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Tēnā koe Arran

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 December 2023 sharing the Independent Children's Monitor's (Aroturuki Tamariki) finalised report *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa 2022/2023*.

The Ministry of Health | Manatū Hauora and Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora appreciate the work done by Aroturuki Tamariki on the report. This letter outlines our response to the findings made in the report regarding the health-related National Care Standards (NCS) regulations.

These findings reiterate the conclusions of the *Access to Primary Health Services and Dental Care* review, indicating that NCS regulations have not been implemented well. The health system has an important role in supporting Oranga Tamariki to meet NCS regulations, and we have provided you with a more detailed letter responding to that review alongside this one, which references work being progressed by health agencies.

As mental health was considered out of scope of the primary health and dental care review, we wanted to pick up on the points you raise around the challenges experienced by children and young people in care accessing mental health and wellbeing services.

As acknowledged in the 2022 in-depth assessment of the mental health needs of children and young people involved with Oranga Tamariki, there is a need to strengthen and improve equity of access to mental health services.

There are several initiatives underway to support improved access to mental health supports for children and young people. For example, as part of Budget 2022 child and youth mental health funding has been used to support placement of an Oranga Tamariki social worker in each of the three child and adolescent mental health inpatient units, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) clinicians have been

employed specifically to provide mental health services to the Epuni care and protection residence in Hutt Valley, and in the Southern District.

Te Whatu Ora also has a range of initiatives to grow and sustain the mental health and addiction workforce, including work underway with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists to increase psychiatry training, increase clinical psychology internships, and collaboration with other agencies (including Oranga Tamariki) to build a common understanding of the needs, opportunities for and utilisation of the mental health and addiction workforce.

Your report acknowledges improved collaboration across agencies. This includes cross-agency work in 2023 to develop a joint outcomes framework to guide work supporting the mental health needs of children and young people, which also recognises the high needs of children involved with Oranga Tamariki. Mental health is an integral consideration within the suite of Oranga Tamariki Action Plan actions, and will continue to be a key focus.

We also note the concerns raised in the report relating to the Gateway assessment process. We consider that there are opportunities to improve the Gateway process to ensure that children and young people involved with Oranga Tamariki have their health, disability, and education needs identified and addressed effectively, are supported to navigate health and education issues, and are cared for by whānau, family, caregivers, hapū, iwi, and communities.

To improve this programme, the Ministers for Children, Health, and Education agreed to initiate a review of Gateway in 2023 as part of the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan. The review is currently underway and aims to address a range of issues with the programme, including improving timeliness, cultural responsiveness, and strengthening engagement with the health system.

We are committed to working alongside Oranga Tamariki and other children's agencies to improve health outcomes for children and young people involved with Oranga Tamariki. The Ministry of Health | Manatū Hauora and Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora welcome working with Aroturuki Tamariki on this important work.

Nāku noa, nā



Dr Diana Sarfati
Director-General of Health
Ministry of Health | Manatū Hauora
Date: 23 January 2024



Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive
Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora
Date: 23 January 2024