

# Oranga Tamariki Draft Long-Term Insights Briefing

May 2025



New Zealand Council Of  
Christian Social Services

## Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Oranga Tamariki Draft Long-Term Insights Briefing (LTIB). We support the kaupapa to explore how we can better prevent, respond to, and enable healing from, child maltreatment between now and 2040. NZCCSS' members provide a range of services focused on prevention, response and healing from child maltreatment and are concerned by Aotearoa's rates of harm to children and the complexity of need that they are seeing among tamariki and whānau within their communities. Our vision for Aotearoa is to see all children safe and nurtured, active and engaged members of our communities.

Our main points are:

- 1. Support for a long term, multipartisan strategy**
- 2. Prioritisation of prevention and early intervention, and alleviation of the drivers of maltreatment**
- 3. Increased accountability required**
- 4. Caution in relation to investment in public awareness campaigns**
- 5. Prioritisation of the voices of tamariki and rangatahi**
- 6. Greater clarity needed in relation to devolution**
- 7. Strengthening the children's workforce**
- 8. Ensuring the balance of rights and opportunities in relation to the use of technology**

## Taunakitanga | Recommendations

We raise the following points and recommendations for consideration:

### **1. Support for a long term, multipartisan strategy**

Policy swings that occur with a change in government risk seeing Oranga Tamariki's focus fluctuate between family preservation and child protection approaches to child welfare. As economic policies currently drive retrenchment of government agencies, we are witnessing Oranga Tamariki's focus narrow to children in care, despite a clear focus on prevention of harm and family preservation within the purposes of the Oranga Tamariki Act (sections 4, (1) (a)-(d)). This has been exemplified by the removal of Oranga Tamariki targets relating to family-preservation (Chhour, 2025) and the repeal of Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act. Our concerns in relation to Section 7AA are further detailed in our [submission](#) on this legislation.

We are supportive of a long-term, multi partisan strategy which could aid in ensuring the government has a consistent approach to how purposes within the Act are interpreted, prioritised and actioned, irrespective of the dominant political party and ideology.

**Recommendation:** We support option 1) *Develop and agree a long term (e.g., 10-15 year), multi partisan strategy and action plan* as a means to better preventing, responding to, and enabling healing from child maltreatment between now and 2040.

## **2. Prioritisation of prevention and early intervention, and alleviation of the drivers of maltreatment**

International experience indicates that where we see reduced investment in prevention and early intervention services, we are likely to also see an increase in the number of children entering state care (Webb, 2025). Policies that favour short-term cost savings and retrenchment of government agencies are likely to result in greater long-term costs and mean that many children and whānau do not receive adequate support until their situation has reached crisis point. This is exemplified by research in an Aotearoa context confirming that young people who offend are likely to have experienced a range of disadvantages and are well-known to children's agencies before offending occurs (Reil et al, 2022; Social Wellbeing Agency, 2023). We explore this issue further in our [submission](#) on the Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill. As stated in our [submission](#) on the Oranga Tamariki LTIB Topic, we believe this approach to be at odds with a social investment approach which prioritises investment in prevention and early intervention, recognising the importance of both community and state level interventions (Office of the Prime Minister's Science Advisory Committee, 2011).

**Recommendation:** We support option 2) *Address the root causes of child maltreatment through a balance of reinforcing universal, targeted, community-led and whānau-centred approaches*, as being vital to addressing the drivers of maltreatment and enabling the prevention of harm, early identification of need and timely services and interventions for tamariki and whānau.

## **3. Increased accountability and clarity of responsibility required**

Adequate accountability mechanisms and resourcing are required to effectively mandate collaboration, prioritisation of children in need, and hold government to account for the delivery of services that meet children's needs across a range of domains.

NZCCSS members express concern that existing cross-agency levers, such as the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan (OTAP), have yet to be proven successful in improving the extent to which children and young people are prioritised across responsible agencies such as education and health (Aroturuki Tamariki, 2025).

Fragmentation, including siloed funding and a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities, are some of the barriers our members see in relation to plans such as OTAP being successful, resulting in holes in the safety net of support for tamariki and whānau.

Fragmentation occurs at both an agency and case level. Recent monitoring findings indicate that:

“Social workers, caregivers and whānau have to seek out services and supports child-by-child, relying on established relationships and goodwill, rather than there being a system that automatically responds to need.” (ibid, p.11)

Transiency of both the care and protection workforce and tamariki and whānau mean that support can be delayed. For example, when a child moves to a new community, kaimahi may not have timely access to prior information about a tamariki's situation, preventing the pace and adequacy of support provided. These issues are exacerbated by greater risk and complexity within cases.

Our members voice hesitation about accountability being targeted to Oranga Tamariki alone, which has proven itself limited in its ability to deliver and in periods of scarcity tends to retrench to focus primarily on children in care. We continue to see a lack of enforceability in relation to recommendations made by the Oversight System and resulting from the many previous reviews of the Oranga Tamariki system. Our broader concerns in relation to accountability for child maltreatment and the Oversight System are detailed in our previous submission on this topic which can be found [here](#).

**Recommendation:** We recommend that solutions to strengthen accountability and resourcing, including greater sharing of responsibility across agencies, be explored to enable any long term, multipartisan agreement to be effective. This should include exploring alternative models of shared accountability used in international settings.

#### **4. Caution in relation to investment in public awareness campaigns**

While public awareness is an important consideration in relation to preventing maltreatment, our members raised concerns about the extent to which this is prioritised in relation to other Future Options noted in the draft LTIB. Public awareness is likely to have limited effectiveness where there are not the resources to respond to reports of concern or address the drivers of maltreatment.

**Recommendation:** We suggest that investment be prioritised on responses to the drivers of, and reports of maltreatment, over public awareness campaigns.

#### **5. Prioritisation of the voices of tamariki and rangatahi**

The voices of tamariki and rangatahi, especially those who are care-experienced, should be central to efforts focused on prevention, response and healing from child maltreatment.

We refer to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which upholds children's right to have a say about matters that affect them and the most recent Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023) that recommended that the government:

“Make compulsory the application of the child impact assessment tool in the development of policy and legislation affecting children, ensuring that government officials, legislators and non-governmental service providers are trained on its use.” (p.2)

The perspectives of care-experienced children and young people have been captured in many reports focused on the Oranga Tamariki system and continue to offer valuable insight via VOYCE Whakaronga Mai and other advocacy avenues. These sources provide insight into the impacts that previous policy and legislation has had on tamariki and rangatahi, and how both might be improved to enable better outcomes. It is important that we also consider how tamariki and rangatahi can be better supported to advocate for themselves.

**Recommendation:** We recommend the LTIB prioritise the aspirations, contribution and expertise of children and young people and consider how these might be better embedded in government policy and initiatives between now and 2040. Opportunities include ensuring children and young people are actively consulted in the development of policy and legislation and giving greater effect to children's rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in legislation.

#### **6. Greater clarity needed in relation to devolution**

NZCCSS is supportive of greater enablement of Māori and community-led solutions. It is communities that hold relational insight and trust, and are best placed to work with tamariki and whānau to enable change. While devolution presents opportunities to improve prevention, response and healing from child maltreatment, members highlight the need for greater clarity for devolution to be successful. Transitions of power must be genuine, with clarity around who makes which decisions and who holds resources. Lack of clarity can hold up decision-making and limit community responsiveness. Siloed funding focused on narrow areas can create gaps in the safety net of support, leaving communities poorly resourced to respond to need and children and families unable to access the support they require. These issues are important considerations in any efforts to increase devolution.

**Recommendation:** We support a focus on option 5) *Devolution to shift*, recommending efforts to increase devolution prioritise genuine partnership and power-sharing, with clarity of roles and responsibilities and adequate resourcing.

## 7. Strengthening the children's workforce

Building the capability of the children's workforce will be an integral part of efforts to prevent, respond to and enable healing from maltreatment both now and in the years to come. Challenges to address include workforce shortages, the impacts of funding uncertainty on recruitment and retention, developing and maintaining capability given the increasing proportion of new graduates in the workforce, enabling cultural capability, and the level of staff burnout due to increasing complexity within caseloads. Valuing the contribution of the children's workforce is crucial to thriving social service provision and we call on government to give effect to existing pay equity claims, currently at risk due to the Pay Equity Amendment Bill.

**Recommendation:** We support a focus on option 4) *Grow collective workforce capability for the future* with prioritisation given to the issues identified above.

## 8. Ensuring the balance of rights and opportunities in relation to the use of technology

Members acknowledge the opportunities that trends in technology might present in relation to workforce capability, information sharing, collaboration and service provision, but express concern regarding the potential for increasing reliance on data and algorithms to predict need to result in stigmatising of tamariki and whānau. We have explored this issue in more detail in our previous submission on the OT LTIB Topic.

**Recommendation:** We recommend that investment in technology and particularly data-driven approaches to risk identification, be balanced with tamariki, rangatahi and whānau rights in relation to discrimination and the ability for systems to respond to identified need.

## Ngā Tohutoro | References

Aroturuki Tamariki (2025). Experiences of Care in Aotearoa: Agency Compliance with the National Care Standards and Related Matters Regulations 2023/24.

<https://aroturuki.govt.nz/assets/Reports/EOCR2324/Experiences-of-Care-2023-24.pdf>

Chhour, K. (2025). 'Safety-first' approach at Oranga Tamariki underway.

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/%E2%80%98safety-first%E2%80%99-approach-oranga-tamariki-underway>

Office of the Prime Minister's Science Advisory Committee. (2011). *Improving the transition: reducing social and psychological morbidity during adolescence.*

<https://www.dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2021-10/pmcsa-Improving-the-Transition-report.pdf>

Reil, J., Lambie, I., Becroft, A., & Allen, R. (2022). How we fail children who offend and what to do about it: 'A breakdown across the whole system'. Research and recommendations. Auckland, NZ: The Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation, the New Zealand Law Foundation & the University of Auckland.

Social Wellbeing Agency. (2023, September). Wellbeing of children and young people who offend. Summary of findings. Te Atatū - Insights. <https://www.sia.govt.nz/assets/DocumentLibrary/Wellbeing-of-children-and-young-people-who-offend.pdf>

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2023). *Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of New Zealand\**

<https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=gsnSQk35yZc8uXoQLiEU9KR4qJsq72TZh%2Fu4PHniwUh1j%2Fs%2B8gQa4cGw02sS78jzLqUNLU7Mt5tYdQQyuuCIVA%3D%3D>

Webb, C. (2025). *Investing in Prevention and Support: Spending on family support, children's centres, young peoples' services, and other forms of help and child welfare interventions in England, 2009-10 to 2021-22. Final Report.* Sheffield, UK: The University of Sheffield. doi: 10.15131/shef.data.26364292

## Ko wai tātou | Who we are

NZCCSS has six foundation members; the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support and the Methodist and Salvation Army Churches.

Through this membership, NZCCSS represents over 100 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. Our mission is to call forth a just and compassionate society for Aotearoa, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Further details on NZCCSS can be found on our website - [www.nzccss.org.nz](http://www.nzccss.org.nz).

## Ingoa whakapā | Contact Name

**Alicia Sudden** [ceo@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:ceo@nzccss.org.nz)

Melanie Wilson