

Prioritising housing services for children and young people in care, their families and whānau, and caregivers

Oranga Tamariki Action Plan

In-depth assessment

December 2022

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Part A: Purpose, methodology and context.....	5
Purpose of this assessment	5
Methodology and approach for the assessments	6
Context for this assessment	6
Part B: Focus of this assessment.....	10
Children and young people in care	10
Part C: Current state	15
Some parents and caregivers are reliant on the universal housing system to meet their housing needs	15
Existing housing supports and services are not meeting this population group's needs.....	19
Part D: Driving change through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan	27
Government agencies are committed to improving housing services and supports	27
This assessment has identified four focus areas to help drive further change through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan.....	29



Executive Summary

Through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan, Ministers and Chief Executives of the children’s agencies have made a commitment to prioritise the populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki

The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan and its companion implementation plan, set out how children’s agencies will advance the commitment to prioritise the populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki (‘priority populations’).

As part of the work to deliver the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan, Oranga Tamariki is leading a series of in-depth assessments, focusing on housing, health, and education of our priority populations. The purpose of the assessments is to close gaps in the understanding about the experiences of our priority populations, to highlight areas of need, and to set out where further work needs to be done by Government agencies. This is because Oranga Tamariki is just one of many agencies that are jointly responsible for meeting the wellbeing needs and improving outcomes for our priority populations.

This assessment addresses the housing needs of children and young people in care, their families and whānau, and caregivers

This assessment is the second in a series of housing-focused assessments. Because the housing needs and experiences of children and young people are intrinsically linked with those that they live with, this assessment considers the housing needs of the child / young person, their parents, and those caring for them, most often family and whānau. Some population groups in New Zealand are at greater risk of experiencing severe housing deprivation, with Māori, Pacific Peoples and disabled people experiencing the highest rates of severe housing deprivation.

Oranga Tamariki assists and supports families, whānau and caregivers to access housing and housing supports offered by Government housing agencies

Housing supports can include emergency housing, longer-term housing options (such as public housing), and support to access and maintain housing (such as financial assistance). Oranga Tamariki is not a housing provider and is largely reliant on the Government housing system¹ to provide housing services and supports to parents, whānau and caregivers of children and young people, if they require it.

Caregivers of children and young people often require Oranga Tamariki to work closely with them to gain access to housing when needed to support the placement of a child

¹ The key housing agencies are Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Ministry of Social Development (MSD), and Kāinga Ora. However, other agencies provide some services or supports for specific population cohorts, including, for instance, the Ministry of Health, Ara Poutama Aotearoa, Oranga Tamariki and Whaikaha.

or young person. Oranga Tamariki social workers often step-in to assist families, whānau and caregivers to navigate the Government housing system, providing advocacy and support to access housing and housing supports, such as the fast-track system.

The Government housing system does not always meet the needs of children and young people in care

Families and whānau of children in care struggle to access the housing supports they need to provide the safe, appropriate home they need to support either the return of the child or young person from care or enable family and whānau to care for a young person in care.

- Currently, the only specific Government housing service and support for children and young people in care is the fast-track system, aimed at prioritising households caring for a child or young person in care on the Housing Register. However, it is not clear that the system is working as intended.
- The reunification or return home of a child or young person to their parents and family is, in some cases, delayed because of an inability to source an appropriate housing solution for the family. In addition, the fast-track system does not prioritise the needs of children and young people who are on return home placements.
- In some cases where there are no other housing options available, Oranga Tamariki will assist families and whānau into emergency housing. Emergency housing is intended to be a short-term solution, and we know in general people are staying in emergency housing for longer than is appropriate. Emergency housing is not tailored to meet the needs of families, whānau and caregivers caring for children and young people in care and can be unsafe and inappropriate.
- Oranga Tamariki is reliant on the Government housing system to source accommodation for disabled children and young people with intensive support needs. The housing requirements for this cohort are very specific, and the homes regularly require extensive adaptations to meet the needs of disabled children and young people.

To help improve housing for children and young people in care, this assessment identifies four focus areas

This assessment identifies four focus areas to help drive further change through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan to help improve housing-related outcomes for children and young people in care.

The relevant agencies will work together:

- *Reviewing and strengthening the fast-track system to ensure that it is operating to meet the housing needs of children and young people in care, and their families, whānau and caregivers:* Oranga Tamariki will work with Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Ministry of Social Development (MSD), and Kāinga Ora to review and strengthen the fast-track system. This would include consideration of the entry criteria, timeliness and prioritisation of children and young people in care, and reviewing guidance to social workers on the fast-track system.
- *Identifying cross-agency ways to support children and young people in care to stay or return to their parents, family and whānau:* Oranga Tamariki will work with HUD, MSD, and Kāinga Ora to support access to appropriate housing that will enable children and young people to stay in the care of parents, family and whānau. This would include consideration of cross-agency support available, consideration of housing needs of children reunifying with their family and whānau, and how existing roles in agencies could be used to better support families and whānau to navigate the housing system.
- *Ensuring emergency housing options are fit for purpose when longer term housing is not available:* Oranga Tamariki will work with HUD and MSD to ensure that the specific needs of children and young people in care are considered through the review of the emergency housing system.
- *Ensuring the availability of suitable housing for children and young people in care who have more intensive support needs (and preventing these children and young people from coming into care in the first place):* Oranga Tamariki will work with HUD and Kāinga Ora to source public housing and supported housing for this group of children and young people. Oranga Tamariki will also work with Whaikaha to ensure that disabled children and young people in care, and their parents and whānau, are considered in the provision of homes, adaption and equipment.

Agencies are required to report back within three months on their response to the outcomes of the needs assessment

Under the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan implementation plan, agencies are required to report back to the Social Wellbeing Board within three months on how they will respond to the findings of this assessment. That report will include input from the key housing agencies HUD, MSD, and Kāinga Ora as well as from Oranga Tamariki.

Part A: Purpose, methodology and context

Purpose of this assessment

1. This assessment is the fourth in the series of in-depth assessments as part of the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan and looks at the housing needs of children and young people who are subject to:
 - a custody order;
 - an order appointing a person specified in section 110(1)(a) to (e) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 as their sole guardian; or
 - an agreement for care, under Part 2 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.²
2. This cohort is referred to collectively in this assessment as ‘children and young people in care’. This assessment also looks, where appropriate, at the housing needs of their families and whānau, and their caregivers.
3. This assessment focuses on the housing services and supports that are delivered by Government agencies.³

Advancing the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan

4. The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan sets out how children’s agencies will work together to achieve the outcomes set out in the Child Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2019 for those core populations of interest.⁴ It also sets out how other Government agencies providing services to, for, and that impact on the populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki, will work together to achieve those outcomes. This series of assessments are designed to highlight areas of need, and how Government agencies should respond.
5. The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan underscores that it is critical that the children’s agencies collaborate to prioritise the needs of the children, young people, and their families and whānau. The children’s agencies are jointly responsible for meeting wellbeing needs and improving outcomes for our priority populations.
6. This assessment follows on from an earlier assessment on the housing needs of young people transitioning to independence from care and youth justice

² This cohort is based on the “core populations of interest to the department” (i.e., Oranga Tamariki), as set out in section 5, paragraph (1)(b)(ii) of the definition of that term in the Children’s Act 2014.

³ Separate work would be required to explore the housing services and supports delivered by non-Governmental agencies.

⁴ Child Youth Wellbeing Strategy. (2019). <https://www.childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/resources/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>

placements, with a focus on those eligible for Oranga Tamariki Transition Support Services.

7. A subsequent assessment will focus on the housing needs of children and young people who come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki, including their families and whānau (delivery in 2023).

Methodology and approach for the assessments

8. In undertaking these assessments, Oranga Tamariki bought together information, data and evidence, and a thematic analysis was then undertaken to identify the key areas for action.
9. This approach included reviewing relevant literature, data, and documents (including research literature providing an insight into the voices of children and young people) and conducting focus groups with social workers and other relevant frontline or operational employees (for instance, placement co-ordinators, transitions workers). We also met with members of the Oranga Tamariki Youth Advisory Group, who provided a care-experienced perspective of the housing challenges for children and young people in care, their families and whānau.
10. Key Government agencies were consulted. These were: Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga - Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Social Development, Kāinga Ora, Ministry of Health, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People and the Social Wellbeing Agency.
11. As the action areas identified in each assessment are progressed, especially where the action relates to service provision, agencies, including Oranga Tamariki, will work with external stakeholders (such as providers, strategic partners, communities, iwi and children and young people) as appropriate to progress that action.

Context for this assessment

Importance of kāinga and home

12. In the Waitangi Tribunal report *He Pāharakeke, he Rito Whakakīkinga Whāruarua*,⁵ the Tribunal noted that the word kāinga has a greater meaning than dwelling place, but included broader meanings including home, village, or homeland. Waitangi Tribunal panel member Ahorangi Ta Pou Temara described “kāinga is home as opposed to a place where one lives”. Kāinga is a place where cultural identity is formed and sustained.

⁵ *He Pāharakeke, he Rito Whakakīkinga Whāruarua* (the Oranga Tamariki Urgent Inquiry). (2021). WAI2915 Waitangi Tribunal Report

13. The Tribunal's report on Oranga Tamariki underscores that Te Tiriti o Waitangi guarantees to Māori tino rangatiratanga over kāinga.⁶ It finds that the Crown's failure to honour this guarantee has caused significant and enduring disparities between the number of tamariki Māori and non-Māori taken into statutory care.
14. Separately, the Waitangi Tribunal's Kaupapa Inquiry into Housing Policy and Services is examining grievances concerning housing outcomes for Māori (WAI 2750).⁷ Claimants in stage one of the housing kaupapa inquiry have raised issues about the failure of our housing system. Claims allege Crown failure to ensure an adequate standard of housing for Māori, or to deliver state services, programmes, and support enabling access to adequate housing.
15. Oranga Tamariki has specific legislative obligations under section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 in relation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. One of the key obligations imposed by section 7AA is an expectation that Oranga Tamariki will uphold and protect the familial structures of whānau, hapū and iwi. In line with section 7AA(2)(b) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, Oranga Tamariki must ensure that its policies and practices have regard to mana tamaiti and the whakapapa of Māori children and young persons, and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their whānau, hapū, and iwi.⁸

The importance of housing for wellbeing

16. Access to stable and adequate housing is important for people's health and wellbeing, and for children and young people, is likely to be associated with better education and health outcomes.⁹ Healthy, secure, fit-for-purpose, and affordable housing is fundamental to living and working with dignity. It plays a significant role in wellbeing, supporting improved physical and mental health, educational attainment, employment, social cohesion, connection, and belonging.¹⁰

⁶ Article 2 of te Tiriti o Waitangi. The English text "confirms and guarantees to the chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand and to the respective families and individuals thereof the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their Lands and Estates Forests Fisheries and other properties which they may collectively or individually possess".

⁷ See <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/inquiries/kaupapa-inquiries/housing-policy-and-services-inquiry> for more info about the Housing Policy and Services Inquiry (WAI 2750).

⁸This reflects the focus on family and whānau that is inherent in the values that underpin the role of Oranga Tamariki as a statutory care and protection agency, as set out in the Mana Tamaiti Objectives. Objective 3 of the Mana Tamaiti Objectives provides that if removal from home is necessary, Oranga Tamariki will preference placements for tamariki and rangatahi Māori (including siblings) with members of their whānau, hapū and iwi ensuring support and assistance is provided to meet their needs. Objective 4 provides that Oranga Tamariki will support tamariki and rangatahi Māori to establish, maintain or strengthen their sense of belonging through cultural identity and connections to whānau, hapū, and iwi, while Objective 5 provides that Oranga Tamariki will support, strengthen, and assist tamariki Māori and their whānau to prepare for a return home or transition into the community.

⁹Morton, S., Knowles, S & Morar, M. (2021). Academic Perspectives of Wellbeing. <https://swa.govt.nz/assets/Publications/reports/SWA-Academic-Perspectives-of-Wellbeing-Final-for-publication-Oct-2021-2....pdf>

¹⁰ The study *Growing up in New Zealand* highlights the importance of stable and healthy housing in the first 1,000 days of a person's life. It also demonstrates the impacts of housing on developmental outcomes.

17. Children and young people’s development and wellbeing is impacted in part by their environment and housing is a critical part of that.¹¹ Stable quality housing is a main protective factor preventing families from becoming ‘persistently disadvantaged’ – and this applies whether or not the family owns or rents.¹² As well as providing a foundation for individual and family wellbeing, stable housing allows children to be part of their community, to build their own identity, and can also provide the means for supporting intergenerational wellbeing.

Increasing housing stress in New Zealand

18. Housing shortages and rising rents, coupled with costs of living, are causing acute increases in housing stress in New Zealand. Homelessness is driven by structural issues and system failures such as poverty, a lack of affordable housing and limited supply, discrimination, welfare support issues and a lack of employment opportunities.¹³
19. There has been a significant increase in public housing demand. At the end of June 2017 there were 5,353 applicants who were assessed as eligible for public housing and who were ready to be matched to a suitable property. At the end of August 2022 this had increased to a total of 26,030 applicants who were assessed as eligible for public housing and who were ready to be matched to a suitable property.¹⁴
20. Some population groups in New Zealand are at greater risk of experiencing severe housing deprivation.¹⁵ Rates of severe housing deprivation are highest among Māori and Pacific Peoples.¹⁶ Pacific Peoples are four times more likely to experience severe housing deprivation than Pākehā and are much less likely to own their own home.¹⁷ Māori are three times more likely to experience severe housing deprivation than Pākehā.¹⁸ Disabled people are twice as likely to experience severe housing deprivation where their dwelling lacks at least one basic amenity¹⁹ and they lack the resources to change their circumstances, then the general population.²⁰

¹¹ Prickett, K. C., Paine, S.-J., Carr, P. A., & Morton, S. (2022). A fair chance for all? Family resources across the early life course and children’s development in Aotearoa New Zealand. New Zealand Productivity Commission.

¹² New Zealand Productivity Commission. (2022). Fair Chance for All Interim Report - Breaking the Cycle of Persistent Disadvantage. Other protective factors identified in the report include income and social connections.

¹³ HUD. (2020). *Aotearoa / New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan 2020 – 2023*.

¹⁴ [Housing register - Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga - Ministry of Housing and Urban Development \(hud.govt.nz\)](https://www.hud.govt.nz/housing-register) accessed 17 October 2022.

¹⁵ Severe housing deprivation refers to people living in severely inadequate housing due to a lack of access to minimally adequate housing. This means not being able to access a private dwelling to rent or own that has all basic amenities. This definition comes from Amore, K., Viggers, H. & Howden Chapman, P. (2021). *Severe Housing Deprivation in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018*.

¹⁶ MAIHI Ka Ora – National Māori housing strategy 2021-2025. (2021). HUD.

¹⁷ Housing in Aotearoa: 2020. Statistics New Zealand.

¹⁸ MAIHI Ka Ora - National Māori housing strategy 2021-2051. (2021). HUD.

¹⁹ Basic amenities are identified in this report as drinkable tap water; a kitchen sink; cooking facilities; electricity; a toilet; a bath or shower.

²⁰ Viggers, H., Amore, K, & Howden-Chapman, P. (2021). *Housing that Lacks Basic Amenities in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018*.

21. Children and young people are also disproportionately affected by housing stress.²¹ It is estimated that almost half of the people living in accommodation funded through an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant are children.²²
22. Information on the number of disabled children and young people living in housing stress is not known. However, research indicates that many disabled people or their families were concerned about the housing options available for them, and the stability of their current housing arrangements.²³

²¹ Housing stress is generally considered to occur when households spend more than 40 percent of their income on housing costs (private rent and mortgage). This definition is used in Perry, B. (2021). Housing affordability for renters and owners: International comparisons. Ministry of Social Development.

²² Monthly Housing Update. (February 2022). Ministry of Social Development.

²³ Disability Connect. (2021). Research into the Unmet Housing Needs of People with Disabilities, their Family and Whānau.

Part B: Focus of this assessment

Children and young people in care

23. This assessment examines the housing needs of children and young people who are in care, and the specific housing needs of their families and whānau, and their caregivers.
24. Children and young people do not exist in isolation. From a housing perspective, there is an inextricable link between the housing experiences of children and young people and the housing experiences of their parents, family, whānau or caregivers. Homes are more than houses, and families, whānau and other support people are also critical to, and interwoven with, children and young people's wellbeing. These relationships are crucial to both what wellbeing means, and how wellbeing is achieved.²⁴

Information on the number of children and young people in care and protection

25. As at 30 June 2022, there were 4,722 children and young people in the care, custody, and sole guardianship of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki. This is a decrease from 31 July 2021 where there were 5,179 in this population group.

²⁴ Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki. (February 2019). What Makes A Good Life. Similar intertwining can also be seen in Fleming, T., Neems, O., King-Finau, T., Kuresa, B., Archer, D., & Clark, T. (2021). What should be changed to support young people? The voices of young people involved with Oranga Tamariki. The Youth19 Research Group, The University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Gender of children and young people in the care, custody and sole guardianship of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki as at 30 June 2022

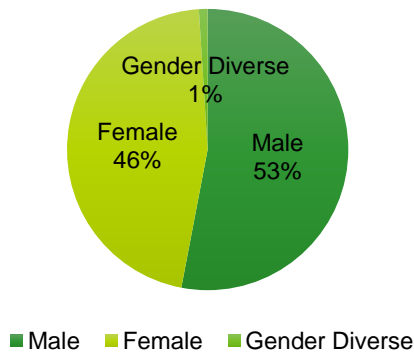


Figure 1. Gender of children and young people in care, custody and sole guardianship of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki as at 30 June 2022.

Ethnicity of children and young people in the care, custody and sole guardianship of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki as at 30 June 2022

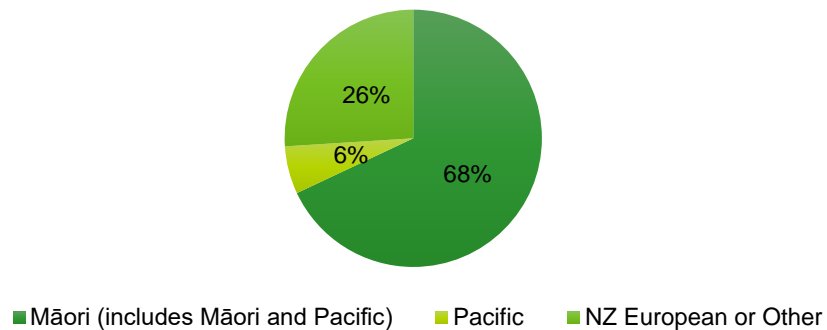


Figure 2. Ethnicity of children and young people in the care, custody and sole guardianship of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki as at 30 June 2022

Age of children and young people in the care, custody and guardianship of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki as at 30 June 2022

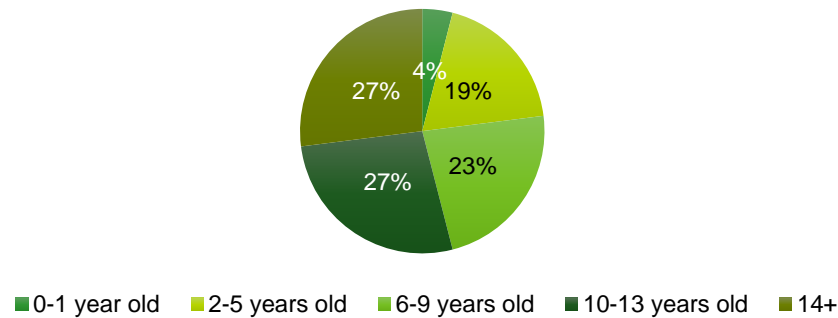


Figure 3. Age of children and young people in the care, custody and guardianship of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki as at 30 June 2022

Types of placements

26. Most children and young people in the care, custody and sole guardianship of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki are in out of home placements. These placements can include:
- **Family or whānau placements:** where a child or young person is in the custody of Chief Executive and is supported to remain living with members of their family and whānau as their caregiver.
 - **Non-family or whānau placements:** where an Oranga Tamariki approved carer provides care for children and young people who are not part of their own whānau.
 - **Other placements:** these placements can include residences, family or group homes, and contracted NGO services.
27. As at 30 June 2022, 43 per cent of children and young people who are in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki are placed in family or whānau placements. Where possible, Oranga Tamariki will try and keep children and young people with their family or whānau.
28. A child or young person is in a **return / remain placement** when they are in the legal custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki but remain in the care of their immediate family. These placements are used more commonly where Oranga Tamariki attempts to support the reunification of a family, while still maintaining legal custody to ensure that the child remains safe. As at 30 June 2022, 13 per cent of children and young people who are in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki are placed in a return / remain placement.

Tamariki and Rangatahi Māori in this population group

29. Māori are overrepresented within those children and young people who are in the care and protection system. The higher proportion of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care reflects a disparity between the number of Māori and non-Māori

children and young people being taken into the care system. Such disparity is influenced and driven by the impacts of colonisation and structural racism.²⁵

30. As part of its role in the care and protection system, the Crown recognises that tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and the whānau unit are taonga that require protection. In *He Pāharakeke, he Rito Whakakīkinga Whāruarua*, the Crown recognised that its role was to support whānau Māori to care for their tamaiti or tamariki to prevent the need for their removal from their homes.²⁶

Children and young people in care with high or higher support needs

31. Some children and young people come into the care system due, in part, to their high or higher support needs. These children and young people may have significant (intellectual and physical) disabilities, which require intensive, specialised support. These children and young people will generally require specialist out of home placements; the exact nature of which would depend on the child or young person's specific needs. The difficulty in identifying the number of disabled children and young people with intensive support needs, and the limited information available about the cohort, can create challenges in the provision of homes for these children and young people and in projecting future housing support need.²⁷
32. There is also little information on takatāpui and rainbow children and young people in care. A study of over 7,000 Year 9 to 13 students (most aged between 13 – 18 years) found that takatāpui and rainbow young people reported higher rates of involvement with Oranga Tamariki²⁸ than their peers, with takatāpui Māori almost twice as likely to report involvement with Oranga Tamariki than other ethnicities. Takatāpui and rainbow young people who had reported being involved with Oranga Tamariki also reported high housing deprivation.²⁹

Children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki experience housing deprivation

33. A study of over 7,000 Year 9 to 13 students (most aged between 13 – 18 years) found that young people who report Oranga Tamariki involvement experienced higher levels of housing insecurity compared to those who reported no

²⁵ *He Pāharakeke, he Rito Whakakīkinga Whāruarua* (the Oranga Tamariki Urgent Inquiry). (2021). WAI 2915 Waitangi Tribunal Report

²⁶ *He Pāharakeke, he Rito Whakakīkinga Whāruarua* (the Oranga Tamariki Urgent Inquiry). (2021). WAI 2915 Waitangi Tribunal Report

²⁷ Identifying the number of disabled children and young people and / or those with higher support needs can be difficult. While administrative data shows that at least 14 per cent of children and young people in care have at least one indicator of disability (Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children. (2020). Children and young people with impairments. Wellington, New Zealand) this is likely to be an underreporting as the impairments of many children and young people may be undiagnosed or do not meet the disability-related funding thresholds.

²⁸ Note that involvement with Oranga Tamariki is wider than being in care – however this survey is likely to be indicative of the issues faced by children and young people in care who identified as being takatāpui and rainbow.

²⁹ King-Finau, T., Archer, D., Fenaughty, J., Sutcliffe, K., Clark, T., & Fleming, T. (2022). The health and wellbeing of takatāpui and rainbow young people who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki. The Youth19 Research Group, The University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

involvement with Oranga Tamariki. Of those who reported involvement with Oranga Tamariki, almost 60 per cent reported some form of housing deprivation in the last 12 months.³⁰

34. Of the children and young people in care in the 2021/2020 financial year, 73 per cent had a parent who received a temporary or regular accommodation supplement at some stage, compared to 16 per cent of children and young people in the general population who had a parent receive a temporary or regular accommodation supplement at some stage.

³⁰ Fleming, T., Archer, D., King-Finau, T., Ormerod, F., Clark, T.C., (2021). Health and Wellbeing of young people who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki: Home and Housing. The Youth19 Research Group, The University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. It should be noted that this study involved children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki, which is wider than children and young people in care.

Part C: Current state

Some parents and caregivers are reliant on the universal housing system to meet their housing needs

35. Government agencies provide a range of housing services to eligible cohorts of the general population who require it. This is delivered through a mix of financial assistance, housing, and wrap around supports. Agencies involved in delivery of these services include Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Kāinga Ora, Ministry of Social Development (MSD), Ministry of Health, Ara Poutama Aotearoa (the Department of Corrections), Oranga Tamariki and Whaikaha (the Ministry of Disabled People).³¹

Emergency Housing	Longer-term housing options	Support to access and maintain housing
Transitional Housing – provides short-term stays (intended to be 12 weeks) in contracted accommodation with support services	Public Housing – housing provided to eligible individuals or families as long as they need it, who pay income related rent	Sustaining Tenancies – support programme to help people maintain their tenancies and address issues putting their tenancy at risk
Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant – provides short-term stays (intended to be 12 weeks) in contracted accommodation	Housing First and Rapid Rehousing – offers immediate access to stable housing and wrap-around tailored support to help people remain housed and address the issues that led to their homelessness	Housing Support Products – financial assistance to address barriers to accessing or retaining housing, including bond grants, moving assistance, rent arrears assistance, and rent in advance
HUD-Contracted Emergency Housing in Rotorua – provides whānau appropriate accommodation with wrap-around support and 24/7 onsite management		Accommodation Supplement – weekly payments to assist with rent or mortgage for non-public housing residents
Agency/cohort specific supported housing – short- or long-term accommodation alongside support services to address social, health, cultural or other needs. Cohort-specific housing is provided by Oranga Tamariki, Ara Poutama Aotearoa, Ministry of Health and Whaikaha		

36. Most of the housing supports available are geared and delivered to adults – that is, the parents, whānau and caregivers of children and young people in

³¹ The three key agencies within the housing system are HUD, MSD, and Kāinga Ora. Other agencies including Ara Poutama Aotearoa, Ministry of Health, Oranga Tamariki, and Whaikaha also provide housing services and supports for specific cohorts of the population.



care as opposed to being focused on (or geared towards) children and young people in care, or households where there is a child or young person in care.

37. The exception to this is the fast-track system. The fast-track public housing process recognises that certain households applying for public housing are at higher risk of negative outcomes, and therefore helping them into public housing quicker will improve their long-term outcomes.
38. The fast-track policy prioritises public housing provision for those who are caring for a child or young person who is in the custody of Oranga Tamariki.³² The intention of this process is to materially reduce the wait time for these families and whānau to be housed in public housing.

Oranga Tamariki advocates for the housing needs of children and young people in care

39. Oranga Tamariki's core role is to promote the well-being of children and young people, and their families and whānau, and to ensure that where children and young people require care, that they have a safe, stable, and loving home.³³
40. As part of the National Care Standards, Oranga Tamariki must consider "the safety, adequacy, and appropriateness of the physical caregiving environment" when assessing the appropriateness of a placement.³⁴ This reflects that while some children and young people in care will be housed in Oranga Tamariki owned or contracted facilities, most will be placed with caregivers.
41. While the National Care Standards do not require Oranga Tamariki to provide access to housing or assist caregivers to access housing for a placement, caregivers of children and young people often need Oranga Tamariki to work closely with them. This is most often to gain access to housing to support the placement of a child or young person or in the case of sibling groups, to support the placement of multiple children or young people with that family / household.
42. Where families, whānau and caregivers of children in care are reliant on the housing system³⁵ to provide appropriate, long-term housing outcomes, Oranga Tamariki often needs to step in to assist and support families, whānau, and caregivers to navigate the Government housing system and access housing and housing supports (including financial supports) offered by Government housing agencies.
43. This includes supporting and assisting families and whānau to access public housing and supporting families and whānau to navigate the fast-track

³² This also includes those who are in custody under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, in the care of an Iwi social service, a cultural social service or a child and family support service. The fast-track system also applies to those who are caring for a child or young person who is getting the Orphan's Benefit or Unsupported Child's Benefit, who was previously in custody under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

³³ Section 4(1)(e) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

³⁴ Reg 56(a)(ii) of the Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018.

³⁵ This includes housing supports provided by Government housing agencies and the private housing market.

application process with MSD. It also includes directly advocating for families with MSD, for example contacting the MSD call centre on their behalf to follow up on the status of an application. The growing need for public housing means that the Housing Register³⁶ can have extremely long wait times. A similar issue exists in relation to the Transfer Register.³⁷ The median wait time for being housed from the Housing Register is 291 days, and 443 days from the Transfer Register.³⁸

44. Should other housing options not be available, Oranga Tamariki will step in to assist families and whānau into emergency housing.³⁹ This can mean that some children and young people in care, and the families / households caring for them, will need to reside in emergency housing until an appropriate alternative is found.
45. Oranga Tamariki social workers also advocate on behalf of families and households caring for children and young people in care who live in emergency housing to exit emergency housing as quickly as possible. Oranga Tamariki social workers do this by working with Government housing agencies, and non-Government housing suppliers, to investigate alternative housing (such as public housing), and advocate, on behalf of families and whānau, to access that housing where those families are not able to do that themselves.
46. Occasionally, Oranga Tamariki will place a child or young person in care in an interim motel placement along with a caregiver or staff member. This is separate to accommodation offered through the Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant process as this type of interim motel placement is funded by Oranga Tamariki, and occurs in situations, such as when a placement has fallen over, when appropriate whānau cannot be located or when a child / young person comes into care with little notice. This is done on the basis that this is the safest option and the best place for them to be while Oranga Tamariki staff find them a more permanent, stable placement that meets their needs.

³⁶ The Housing Register contains applicants who are not currently in public housing but have been assessed as eligible and who are ready to be matched to a suitable property. MSD maintains the Housing Register.

³⁷ The Transfer Register contains applicants who are already in public housing, but who need to be rehoused for any reason. Examples of why a person needs rehousing include being in a house with too few or too many bedrooms or for health reasons. MSD maintains the Transfer Register.

³⁸ Taken from <https://www.hud.govt.nz/stats-and-insight/the-government-housing-dashboard/housing-register/> on 19 September 2022. Note we do not currently have statistics on the range of wait times, including those who wait the shortest times, and those who wait the longest time to be housed from the Housing Register, or Transfer Register.

³⁹ Emergency Housing refers to a range of temporary housing solutions for people with an urgent housing need: motel accommodation funded through the Emergency Special Needs Grants administered by MSD, Transitional Housing placements, COVID-19 motels, and HUD contracted emergency housing.

Oranga Tamariki also works with parents and whānau to access suitable housing when seeking to return a child to their parents in a return home placement

47. Oranga Tamariki works with parents, family, and whānau who have children or young people in a return home placement. In these situations, Oranga Tamariki staff meet with family and whānau as part of the reunification process to consider, discuss and plan housing action to successfully return children and young people home.
48. If the current accommodation of the family or whānau is not considered suitable (for example, it does not have enough bedrooms) or safe, Oranga Tamariki staff have told us that families often need assistance to find alternative housing, including any private rental options. Oranga Tamariki staff have told us that families and whānau who are on the Housing Register or Transfer Register can have no other option but to access emergency accommodation, such as motels, while they wait for suitable public housing in the hope of being reunified with their children in care.

Oranga Tamariki also provides out of home care for disabled children and young people with significant (intellectual and physical) disabilities who require intensive care

49. Oranga Tamariki also provides out of home care for young people with significant (intellectual and physical) disabilities who require intensive care, often when their parents, family and whānau can no longer meet the needs of the child or young person. As at 20 October 2022, there were 216 children and young people requiring intensive care response placements. Family and whānau and close supporters of people with multiple and complex disabilities have highlighted the limited choice and control they experience when accessing housing and accommodation for the disabled person they support.⁴⁰ For many of these parents, placing their child or young person with Oranga Tamariki is a last resort.⁴¹
50. It can be difficult finding an appropriate placement for these children, due to their intensive care needs. Oranga Tamariki has a small team who work with care partners to identify the housing requirements of these children and young people to support the appropriate care arrangements. Bespoke intensive care responses typically place one to three children in a home, but placements can change as care-needs change, and children may move from a shared house,

⁴⁰ Donald Bealey Institute. (2020). *Housing for Disabled People: Family / Whānau and Close Supporter Perspectives*. Having access to accessible and affordable housing was identified in this research as a key factor in alleviating some of the negative psychosocial and physical experiences of caring for a family member with multiple and complex disabilities.

⁴¹ Carpinter, A., Irwin, C., & Rogers, G. (2000). Just surviving: Talking with parents of children with very high disability support needs about how they get by.

to one in which they are cared for in a one-on-one placement, and vice versa. Often the housing and support requirements are very specific.⁴²

51. While Oranga Tamariki owns a small number of homes used for some of these placements, providing housing infrastructure is not a core role of Oranga Tamariki. Oranga Tamariki has established a pilot program with a social impact investor to provide ten homes to provide out of home care for these children.
52. Leasing homes from the private market can be difficult for Oranga Tamariki for many reasons, including the lack of appropriate housing, that many homes require modifications, a lack of willingness for landlords to engage with Oranga Tamariki, and there being no guarantee of tenure.
53. This means that Oranga Tamariki is currently reliant on the Government housing system, mostly Kāinga Ora, to construct or purchase these homes and lease them to Oranga Tamariki. Kāinga Ora has developed 38 properties to date for disabled young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki as part of the Supported Housing Oranga Tamariki Homes Program.⁴³
54. Kāinga Ora and Oranga Tamariki are currently progressing a revised Memorandum of Understanding and are working towards the delivery of a further ten homes in various regions.⁴⁴

Existing housing supports and services are not meeting this population group's needs

Families and whānau of children in care struggle to access the housing supports they need

55. Housing has become a greater struggle for many families and whānau. Pressures in the housing market, including a lack of supply and rising rental costs and interest rates, have resulted in a greater demand for housing support. This has been felt by the families and whānau of children and young people in care, who are more likely to receive an accommodation support, or live in public housing, in particular Māori families and whānau who are likely to be overrepresented in this group.
56. As noted, many parents, families and whānau struggle to navigate the Government housing system and struggle to access housing supports needed to provide the safe, appropriate home they need to support either the return of

⁴² For instance, there may need to be specific layout of a home, or the house not being too close to other houses to support the child / young person and those caring for them.

⁴³ These properties are spread throughout New Zealand, with the biggest concentration currently in Tāmaki Makaurau, Waikato and Bay of Plenty. The majority of leases are for five years with three five-year rights of renewal. The rent cost to Oranga Tamariki ranges from \$24,000 per annum (for a two-bedroom home in Hamilton), to more than \$152,000 per annum (for a building with six one bedroom units in Auckland).

⁴⁴ The Memorandum of Understanding is a relationship agreement between Kāinga Ora and Oranga Tamariki covering three priority areas: operational connection; delivery of Supporting Housing homes program; and partnering with Māori.

the child or young person from care or enable family and whānau to care for a child or young person in care.

57. Oranga Tamariki social workers and placement coordinators have told us it can be difficult to find appropriate placements for children and young people coming into care. While this can come down to a broad range of matters, some of the reasons reflect specific housing related issues: for instance, the size of a possible caregivers' home may mean it is not possible for the child (or several children) to be placed there.⁴⁵ This may be the case where a caregiver lives in public housing and the tenancy agreement it holds with the housing provider (for example, Kāinga Ora) specifies a maximum number of occupants.
58. Oranga Tamariki staff have also told us the difficulties they face in trying to support parents, families and whānau to obtain appropriate accommodation through the public housing system. Staff told us that finding temporary housing solutions for a household may also impact on that household's ability to access public housing or result in that family losing their place on the Housing Register. They have also told us how they feel they do not always have the skills to effectively navigate the housing system on behalf of families and whānau of children in care.
59. Oranga Tamariki social workers also told us that families and whānau of children in care sometimes require Oranga Tamariki staff to step-in to escalate public housing applications because families and whānau do not feel like they are able to do this themselves, or are not able to successfully action any escalation themselves.
60. Oranga Tamariki social workers have told us that the work they do to find housing solutions for families and whānau of children in care is extremely labour-intensive and detracts from other, equally crucial, aspects of their social work role. Where Oranga Tamariki and MSD cross-agency processes for escalating housing applications exist (for example, with MSD for fast-track applications at a regional level), Oranga Tamariki social workers have told us those processes are not always making an impact on their workload.
61. Oranga Tamariki staff also indicated concern about the over-reliance on short-term immediate and emergency housing for families and whānau of children and young people in care, including Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant motels, Transitional Housing and emergency accommodation organised by Oranga Tamariki. Housing supports and solutions for families and whānau of children and young people in care need to be more sustainable and long-term as housing need does not end once the child or young person returns home from Oranga Tamariki care.

⁴⁵ Children and young people in care should only share a bedroom where it is safe and appropriate for them, and the others they are sharing the bedroom with, to do so. This should be based on the assessed individual needs of the child or young person in the context of the family group or whānau living in the home.

Key system issues

62. There are limited services and supports that address the specific housing needs of children and young people in care. This partly reflects that most of the housing needs of children and young people are interlinked to their parents, families, whānau, and caregivers. As a result, many of the current housing supports do not meet the needs of children and young people in care, particularly those who are in a return home placement.
63. Where the Government housing system is providing services and supports to the families, whānau and caregivers of children and young people in care, the respective roles of the Government agencies are not clearly defined. For example, it is not clear which agency is responsible for assisting families, whānau and caregivers to navigate the fast-track system. The role and responsibility of each agency in providing housing services and supports to this cohort requires clarification, particularly as Oranga Tamariki is neither a Government housing agency nor a housing provider.

The fast-track housing system is not working as intended

64. The fast-track system is intended to prioritise certain households, including those caring for a child or young person in care, on the Housing Register. However, it is not clear how many households involving children and young people in care have been housed through the fast-track system and Oranga Tamariki has concerns about its effectiveness in providing households with a child or young person in care with housing.
65. Oranga Tamariki social workers told us that in some instances, they have been told that applicants caring for children in care are not eligible to be fast-tracked and identified two situations where this occurs. The first is where the household was not already on the Housing Register and is progressing an application with MSD to be on the register. In these situations, applicants undergo a public housing interview process. This interview process does not specifically include any question on whether there is a child or young person in care in the household, but this information needs to come up during the assessment conversation – and must be specifically noted by the interviewer for the applicant to be identified as eligible for the fast-track system.
66. The second situation that Oranga Tamariki social workers identified was where the household was already on the Housing Register, and a child or young person subsequently comes into their care. In these situations, Oranga Tamariki social workers would need to provide evidence to MSD that the household had a child / or children in their care and was eligible to be fast-tracked. Oranga Tamariki social workers told us that MSD sometimes provides inconsistent advice as to which households who were eligible for the Housing Register would also be eligible to be fast-tracked.
67. Some families and whānau who have children in their care report calling the centralised MSD call-centre multiple times and explaining their case to different MSD staff members each time. This can create confusion and shame or whakamā as they have to talk about their needs to different staff members and, at times, has resulted in the applicant receiving contradictory or incorrect

information. Oranga Tamariki staff also report challenges advocating on behalf of families and whānau who need additional support with their application and are told communication must be made directly with the client unless the family and whānau have specifically nominated the social worker to act on their behalf.

68. There are also concerns about the wait times of the fast-track system. Some families and whānau spent two years on the fast-track waiting for housing. MSD are unable to provide indicative fast-track wait times, which creates further uncertainty for family and whānau.
69. Uncertainty as to timeframes and long wait times for fast-track applications can have flow-on effects to Oranga Tamariki staff, families and whānau. In some cases, Oranga Tamariki staff may need to assist families and whānau to look for alternative short-term housing options. This can then negatively impact on the housing support or options that are available for other families and whānau that also need housing support, due to the limited short-term options available in some cases.
70. Oranga Tamariki staff have also told us that in some cases where they find a short-term housing solution for a family or whānau, this may mean that the household loses their place on the Housing Register.
71. Finally, families with children in remain or return home placements are not eligible for fast-tracking. This means that parents and families who need a home or a larger house (for instance) through the public housing system to enable reunification are not able to be prioritised through the fast-track system. In some instances, this would prevent a child or young person from being able to return home.

Parents undergoing reunification with children and young people in care need to be prioritised and supported through public housing system supports and services

72. The reunification or return home of a child or young person to their parents and family has, in some cases, been delayed because of the inability to source an appropriate housing solution for the family.
73. A common barrier Oranga Tamariki staff deal with is family or whānau not having a home that is large enough for children in care to be returned home to. We understand that this is most often an issue where family or whānau live in public housing, and the tenancy agreement sets out the maximum occupants in that property. In these situations, Oranga Tamariki works with the family and whānau to identify and navigate possible solutions, including housing solutions offered by Government housing agencies. When an appropriate solution cannot be found the child or young person is not able to be reunified with their family until they can access a larger house.
74. Further, Oranga Tamariki social workers have told us that a complex predicament arises where a child or young person is not able to be reunified with their family until they can access a larger house, however the family may not be able to access a larger house through the public housing system as they

are not eligible for the Transfer Register until the child or young person is living with them.

75. As noted earlier, parents and families who have a child or children returning home and are on the Housing Register are not eligible for fast-tracking. Fast-tracking, if successful, could support reunification of the child or young person with their family or whānau because the household could be prioritised on the Housing Register or Transfer Register, and placed in an appropriate (for example, larger) house enabling the child or young person to be returned home.
76. Oranga Tamariki has in some cases needed to look at what other interim solutions could be found to support reunification – including, for instance, options of providing a cabin on a property to free up a bedroom in the main house for the child returning home or making bond / rental payments. However, these solutions are not routinely available, and are not always sustainable – either for the family or for Oranga Tamariki given providing housing infrastructure is not a core role of Oranga Tamariki. The provision of these services by Oranga Tamariki, even on a short-term basis, can also have unintended consequences by impacting on family or whānau eligibility for other supports and services.

Emergency housing supports and services are not tailored to meet the needs of families, whānau and caregivers caring for children and young people in care

77. The emergency housing system provides temporary accommodation and support for people with an immediate and urgent housing need where no other options are available. It is intended to deliver a range of outcomes, including access to housing with urgent housing needs, support services, and a pathway towards longer-term public housing.
78. MSD and HUD currently fund and deliver emergency housing system responses through:
 - Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants, which assist with the cost of short-term commercial accommodation (usually a motel);
 - Transitional Housing, which includes tailored support services and short-term accommodation (for instance, apartments, converted facilities, and contracted motels);
 - COVID-19 motels;
 - HUD-contracted emergency housing.
79. MSD also provides one-off financial support through the Flexible Funding Assistance program to families with children who are staying in Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants motels, and who have immediate needs arising from living in that accommodation. These needs must be related to education, early childhood or wellbeing. Examples of need covered by Flexible Funding Assistance include the cost of after school care or holiday programs due to the

emergency housing not being suitable for the child (for example, the motel room is small and everyone in the family is sharing one bedroom).⁴⁶

80. Emergency housing is intended to be a short-term housing solution for families and whānau. However, we know that in general people are staying in emergency housing for longer than is appropriate. Māori make up around 60 per cent of housing recipients, and this has implications for tamariki and rangatahi Māori.⁴⁷ Claimants in the Waitangi Tribunal's Kaupapa Inquiry into Housing Policy and Services (WAI 2750) have indicated that Māori face challenges in accessing and navigating the system – and feel shame or whakamā when asking for help. Many also feel discriminated against.⁴⁸
81. A small proportion of children and young people in care are housed in emergency housing, normally with family or whānau carers, through Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant motels and Transitional Housing. As at 12 September 2022, there were 34 children and young people in care living in Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant motels and / or Transitional Housing.⁴⁹
82. Emergency housing in Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant motels can put children and young people at risk of being exposed to drug and alcohol use and other negative and harmful behaviours.⁵⁰ Care-experienced young people told us of their experiences living in Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants motels and the unsafe situations they encountered, including incidents of assault and breaches of privacy. They told us that creating female only areas at these motels would make them feel safer.
83. We have also heard instances where cribs have not been provided to family and whānau with babies in motel placements, creating potentially unsafe sleeping practices. Care-experienced young people also told us that there were instances when Plunket nurses were refused access to the motel to provide support to them and their newborn babies.
84. Living in emergency housing can move families and whānau away from their communities. Children and young people living in emergency housing may be some distance from their usual school, which may present logistical challenges

⁴⁶ Work and Income. [Examples of immediate needs for Flexible Funding Assistance - Map \(workandincome.govt.nz\)](https://www.workandincome.govt.nz) accessed 26 October 2022.

⁴⁷ See the Homelessness Action Plan.

⁴⁸ See <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/inquiries/kaupapa-inquiries/housing-policy-and-services-inquiry> for more info about the Housing Policy and Services Inquiry (WAI 2750).

⁴⁹ This information comes from an informal collection of data across Oranga Tamariki sites and is likely to be a lower estimate of the number of children and young people in care who are living in Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant motels and Transitional Housing. This is because the data is not linked to MSD (who approves the grants and housing) and Oranga Tamariki sites may not be aware of all applicants for emergency housing support. Further, this data reflects a snapshot in time, and we know that the number of people living in Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant motels and Transitional Housing is likely to be highly variable over weeks and months.

⁵⁰ Emergency System Housing Review: Assessment of current emergency housing system and areas for improvement. 2021. Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Social Development.

for family and whānau in transporting children to and from school. This can negatively disrupt school attendance and could go on to affect the educational achievement of these children and young people.⁵¹

85. Given that children and young people in care can be particularly vulnerable, living in temporary housing can exacerbate uncertainty for these children and young people for whom a safe and stable home is important for their wellbeing.
86. Many emergency housing settings are also not geared up to cater for disabled children and young people who need more intensive support or care. For example, motels are not set up to take into account the high sensory needs of neurodiverse children and young people (for example, autistic children and young people), and small features such as bubbled wallpaper can have negative effects on these children.

There is a lack of suitable housing for disabled children and young people who need more intensive support and care

87. Oranga Tamariki provides (through owned or leased premises) accommodation in home-like settings for disabled children and young people with significant intellectual and physical disabilities who require intensive care.
88. Oranga Tamariki struggles to find appropriate accommodation to lease privately for these children and young people, in part because the housing requirements for this cohort of vulnerable children are very specific. This means Oranga Tamariki is reliant on the Government housing system, specifically Kāinga Ora to provide homes that Oranga Tamariki can lease for these children and young people.⁵²
89. The homes that Kāinga Ora provide to Oranga Tamariki to lease often need extensive adaptations for disabled children and young people. This is because the majority of Kāinga Ora homes are not accessible for disabled children and young people.⁵³ Sometimes Oranga Tamariki is required to make the necessary adaptations to Kāinga Ora homes at short notice, and at a significant cost.

⁵¹ James, B. (2007). Children's and Young People's Housing Experiences: Issues and Scoping Paper. Centre for Housing Research Aotearoa New Zealand. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that living emergency housing can impact on the children and young people's attendance and achievement at school.

⁵² Homes provided by Kāinga Ora in this case are provided under its Supported Housing remit where it works with Government agencies and provider organisations to deliver supported housing for people with high and complex needs, as compared to its public housing portfolio where Kāinga Ora places people from the Housing Register in public housing. (The housing functions of Kāinga Ora are set out in Figure One: *Roles of the Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and Kāinga Ora.*)

⁵³ Kāinga Ora currently has 15 per cent universal design targets for its new build homes. We note the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at New Zealand's second examination (23 and 24 August 2022) recommended that New Zealand adopt the principle of universal design and commit to a target of 100% accessibility for new build public housing and introduce mandatory accessibility requirements for new housing constructed by the private sector.

90. Whaikaha are funded to deliver adaptations and equipment for disabled children and young people (who are eligible for DSS funding)⁵⁴ where assessed as required by a Needs Assessment Service Co-ordinator (NASC) to ensure accessibility.⁵⁵ Adaptations to housing structures or environments to ensure the safety and appropriateness of the property for disabled children and young people (for example, the installation of safety glass) are not covered by Whaikaha funding. Where required, Oranga Tamariki pays for these adaptations and are not reimbursed.
91. Further, Whaikaha can only fund adaptations and equipment once for each person under DSS funding, so where Oranga Tamariki is not able to provide a long-term or permanent home for disabled children and young people with significant intellectual or physical disabilities who require intensive care, future home modifications are not always able to be funded. Therefore, if the child or young person moves properties, further modifications that are required are often funded by Oranga Tamariki.
92. One of the issues affecting the supply of Kāinga Ora housing is that Oranga Tamariki does not receive much notice that a child or young person with these intensive needs will be coming into care, and Oranga Tamariki is not always able to provide notice to Kāinga Ora of future property needs. This lack of notice from Oranga Tamariki creates difficulties for Kāinga Ora in its business and property planning processes, including the two-year time frame needed to build properties.
93. Oranga Tamariki expects an increase in demand for children and young people with the highest needs requiring specialist care and a permanent home over the next three years. The majority of these homes will need to be three to four-bedroom homes designed or modified to be accessible by disabled children and young people.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ministry funded disability support services (DSS) are available to people who have a physical, intellectual, or sensory disability (or a combination of these) and meet eligibility criteria.

⁵⁵ A NASC completes a needs assessment for a disabled person or their caregiver, identifying which services or supports they are eligible for, and which of the supports and services are funded.

⁵⁶ Three-four bedrooms enables the child / young person's family to stay, supporting ongoing family and whānau connections. This would also allow for the possibility of the home becoming a 'home for life' for the child or young person to stay in the home when they age out of care. For this to occur, a range of agencies would need to be involved - including Whaikaha, the Ministry of Health, and Kāinga Ora - as Oranga Tamariki would not be able to continue to lease the property once the child / young person has aged out of care.

Part D: Driving change through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan

Government agencies are committed to improving housing services and supports

94. There are significant housing initiatives underway across Government to address housing deprivation in Aotearoa New Zealand. Oranga Tamariki will continue working with other Government agencies to help ensure that these housing initiatives help to meet the specific needs of children and young people who are in care.
95. At the same time, it is also critical that these housing initiatives work with family, whānau, hapū, iwi, family groups, and communities to deliver appropriate solutions for children and young people in care.

Homelessness Action Plan

96. The Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan, released in 2020, seeks to deliver on the vision that homelessness (including people in emergency and temporary accommodation) is prevented where possible, or is rare, brief, and non-recurring. It includes actions focused on prevention, supply, support, and system enablers. It recognises that action is needed now to prevent homelessness, increase housing supply, and provide support services.
97. The Homelessness Action Plan sets out Phase One actions (2020 to 2023) to prevent and reduce homelessness. Action is focused on four main areas: supply, support, prevention, and system enablers. HUD is leading delivery on the Homelessness Action Plan; however, the action plan is being delivered through a collaborative cross-government commitment from multiple agencies and partners.
98. As part of Budget 2022, additional funding of \$75 million over four years was set out to support ongoing activity under the Homelessness Action Plan. This includes the provision of Kaupapa Māori wraparound support services, the expansion of rangatahi / youth focused transitional housing places, the design and delivery of a new supported accommodation service for rangatahi / young people with higher and more complex needs, and homelessness outreach services.

Emergency housing system review

99. The emergency housing system provides temporary accommodation and support for people with an immediate and urgent housing need.
100. HUD and MSD are conducting a review of the emergency housing system. An initial assessment has found that the emergency housing system is not effectively providing a pathway to permanent housing, supporting people at the right time, addressing housing disparities, or improving the housing and wellbeing of individuals, families, and whānau.⁵⁷
101. The review has identified system-wide areas for improvement to ensure that people get the right levels of support and housing suitable for their needs. This includes longer term supported housing options, Māori-led responses, and strengths-based prevention measures. Budget 2022 delivered new funding to enable faster progress on elements of the emergency housing system, with a contingency of \$355 million over two years set aside to support two key objectives: enabling Māori-led solutions to urgent housing need and improving wellbeing outcomes for people in emergency motel accommodation.
102. Separately, HUD is developing a Code of Practice for Transitional Housing. The Code would set out the basic rights and responsibilities of providers, motel operators and households living in Transitional Housing. The Code is intended to support rights and responsibilities in relation to Transitional Housing, also recognising that Transitional Housing is not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act 1986.

Te Maihi o Te Whare Māori – the Māori and Iwi Housing Innovation Framework for Action (MAIHI)

103. The Government has introduced Te Maihi o te Whare Māori – the Māori and Iwi Housing Innovation Framework for Action (MAIHI) - which sets the vision for Māori housing and how New Zealand's housing system can be reshaped to provide better housing solutions for whānau Māori.
104. MAIHI is based on a set of kaupapa Māori principles, founded on strong Crown-Māori partnership. MAIHI places whānau at its centre and recognises that improving outcomes for whānau will increase positive housing experiences for tamariki and rangatahi.
105. Budget 2020 invested \$40 million in delivering housing outcomes for Māori through MAIHI. Government is applying this funding to increase affordable housing options, and to support iwi and Māori providers with community-based housing projects.

⁵⁷ Emergency System Housing Review: Assessment of current emergency housing system and areas for improvement. 2021. Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Social Development.

106. MAIHI Ka Ora, the National Māori Housing Strategy, uses the MAIHI framework to provide strategic direction for the Māori housing system. The strategy has a vision that all whānau have safe, healthy, affordable homes with secure tenure across the Māori housing continuum. Implementation for this strategy is underway with actions planned out to quarter four 2023.

Fale mo Aiga – the Pacific Housing Strategy

107. Fale mo Aiga - Pacific Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2030 is the Government's targeted response to the housing needs and aspirations of Pacific communities across Aotearoa. It was endorsed by Cabinet in August 2022. Fale mo Aiga has been developed collaboratively by the Te Manatū mō ngā Iwi o Te Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa / the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, HUD, and Kāinga Ora. The vision for Fale mo Aiga is that Pacific Peoples own and live in affordable, quality, fit-for-purpose, healthy homes that enhance their wellbeing.
108. A strong sustained and coordinated effort is required to reverse the socio-economic disadvantage Pacific peoples have been experiencing for decades. Fale mo Aiga responds to the need for a culturally responsive, joined-up housing system, including a strong capable Pacific housing sector. It seeks to promote and enable a deliberate housing system response to the significant and disproportionate impact the current housing crisis has had on Pacific families across Aotearoa. While primarily focused on home ownership, Fale mo Aiga also recognises the need to support Pacific families on their housing journey, regardless of tenure.
109. The \$41.315 million funding received by MPP through Budget 2020, for the Improving Outcomes for Pacific Families and Communities Initiative is a start towards improving housing outcomes for Pacific peoples. However, further investment is required to continue the work. MPP, HUD and Kāinga Ora are working together in a more deliberate, enduring, and effective partnership to leverage existing initiatives and opportunities.

This assessment has identified four focus areas to help drive further change through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan

110. This assessment identifies four new focus areas for government agencies to help improve housing-related outcomes for children and young people in care. This section provides an overview of these focus areas. As specified in the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan implementation plan, agencies will be required to report back to the Social Wellbeing Board in three months on how they will respond to these focus areas.

Reviewing and strengthening the fast-track system to ensure that it is operating to meet the housing needs of children and young people in care, and their families, whānau and caregivers

111. Oranga Tamariki will work with MSD, HUD, and Kāinga Ora to review and strengthen the fast-track system to ensure that it is operating to meet the needs of children and young people in care.
112. The review needs to include consideration of the entry criteria for the fast-track system and the processes involved in obtaining access to the fast-track system, including consideration of the role of MSD staff in assisting families and whānau to navigate the fast-track system. The review would also need to include consideration of any mechanisms for families and whānau to escalate applications or complaints with MSD, including mechanisms between Oranga Tamariki and MSD for this purpose. The review would also need to look at the timeliness of the system in supporting households into appropriate housing.
113. While the speed and timeline for obtaining a house through the fast-track system depends on the availability of an appropriate house (particularly an appropriate Kāinga Ora house), feedback from staff indicates that the fast-track system is not always prioritising households caring for children and young people in care effectively. Families undergoing reunification are also not covered, potentially delaying a child or young person being able to return home from care.
114. As part of the review, consideration is also needed to ensure that fast-track processes were applied across both the Housing Register and Transfer Register. This would enable households already in a public housing, but who need a more appropriate house (for instance, a larger house) to support children in care (or returning from care), to also be prioritised.
115. Oranga Tamariki will also review its guidance to social workers on the fast-track system to ensure that there is consistent understanding across social workers of the system as it currently works.

Identifying cross-agency ways to support children and young people in care to stay or return to their parents, family and whānau

116. A key focus of the new direction for Oranga Tamariki is to support children and young people to be able to stay in the care of their parents, family and whānau. This also reflects that the most common aspiration in a study of young people (mostly aged between 13 – 18 years) currently involved with Oranga Tamariki was for the young person to be able to live with their family or for the whānau to live under the same roof.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Fleming, T., Neems, O., King-Finau, T., Kuresa, B., Archer, D., & Clark, T. (2021). What should be changed to support young people? The voices of young people involved with Oranga Tamariki. The Youth19 Research Group, The University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

117. However, for this to occur, parents, family and whānau need to be able to access appropriate housing to enable that child to live with them. Currently, social workers and other staff struggle to support families and whānau of children and young people in care to find appropriate housing solutions. Short-term solutions provided by Oranga Tamariki can also impact negatively on families and whānau by impacting on their ability to access other housing or social service supports.
118. Oranga Tamariki will work with the three key housing system agencies (MSD, HUD, and Kāinga Ora) to identify cross-agency solutions to support children and young people to be able to stay in the care of their parents, family and whānau (including through existing work programs). For instance, the needs of children and young people who are reunifying with their parents could be included as part of the review of the fast-track system.
119. Oranga Tamariki will also work with MSD, HUD and Kāinga Ora to identify how existing roles employed in MSD, HUD and Kāinga Ora can be used to better support families and whānau to navigate the housing system, and specifically housing services and supports which promote the reunification of children and young people in care with their parents.
120. Oranga Tamariki and MSD will work to support better communication between Oranga Tamariki and MSD, to enable housing solutions to be identified for children in care, their families and whānau when required. For instance, identifying and promoting effective cross-agency communication points for Oranga Tamariki staff with MSD staff, to enable parents of children in care to be able to navigate the housing system to support reunification of children and young people with their parents, including fast-track applications and supporting families in emergency housing.

Ensuring emergency housing options are fit for purpose when longer term housing is not available

121. Oranga Tamariki will continue to work with HUD and MSD to ensure that the specific needs of children and young people in care – and their families, whānau, and caregivers – are considered through work in the Transitional Housing and emergency housing spaces.
122. This includes ensuring that the housing needs of children and young people in care and their families, whānau, and caregivers are being specifically considered through the emergency housing system review. The review seeks to identify the system-wide risks and pressure points across the whole emergency housing system and creates a vision for an ideal state emergency housing system. This ideal state is where emergency accommodation is rarely needed, and when it is used, stays are brief and non-recurring; where it will be used by individuals and whānau who have experienced a shock or crisis (e.g., family breakdown) and they will be supported to quickly move into suitable, long-term housing. Specific focus areas of the emergency housing system review where there is an opportunity to consider the housing needs of children and young people in care include the reset of the Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants entry pathways, delivery of fit-for-purpose emergency

accommodation and the reset of social support services for people in emergency motel accommodation.

123. Oranga Tamariki will also work with HUD in relation to the development of a Code of Practice for Transitional Housing to ensure that it does not indirectly impact on care-experienced children and young people, whose experiences, behaviours, disabilities, and high support needs, may impact on the willingness of providers to accept them as tenants.

Ensuring the availability of suitable housing for disabled children and young people in care who have more intensive support needs (and preventing these children and young people from coming into care in the first place)

124. Oranga Tamariki will continue to work with Kāinga Ora and HUD to source the public and supported housing (as appropriate) it needs so that Oranga Tamariki can provide appropriate homes for children and young people with more intensive support needs, including considering the future ownership of the homes that Oranga Tamariki currently owns.
125. Oranga Tamariki will work with Whaikaha as it develops in its disability stewardship role, to ensure that disabled children and young people in care, and their parents and whānau, are considered in the provision of appropriate homes and the required adaptations and equipment.
126. A key part of this will involve clearly setting out expectations as to how Oranga Tamariki and Kāinga Ora will work together in relation to this cohort of vulnerable children and young people. While Oranga Tamariki and Kāinga Ora currently have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), this does not cover key matters in relation to prioritising housing for this cohort. Oranga Tamariki and Kāinga Ora will revise their MOU to identify additional ways in which they can operate together to support the obtaining of public housing for this cohort.
127. Oranga Tamariki is also working with Kāinga Ora to create an updated work plan for delivery of housing. While Oranga Tamariki is not always able to predict the needs for this type of housing in advance, Oranga Tamariki has indicated to Kāinga Ora that ten additional homes will be required before the end of this financial year (FY2022/23) and has confirmed with Kāinga Ora the location and typology of nine of the homes required.
128. Many disabled children and young people who have intensive support needs come into care because their parents, family and whānau can no longer provide the care needed including appropriate housing.⁵⁹ As such, there is value in the Government considering longer-term work across the housing and social sector

⁵⁹ Affordable rent and rising house prices were identified, in interviews with disabled people, as barriers to adequate housing and living situations that met their basic needs. Donald Beasley Institute. (2020). *My Experiences, My Rights: A Monitoring Report on Disabled Person's Experience of Housing in Aotearoa New Zealand*.

agencies to identify the system changes and actions required to support these children and young people to stay with their families and prevent them from needing to come into care at all.

129. This longer-term work could also look at addressing the housing needs of children and young people who have more intensive support needs when they come into care – as well as the longer-term housing and support needs of the child as they grow into adult hood.⁶⁰ Any longer-term, strategic action or system change work would also need to consider the non-housing supports needed by children and young people – and those who care and support them – and would also need the involvement of wider social sector and children’s agencies, particularly Whaikaha.

⁶⁰ It is well-established, both anecdotally and in research, that parents and caregivers experience ongoing anxiety about the care and support needs of their children with complex disabilities as they grow into adulthood. For example: Disability Connect. (2021). *Where Will We Live in the Future?*