



ORANGA TAMARIKI SYSTEM

Action Plan

Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan Six-monthly Implementation Report

July to December 2025



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Introduction

The Action Plan is a cross-agency response to improve outcomes for core populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki

The Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan (the Action Plan) is a statutory accountability mechanism requiring Chief Executives of children’s agencies¹ to work together to improve outcomes for the core populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki.²

Oranga Tamariki works with children, young people, and families and whānau that often have multiple, complex needs. This includes impacts of poverty, discrimination, long term unemployment, low income, poor housing, greater physical and mental health needs, alcohol and drug abuse, family breakdown, family violence and sexual violence. The Action Plan considers that agencies need to work together to support the wellbeing of these populations.

In May 2025, Child and Youth Ministers agreed to rename the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan to the Oranga Tamariki *System* Action Plan to emphasise the collective commitment and accountability across all six children’s agencies and Chief Executives, for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at most risk across Aotearoa New Zealand. There are also other 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.

Agencies have focused efforts on where they will have the most impact

Since 2022, the six children’s agencies, along with other key partners, have been working together to progress actions under the Action Plan. Initial work included seven in-depth needs assessments that gave us a strong evidence-base to understand the issues facing the children’s system, highlighting where we could focus our efforts to have the biggest impact.

As a result, in 2024, the Minister for Children agreed to a narrowed set of focus areas that concentrated on improving health, education, and housing outcomes for children and young people in care. This was supported by a focus on improving data and information sharing. In 2025/26, the Minister for Children approved a new set of initiatives that built on this work and introduced additional actions in response to findings from the 2023/24 *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa* report from the Independent Children’s Monitor³ and other relevant reviews.

Additional cross-agency work outside of the Action Plan also supports better outcomes for core populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki. For example, initiatives arising from the Dame Karen Poutasi review, Government Target 3 on reducing child and youth offending, and other agency-led programmes. These activities sit outside the scope of this report.

¹ Children’s agencies are defined by the Act as Oranga Tamariki, New Zealand Police, 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 for Housing and Urban Development.

² This encompasses the “core populations of interest to the department” as defined in section 5(1) of the Children’s Act 2014.

³ <https://aroturuki.govt.nz/assets/Reports/EOC2425/Experiences-of-Care-2024-25.pdf>

This report outlines progress made between July and December 2025 on implementing the 2025/26 Action Plan focus areas initiatives.

Progress achieved between July to December 2025

Health Focus Area

National improvements to the Gateway Assessment Service

Benefit: Changes to the Gateway Assessment process will help improve timely access to services, improve cultural responsiveness⁴, and clarify accountabilities between agencies in meeting the health, disability and education needs of children and young people

- The Gateway Assessment provides a specialist evaluation to comprehensively identify health, disability, and education support needs of children and young people in care or at the risk of entering care. It ensures a coordinated, cross-sector plan is in place to meet those needs.
- In response to a review of the Gateway Assessment service, the Minister for Children and Ministers of Health and Education agreed to progress national improvements within baseline funding. These national improvements focus on:
 - clearer processes and pathways so children and young people can access supports earlier and more efficiently
 - improved governance and accountability processes and strengthening cross-agency collaboration through clear guidance
 - earlier referrals and access to primary and community health care services
 - improved Education Profile⁵ and engagement with schools and education professionals (discussed further in the Education Focus Area of this report).
 - practical improvements to the Gateway information technology tool and revision of key performance measures for reporting purposes.
 - streamlining of needs codes data used by health practitioners to report on the needs of children and young people undergoing a gateway assessment.
- Key activities between July to December 2025 included convening the first National Governance Group meeting, establishing cross-agency working groups to strengthen collaboration and work jointly on the identified national improvements, and updating the Education Profile forms and practice guidance.

⁴ This includes, for example, drawing on frameworks like the Māori model for health and wellbeing, Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1984), and enhancing the use of teo reo Māori.

⁵ The Education Profile is a key component of the Gateway Assessment process, where teachers or early childhood educators provide detailed information about a child's learning, engagement, and behavioural needs to inform a broader, multidisciplinary assessment.

Enhanced visibility of children in care within the health system

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

- Enhancing the visibility of children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki within the health system will enable health practitioners to be more responsive to their unique needs and help ensure access to appropriate health services.
- This work includes developing secure and regular information sharing between Oranga Tamariki and Health New Zealand, and guidance for health practitioners.
- Key areas of focus include:
 - supporting better conversations between health practitioners and children and young people, guided by new frontline service guidance
 - enabling more proactive referrals and follow-ups to treatments
 - improving data on the health needs and outcomes for these children and young people.
- In December 2025, the Minister for Children and Minister of Health approved a joint ministerial paper that outlined the preferred design settings to enhance the visibility of children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki within the health system. Funding pathways were also identified to support this work.

Mental health training

Benefit: Children and young people in care will receive better identification of mental health needs and better wellbeing support

- Health New Zealand has contracted Whāraurau (infant, child and youth mental health addiction workforce agency) to provide training to Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (ICAMHS) to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge for working with infants, children, and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki.
- Health New Zealand is offering a ‘train the trainer’ package on infant, child and youth mental health and addiction foundations to equip Oranga Tamariki frontline with the knowledge and skills to provide further learning opportunities across the organisation.
- During July to December 2025, Oranga Tamariki, Health New Zealand, and Whāraurau worked to develop and schedule ‘train the trainer’ sessions for Oranga Tamariki kaimahi in April 2026. Whāraurau personnel will support Oranga Tamariki trainers in delivery of the first round of training to Oranga Tamariki kaimahi.

Improving frontline collaboration between agencies and establishing an escalation pathway

Benefit: Children and young people in care will receive timely access to mental health support

- Youth forensic mental health services and ICAMHS play a significant role in supporting children and young people living in Oranga Tamariki care and protection residences. Recognising the need for stronger collaboration, Health New Zealand has established dedicated ICAMHS specialist positions within residences in Dunedin and Wellington.

- Oranga Tamariki and Health New Zealand have jointly funded liaison social work roles serving the acute mental health inpatient units in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. These roles are now all in place and are supporting improved collaboration between services.
- Oranga Tamariki established an approach to Clinical Governance that will provide oversight of the quality of health and disability service provision, which was endorsed by executive leadership in November 2025. This provides a systematic approach to meeting the clinical needs of all children and young people that Oranga Tamariki works with, including mental health. A Clinical Governance Committee will be established to provide leadership and oversight of the Clinical Governance approach and will include membership from Health New Zealand.
- Oranga Tamariki established a Chief Psychologist role to provide leadership and oversight of the psychology workforce within Oranga Tamariki and strengthen collaboration across agencies. Oranga Tamariki also expanded the number of in-house psychologists to improve coverage across all regions.
- To ensure alignment at the national level, senior officials from Oranga Tamariki regularly engage with the national ICAMHS leaders' group, and other Health New Zealand officials who hold national roles in mental health and addiction.

Education Focus Area

Redesign of education components within Gateway Assessments

Benefit: Holistic educational needs of children will be identified and met, and will engage teachers more effectively in the Gateway Assessment process

- The Gateway Assessment review identified the need to update the Education Profile templates, which informs education needs and supports specialist assessments. The updated profiles aim to better capture the holistic educational needs of a child and empower teachers to actively participate in Gateway Assessments.
- The Ministry of Education and Oranga Tamariki finalised three new Education Profiles including Primary & Secondary, Early Childhood Education, and Non-Enrolled Profiles. In addition, guidance for schools has been prepared to support implementation of the Gateway Assessment.
- Guidance will work to improve teachers' understanding of their role in the Gateway process and support schools and early childhood education in meeting the education needs identified through the assessment.

Improving access to learning and education supports

Benefit: Children and young people will receive the learning, behavioural, and other supports they need to engage in education

- This work helps to address recommendations from an Oranga Tamariki review of Student Aide Support that was completed in December 2024.
- A refresh of the Student Aide Support Joint Agency Initiative agreement between Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Education is underway, as recommended by the review. This will clarify the role, scope, and guidance for the provision of Student Aide Support in line with each agency's legislative obligations.

- To advance this work, the overarching Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Education was updated and signed by both agencies in October 2025. The MoU reiterates the roles, responsibilities, and commitments of both agencies in meeting the educational needs of children and young people. It also establishes an escalation pathway at a site, regional and national level to resolve individual children and system level barriers and issues.
- Under the refreshed MoU, agencies have progressed work to update their shared agreements for delivering supports for learning and behaviour and other educational needs, including the agreements for Student Aide Support, Education in Residences, and Chronic Absence.
- The Student Aide Support Joint Agency Initiative agreement will commence a formal review in February 2026. Both agencies are on track for a June 2026 completion.
- Together, the refreshed MoU and underlying agreements will more clearly define each agency's responsibilities in supporting the learning, behavioural, and other educational needs of children and young people in care, including support provided through Student Aide.

Housing Focus Area

Improving housing services, supports, and access

Benefit: Children, young people, and their whānau and families, who are receiving support from Oranga Tamariki or who are transitioning from state care or custody have access to safe and secure housing

- The Housing Focus Area for 2025/26 aims to address broader systemic issues related to housing supports. Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and the Ministry of Social Development identified initiatives to improve housing services, supports, and access for children and young people, and their families and whānau.
- In 2025, a review of supported accommodation services was initiated. Phase One of the review is now complete, which looked at service model summaries, housing typologies, utilisation data and outcomes. The findings will be used to inform future commissioning of supported accommodation placements. Phase Two is set to begin, which aims to better understand the costs of placements against different levels of support.
- An update was provided to the Minister and Associate Minister of Housing on work to strengthen early interventions and transitions from state care and custody (a targeted form of early intervention).
- The Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki have worked to strengthen the shared understanding of their respective services and supports. This collaboration seeks to help providers better understand the supports and services available through each agency to support children and young people with housing and transitions from care or custody. Training webinars that will be delivered by the Ministry of Social Development and facilitated by Oranga Tamariki for Transition Support Service providers are being developed.
- Housing education workshops are being delivered to young people leaving care. These workshops provide practical information about the responsibilities, obligations, and entitlements related to accommodation support, equipping young people with the knowledge they need to access and maintain safe and stable housing.

Data and Information Sharing Focus Area

Information sharing between Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Education

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 the Ministry of Education signed an Information Sharing Agreement and two Detailed Data Agreements in August 2024. These agreements enable regular data sharing between the two agencies to identify children in care and custody who are not enrolled in or attending education. This will support both agencies to deliver appropriate and meaningful interventions for children and young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education.
- Between July and December 2025, agencies began to operationalise regular data sharing on attendance and enrolment for children and young people in care. Further work will refine data sharing processes and address opportunities to improve data quality and matching accuracy.
- A Detailed Data Agreement to enable the sharing of information about children and young people in Oranga Tamariki care and custody who experience interventions such as stand downs, suspensions and exclusions, or who require educational support has been drafted.
- The focus is now on continuing to refine and operationalise data sharing and working together to utilise this information to better support children and young people in care.

Development of information sharing agreements between Oranga Tamariki and Health New Zealand

Benefit: Health and Oranga Tamariki frontline will have better information to ensure that children in care receive health services that are tailored to their needs

- As part of efforts to enhance the visibility of children in care within the health system, Oranga Tamariki and Health New Zealand are developing a two-way information sharing agreement.
- This will enable Health New Zealand to share health information required under the National Care Standards with Oranga Tamariki. This includes information on enrolment with primary health care and dental health care providers. Once operational, Oranga Tamariki frontline will be able to use this information to help support children in care to receive necessary health services.
- In addition, Oranga Tamariki will be able to share care status information with Health New Zealand. This will help make children in care visible in the health system so health providers can tailor their practice to better meet their needs.
- With formal approval from the Minister for Children and Minister of Health to progress the enhanced visibility initiative (as previously outlined), agencies will begin developing information and data sharing agreements.

Development of a Memorandum of Understanding between Oranga Tamariki and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)



Benefit: ACC and Oranga Tamariki have a strengthened relationship to ensure children in Oranga Tamariki's care are supported to access ACC services and entitlements

- Throughout July to December 2025, Oranga Tamariki and ACC developed a relationship MoU to strengthen collaboration, cooperation, and communication as they carry out their respective roles.
- The MoU provides a framework that enables both agencies to work together more effectively and share information to improve outcomes for children and young people, and their families, in Oranga Tamariki care.
- An updated Information Disclosure Agreement will also accompany the MoU to ensure ACC can continue to provide information to Oranga Tamariki in accordance with their Act.
- The MoU is a priority under the focus areas for 2025/26.
- Oranga Tamariki and ACC expect to formally sign the MoU and Information Disclosure Agreement in early 2026.

Development of a Memorandum of Understanding and information sharing agreements between Oranga Tamariki and Corrections

Benefit: Corrections and Oranga Tamariki frontline staff will have strengthened relationships and better information to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, their caregivers, victims of wrongdoing, people who offend, whānau and communities

- Corrections and Oranga Tamariki work together to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people serving sentences, as well as the children of parents serving sentences. Both agencies share a duty of care to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect and work together to support transitions for rangatahi moving between youth justice residences and prison custody.
- To improve outcomes for this cohort, Corrections and Oranga Tamariki are developing a relationship MoU that will strengthen partnerships and ensure agencies are working better together to meet the needs of this cohort.
- The MoU is a priority under the focus areas for 2025/26.
- Once the MoU is agreed, the Oranga Tamariki-Corrections Working Group will begin developing the associated agreements and schedules, including data and information sharing protocols.

Challenges across the system continue but agencies remain committed

Agencies are working within workforce and funding capacities to optimise delivery

- There are several challenges that affect the capacity of the social sector more broadly to deliver services to children and families in increasingly complex circumstances.

- Agencies remain committed to delivering on the initiatives outlined in the Action Plan, prioritising resources and finding solutions to work around key challenges to support successful delivery. For example, the use of working groups to pool resources together and work on initiatives collaboratively and exploring funding opportunities.
- Social Sector Chief Executives continue to provide oversight of the Action Plan's delivery, reinforcing cross-agency commitment and accountability.

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

- Agencies recognise the need to prioritise long-term evidence-based planning across the sector to ensure the Action Plan continues to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.
- Agencies are working together to provide the Social Sector Chief Executives with timely and relevant data. This will improve insight into how well agencies are meeting the needs of children and young people in care.
- Once key initiatives are implemented, agencies will have an opportunity to refresh the Action Plan to support long-term planning and sustainability and consider ways to ensure successful delivery of the Action Plan around the broader system constraints.

What's coming up

The next six months

The next six months will include progressing implementation of key initiatives:

- Implementation of the first tranche of the Gateway national improvements.
- Health New Zealand and Oranga Tamariki progressing work on the Enhanced Visibility initiative, including developing information and data sharing agreements.
- Whāraurau delivery of mental health training for Oranga Tamariki trainers in April 2026, with roll out of training to frontline social workers beginning thereafter.
- Continuing to review and update agreements within the MoU between Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Education, including a refresh of the Student Aide Support agreement.
- Roll out of the enhanced Education Profiles with guidance for schools to clarify roles and responsibilities between schools and agencies.
- Ministry of Education and Oranga Tamariki working together to develop new joint guidance on escalation pathways, directed enrolments, supports available and how to access them, followed by a professional learning package.
- Complete Phase Two of the Supported Accommodation review and provide recommendations for future service delivery.
- Progress planning for the work required for early intervention housing supports and services and transitions from state care and custody, aligning with broader work on responding to severe housing need.

- Ministry of Social Development providing training to inform Oranga Tamariki transition support service providers of the housing supports and services available for children and young people.
- Transition support service providers delivering 40 housing education programmes before June 2026 to support young people to develop the skills they need to access and maintain housing.
- Completion and signing of the MoU and Information Disclosure Agreement between Oranga Tamariki and ACC.
- Finalising the MoU overarching relationship agreement between Oranga Tamariki and Corrections and reviewing existing information sharing agreements and schedules.