



ORANGA TAMARIKI

Action Plan

Oranga Tamariki Action Plan Six-monthly Implementation Report

January to June 2024



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Introduction

Oranga Tamariki Action Plan is a whole of government response

The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan (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 Tamariki². There are agencies across the children's sector 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 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.

The foundational work is complete, and the Action Plan has a sharper focus for 2024 and 2025

The Action Plan and its Implementation Plan were brought to life in July 2022. The 11 overarching actions and the underlying implementation initiatives were ambitious and wide ranging, addressing multiple problem areas across health, education, housing, and justice sectors and the system overall.

Appendix 1 details the status of previous implementation initiatives. Some have been completed, some are ongoing and being delivered by operational teams within agencies, and some have been reprioritised for consideration for future iterations of the Action Plan or prioritised as part of the focus areas for 2024 and 2025.

Delivery of seven in-depth needs assessments in 2022/23 gave us a much stronger evidence base of health, education and housing experiences of children, young people and whānau within the Action Plan populations. These findings helped us develop a refreshed approach to implementation of the Action Plan which focuses the efforts where they will have the most impact.

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, Department of Corrections, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, Te Puna Aonui, Kāinga Ora, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

² Core populations of interest as defined in Children's Act are children who are in custody of Oranga Tamariki, have early risk factors for future involvement or have been in the statutory care, protection, and youth justice systems.

Focus areas have been established to improve key health, education, and housing outcomes for children and young people in care. This will be supported by improving data and information sharing practices across all three areas. An A3 summarising the approach and focus areas is attached as Appendix 2.

Focusing implementation effort does not reduce the commitment to the Action Plan as a whole. Instead, it recognises the need to manage agency resources sustainably, with a greater focus on regional delivery, and reflects the long-term nature of the Action Plan work programme.

Progress achieved between January and June 2024

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

Benefit: If implemented, changes to the Gateway Assessment process will help improve timely access to services, improve cultural responsiveness, and clarify accountabilities between agencies in meeting the health, disability and education needs of children and young people

- The Gateway Assessment is a tool to understand whether children and young people in care or at the edge of care have unmet health, disability or learning needs.
- The review of the Gateway process, led by Oranga Tamariki in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Health New Zealand, Māori Health Authority, Ministry of Education and Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, was completed and published in July 2024³.
- In reviewing the Gateway process, we aim to improve timely access to services, improve cultural responsiveness to meet the needs and improve the outcomes of all children, clarify accountabilities between agencies to reduce gaps and duplication in services, and address the large regional variations in education support and services to children, young people and their whānau who are receiving a Gateway Assessment.
- In June 2024, the Minister for Children, Minister of Health and Minister of Education endorsed the key findings from the review, along with a proposed approach to re-design Gateway.
- The detailed service design phase has commenced to develop a prototype, that will be tested with frontline kaimahi from relevant agencies, communities, partners and providers through engagements in July and August.
- Utilising findings from the Gateway Review, options for an education pathway have been developed and are ready for testing, to ensure education needs and responses are prioritised.
- Agencies will report back to Ministers in October 2024 with a proposed detailed service design and options for implementation including costings.

³ [Gateway Assessment Review Findings | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

Benefit: Children and young people in care will receive more responsive health services through enhanced visibility between agencies and health systems

- Agencies have developed initial policy options on enhancing visibility of children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki within health systems. These options will be tested with cross agency and community stakeholders through engagements in July and August.
- Enhanced visibility would involve the secure and regular information sharing between Oranga Tamariki and Health New Zealand.
- This will let health professionals know that the child is in care, with the aim of enabling them to provide the child with more responsive care and access to appropriate health support and services.
- This initiative will help health services and practitioners to better respond to the unique needs of these children and young people. This may focus on:
 - improving conversations between health professionals and children and young people, supported by guidance to be developed for frontline services
 - more proactive referral and follow-up to treatments
 - improving data on the health needs and outcomes for these children and young people, so future investment can be directed to areas that will have the most impact.
- Engagement findings will be used to inform the approach and advice will be provided to the Minister for Children and Minister of Health in October.

Benefit: Health and wellbeing guidance to support caregivers to identify and meet children's health needs

- Children in the care of Oranga Tamariki often have a high level of unmet health needs and are more likely to have a disability.
- Oranga Tamariki and Health New Zealand have worked with KidsHealth to give frontline kamahi and caregivers access to health and wellbeing guidance through the Oranga Tamariki Practice Centre.
- Caregiver Social Workers introduce caregivers to the information during a regular visit and support them to access it via a QR code.
- Caregiver Social Workers will gather feedback from caregivers, including identifying additional health and wellbeing guidance that caregivers would find useful. KidsHealth are supportive of developing further health and wellbeing content as needed.
- This is the first phase of the development of guidance under the health focus areas for the Action Plan.
- Additional guidance will be developed to support the redesigned Gateway service and enhanced visibility of children in care within the health system, this will include guidance for frontline health professionals and Oranga Tamariki kamahi.

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

- Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Education have been working together to develop an Information Sharing Agreement and subsequent Detailed Data Agreements.
- These agreements will facilitate regular information sharing between agencies relating to identifying children in the care of Oranga Tamariki who are not enrolled, or not attending education.

- This will enable agencies to work together to provide appropriate and meaningful interventions and support to children and young people who are disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged from education.
- The agreement is expected to be finalised in August 2024, with the first data share to take place by early September 2024 and continuing monthly.
- Discussions are underway between Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Education regarding developing a further Detailed Data Agreement to enable data sharing regarding children and young people in Oranga Tamariki care who are stood down, suspended, expelled, excluded, applied for an early leaving exemption, or referred to Attendance Support Services.
- Possible future Detailed Data Agreements regarding educational support and achievement will also be considered.

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

Benefit: Disabled children and young people receive better housing supports

- Whaikaha is working with Kāinga Ora to support and advocate for principles of Universal Design in housing to meet future accessibility needs, including the needs of disabled children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki.
- Where it is within scope, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will continue to play a supporting role in taking steps to improve accessibility across the housing system, in alignment with the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (GPS-HUD).
- Whaikaha and Kāinga Ora have reviewed and are in the process of updating their Memorandum of Understanding to ensure it will support housing modifications for disabled children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki living in Kāinga Ora homes.

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

- As part of the Action Plan Focus Areas, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development committed to establishing a new supported housing service for youth with greater supported needs.
- This initiative is now complete with the Rangatahi Supported Accommodation service being established in Auckland and Hamilton seeking to meet the needs of 16–25-year-olds with greater support needs who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness.
- This service has begun to fill an identified gap in intensive longer-term support for young people to exit homelessness. It will also increase the provision of immediate access to safe, warm, and stable longer-term accommodation, along with age-appropriate intensive supports.
- Availability of appropriate housing supply for young people has been a constraint in getting places contracted and stood up.

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

- HUD have been undertaking a review of supported housing, looking across different housing typologies including those that support Oranga Tamariki populations of

interest. Initial advice on this area was provided to the Minister of Housing in June 2024.

- HUD and Ministry of Social Development (MSD) undertook a review of the emergency housing system.
- They are also working with Oranga Tamariki to identify further areas for cross-agency work to consider the needs of children and young people in care, their families, whānau and caregivers. This include the creation of a Priority One fast track that supports whānau with children to move out of emergency housing and into social housing.
- Kāinga Ora has reviewed and intends to update its Accessibility Policy, setting commitments to providing more accessible housing.

Families and Young People are supported through Court processes

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

- The Ministry of Justice commissioned Malatest International to complete the first evaluation of the Kaiārahi service, which was completed in January 2024.
- The purpose of the evaluation was to understand whether the Kaiārahi service was providing the intended assistance and navigation support to those going through, or considering applying to, the Family Court.
- The evaluation report was published in June 2024⁴ and includes feedback from judiciary, stakeholders, the community and whānau.
- The report indicates the Kaiārahi service is positively contributing to the community and the navigation support for whānau helps to improve access and the experience for participants in the Family Court.
- Opportunities to further refine the Kaiārahi service were identified. The report covers some of the challenges and areas for improvements since implementation, with work already underway to address those.

National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence (Te Aorerekura)

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

- Te Aorerekura is a 25-year strategy, implemented through targeted action plans. The strategy recognises the need for balanced and effective investment in the Family Violence and Sexual Violence (FVSV) system, ensuring greater emphasis on early intervention and prevention.
- The second Te Aorerekura Action Plan is under development and will set out the collective and individual priorities and actions of agencies. Te Puna Aonui will prioritise and strengthen its focus on improving local multi-agency responses to reduce family violence and safeguard children to prevent re-victimisation and further harm. This includes improvement to information sharing systems, risk assessment, capability development and better integration of responses for children and adults as whānau. Over time, opportunities for social sector commissioning and social investment approaches will be adopted

⁴ <https://www.justice.govt.nz/family/kaiarahi-o-te-kooti-a-whanau/>

- Te Puna Aonui agencies will continue to work on primary prevention initiatives that target family violence and sexual violence for different communities and demographics, including children and young people.
- Te Puna Aonui is working with the Social Investment Agency on a high-level review of social sector spending (initially focused on an evaluation of the effectiveness of collectively appropriated family and sexual violence spend). The Social Investment Agency will report back to Ministers by the end of this year to provide insights on the effectiveness of in-scope initiatives. This will inform future investment and reprioritisation decisions for programs and services based on evidence of effectiveness (e.g. prevention, healing services).

Support for incarcerated young people and women, their children and their families

Benefit: The wellbeing of incarcerated women, their children, and their families is promoted

- Department of Corrections and Oranga Tamariki have completed work on enhancing the relationship between women's prisons and local Oranga Tamariki sites.
- These relationships aim to support better outcomes for mothers and their babies in the Corrections Mothers and Babies Units and Feedings and Bonding Spaces, and will continue to be developed and managed at a local level.

Benefit: Training can equip staff with the skills to work with incarcerated young people, to create a more positive and therapeutic environment that supports young people's wellbeing and rehabilitation.

- Department of Corrections provides staff training for Assessment Placement of Young Adults to sites as requested, with training delivered to three sites in January and February 2024.
- The training helps improve staff capability to manage whānau-centred approaches for young people in Department of Correction's custody.

Challenges across the system remain

System capacity and funding continue to present a risk to successful delivery

- The Action Plan does not have dedicated resourcing, with current resources funded from agencies' baseline.
- Across the children's system, agencies are facing competing priorities and challenges to meet the demand on services.
- Reprioritisation of resources is key to delivering key initiatives under the Action Plan.
- Agencies remain committed to delivering the focused set of priorities under the Action Plan to improve the wellbeing of children and young people that are, have been or may come into contact with Oranga Tamariki.

Planning for the long term needs to be prioritised across the sector

- Long term planning that is underpinned by evidence from system is required to ensure the Action Plan will continue to deliver on its intended outcomes to improve the wellbeing of children and young people.
- The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is currently being refreshed. This provides an opportunity to align the Action Plan with the Strategy, to help inform the next set of priority areas for the Action Plan.

What's coming up

The next six months

In March 2024, the Minister for Children agreed to establish a smaller number of priority areas, with a recommended focus on 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 health priorities were also endorsed by the Minister of Health.

Agencies will continue to work together to progress the focus areas, with several key upcoming milestones:

- Finalisation of the Information Sharing Agreement between Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Education in August, with the first data share by early September.
- Report back to Ministers with policy and implementation options for Identifiability in October.
- Report back to Ministers with detailed service design, options for implementation and funding for the Gateway Redesign in October.
- Finalisation of the Young Parents Home Review and Student Aide Review by December.

The next implementation report (July to December 2024) will report progress on delivering the agreed focus areas.