranga Tamariki in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Health - Manatū Hauora (MoH), Te Aka Whai Ora, and Health New Zealand.
- In reviewing the Gateway process, we aim to reduce wait times, improve cultural responsiveness, clarify accountabilities between agencies and address large regional variations in support and services.
- This has been informed by significant engagement by Oranga Tamariki, MoE and health agencies with children, young people, whānau, caregivers, iwi, hapū, frontline kaimahi, partners and providers across Te Tai Tokerau, Auckland, Bay of Plenty and the Lower South region as well as a national survey which saw 300 responses. Engagements were undertaken with the health sector and with education professionals engaged with children in care (e.g., teachers, principals/deputy principals, Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO)/Learning Support Coordinators (LSC), Social Workers in School (SWIS), regional service managers, regional managers learning support and other pastoral care staff).

Benefit: We now have a much stronger evidence base of health experiences of children, young people and whānau to inform future actions to improve the wellbeing of children under the Action Plan

- Oranga Tamariki, MoH and Health New Zealand have collaborated on the development of two health related needs assessments, covering primary health care, and the primary health care experiences of the transition's cohort.

- A cross-agency response framework was developed to respond to the findings of the primary health needs assessment, the transitions health needs assessment (Ministers approved in July 2023) and the mental health assessment.

Health agencies are enhancing mental health and wellbeing supports for children with acute mental health needs

Benefit: Expanding Infant, Child, and Adolescent Mental Health Services (ICAMHS) support and liaison roles give children and young people involved with Oranga Tamariki better access to supports and services

- Health New Zealand are working to appoint a liaison-type role in three acute mental health wards.
- Dedicated ICAMHS roles are being deployed to provide additional mental health and addiction support into Oranga Tamariki national residential care facilities.

More housing options are being made available to children and young people

Benefit: Disabled children and young people receive better housing supports

- Kāinga Ora and Oranga Tamariki are increasing the number of homes available for disabled children and young people.
- Kāinga Ora purchased a property in Nelson in the second half of 2023, in addition to the seven properties already purchased in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland.

Benefit: Children and young people with higher and more complex needs have access to more housing options

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is leading the establishment of a new supported housing service for young people with higher and more complex needs.
- This is a new service that provides immediate access to safe, warm, and stable longer-term accommodation, along with age-appropriate intensive supports.
- HUD has continued to work with providers to complete contracting and support stand-up of the service.
- Availability of supply that is appropriate for young people has remained a constraint in getting places contracted and stood up quickly. Delivery is ongoing.

Benefit: Young people will have warm, safe, and secure accommodation and age-appropriate supports

- HUD committed to delivering 80-90 additional youth-focused transitional housing places (over four years beginning late 2022).
- This action has been delivered, with 108 new youth-focused transitional housing places delivered from late 2022 to December 2023. This is more than the 80-90 places originally estimated and reflects strong interest in delivery from community providers.
- This action ensures more young people will have warm, safe, and secure accommodation and age-appropriate supports as they make the transition from insecure to stable housing.

Agencies improve information sharing practices

Benefit: Children and young people in care or youth justice are supported to be included in the education system through agencies working better together

- An Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) is being finalised between Oranga Tamariki and MoE.
- The first Detailed Data Schedule (DDS) is under development. In this DDS, MoE will share the name of enrolling school or early learning service and termly attendance data for children with a care status and this will be used by Oranga Tamariki to identify and support attendance and engagement.
- This ISA will help facilitate timely, effective, and lawful sharing and use of information between Oranga Tamariki and MoE to support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and their education outcomes.

Staff have improved awareness of child abuse, child protection and the Action Plan

Benefit: Ministry of Social Development (MSD) enhanced their child protection training for staff to better support children and young people in care

- MSD's 'ChildSAFE' online learning has been recently refreshed and republished within their induction programme. This training sets out the principles of MSD's Child Protection Policy and expectations of how their people should respond when they have concerns about the safety and well-being of children.
- As part of the refresh, the ChildSAFE module now includes high level guidance about sharing information related to children's wellbeing under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and introduces staff to the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan.
- MSD also engaged a specialist provider to design and deliver Family Violence awareness training sessions for all client facing managers. This will be delivered regionally from March to July 2024. Wider learning will be deployed to all staff during 2024/25.
- Specialist development and support is being deployed to MSD's network of Family Violence Response Coordinators to ensure that they are maintaining their professional development, including child protection practices.

Families and Young People are supported through Court processes

Benefit: Young adults aged 18 to 25 can more easily understand and engage with the court process, and the Court is enabled to have a better understanding of any barriers to full participation

- To improve the Young Adult List court's responsiveness to neurodiversity and the communication needs of young adults, the Ministry of Justice is working on the design and development of a neurodiversity screening process.
- Alongside this, an updated training package on neurodiversity is being developed to support the court workforce to better respond to neurodiversity in the List. In mid-2024 the screening process and training package will be piloted in a Young Adult List site.

Benefit: Kaiārahi roles in the Family Court support parents to access services and community-based support

- The final Kaiārahi Evaluation Report was completed in January 2024. The report will be distributed, initially to key leaders and stakeholders and it is expected to be publicly available in April. The report includes feedback from judiciary, stakeholders, the community and whānau and is positive about the impact Kaiārahi are having in providing navigational support to participants.

National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence

Benefit: Addressing family violence and sexual violence will significantly improve the wellbeing of children and young people

- Te Aorerekura: National Strategy (Te Aorerekura) aims to rebalance the system towards investment in prevention, early intervention, and healing, alongside response. The shift towards investment in primary prevention (Shift 4 of Te Aorerekura) has been supported by 11 actions under the first Te Aorerekura Action Plan.
- Te Puna Aonui are continuing to build the primary prevention system. Working on prevention at the same time as improving responses and healing approaches is the only way to eliminate family violence and sexual violence and improve intergenerational wellbeing for children, young people, their families and whānau.

Regional networks are being activated to support the Action Plan work

- Regional Public Service Commissioners (RPSCs) are supporting regional leadership across the motu to ensure that priorities and programmes that support thriving children and young people are connected and not operating in isolation, creating stronger foundations for children and young people’s wellbeing. The Action Plan is a key piece of work within the identified priorities for all regions.
- RPSCs are using their convening mandate through the Regional Leadership Groups and Public Service Leader forums and for priority areas by establishing governance and working groups in their regions.
- These groups support local and regional responses by bringing regional leaders together to identify common goals, share information and data to make timely decisions that support the goals and build collective resources.

Marlborough

- In Marlborough, the RPSC led an environmental scan of central and local government interventions for 0 to 24-year-olds, undertaken to support joined up strategic decision making. This work is now being utilised for work programme planning across several agencies, as well as by a council to assist in the review of their Youth Plan.

Te Tai Tokerau

- In Te Tai Tokerau, the Regional Public Service Commissioner and cross-agency Social Wellbeing Governance Group are stewarding the development of a cross-agency regional Youth Strategy. The strategy will bring together national level plans and actions such as the Action Plan, to ensure there is a coordinated and targeted regional approach.

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- This ensures that the Action Plan is embedded alongside the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy in Northland's approach to young people.
- This strategy will include a focus on community-led initiatives that contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people, which also aligns with the principles and actions of the Action Plan.
- By doing this, we are reducing the risk of overlaps and gaps, so that children and young people are supported when they need it. The regional strategy will also provide an avenue for implementation of current Action Plans actions and any follow-on actions required of the regions.

Challenges across the system remain

System capacity and funding remain a challenge

- All resources contributing to the work of the Action Plan are funded from agencies' baselines.
- Agencies remain committed to improving the wellbeing of children and young people that are, have been or might come in contact with Oranga Tamariki. However, the capacity to progress the breadth of actions in the Action Plan presents an ongoing challenge.
- Oranga Tamariki, in collaboration with other agencies, has provided the Minister for Children with a proposal for a more focused set of priorities under the Action Plan, to help manage these risks.

Chief Executives and Ministers could play a greater role in affirming the work of the Action Plan

- Children's agency Chief Executives are expected to clarify expectations arising from the Action Plan to frontline decision-makers and operational staff of the requirement to meet the needs of the children, young people and whānau who are engaged with Oranga Tamariki or are likely to come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki.
- It is an opportunity for the Chief Executives and Ministers of Children's Agencies to act as stewards of the Action Plan, to affirm its role in sector transformation, take a collaborative leadership approach, increase communication and engagement with their agencies kaimahi and prioritise resources to the Action Plan focus areas.

What's coming up

The Action Plan will have a sharper focus in 2024 and 2025

Foundational work on the Action Plan has now been completed, with a clear understanding of need through the seven in-depth assessments. Advice has been provided to the Minister for Children on establishing a smaller number of priority areas, with a recommended focus on improving key health, education and housing outcomes for children and young people in care, supported by improving data and information sharing practices across all three areas.

The next implementation report (January to June 2024) will be aligned with the revised approach, once agreed by the relevant Ministers and the Cabinet.