

Response: Independent Children's Monitor

Response from Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children to the third full report of Aroturuki Tamariki – Independent Children's Monitor: Experiences of Care in Aotearoa: Agency Compliance with the National Care Standards and Related Matters Regulations

Reporting period 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023

Response to the third full report of the Independent Children’s Monitor

Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) welcomes the third full report from Aroturuki Tamariki – Independent Children’s Monitor (the Monitor) on agency compliance with the National Care Standards (NCS) Regulations.

Overview

Oranga Tamariki helps to ensure all tamariki and rangatahi are in safe, loving whānau and communities where oranga can be realised. Our practices and policies are underpinned by the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989¹ which sets out the duties of our kaimahi in supporting tamariki and whānau who are at risk. All of our leaders, kaimahi, strategic partners, service providers and caregiving whānau play a crucial role in achieving oranga for tamariki.

The Monitor is legally mandated to evaluate Oranga Tamariki “compliance with national care standards regulations” under the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022.² The findings and insights from the Monitor’s report will be used to support ongoing continuous improvement for the children’s system.

We have made a sustained effort to improve our compliance with the NCS, and it is pleasing to see many indicators moving in the right direction, including greater placement stability, improved recorded visits to caregivers, and improved completion of educational assessments. We recognise more mahi is required, including improvements to data sharing with partner agencies. The Monitor uses language like “often” and “frequently”, which prevents Oranga Tamariki having visibility of the scale of the issues being raised. It would be beneficial to see raw data used in future reporting. It would also be useful to see the range of data that Oranga Tamariki has provided to the Monitor utilised more prominently, in combination with data from community engagement, to provide a more complete picture of performance against the NCS.

Key findings

The Monitor has detailed their key findings, which are drawn from data provided by Oranga Tamariki and other monitored agencies, and from their monitoring visits to communities across the motu. The key findings are:

1. Social workers are not able to see tamariki and rangatahi as often as they need
2. Tamariki and rangatahi are more involved in decisions about them
3. Tamariki and rangatahi are less likely to move between homes
4. Fewer rangatahi leaving care are being supported
5. Caregivers continue to need more support
6. Collaboration and information sharing between government agencies remains a barrier
7. Access to health services continues to be a challenge
8. Access to education support continues to be a challenge
9. Oranga Tamariki is starting to improve data collection and monitoring.

¹ Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Available at: [Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 No 24 \(as at 06 October 2023\), Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation](#)

² Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022. Available at: [Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022 No 43 \(as at 01 May 2023\), Public Act 3 Overview – New Zealand Legislation](#)

Response to key findings

1. Social workers are not able to see tamariki and rangatahi as often as they need

Themes identified

The Monitor states that while they have seen “improvement in visits to caregivers, we have not seen improvement across other measures of engagement with tamariki and rangatahi, whānau and caregivers”. This year, 65 percent of tamariki were visited at least once every eight weeks or as set out in their needs assessment, down from 70 percent last year. The report notes social worker turnover is up to 14 percent from 10 percent last year.

The report notes that only a third of investigations are taking place in the required 20 working days timeframe. The report is critical of a second yearly increase in incorrect decisions to No Further Action (49% up from 45% last year, 22% the year before) incidents of children in care experiencing harm.

The Monitor noted they were not able to assess compliance with the NCS, which requires updated plans every six months, including All About Me Plans (AAMP) as Oranga Tamariki uses a 12-month measure instead.

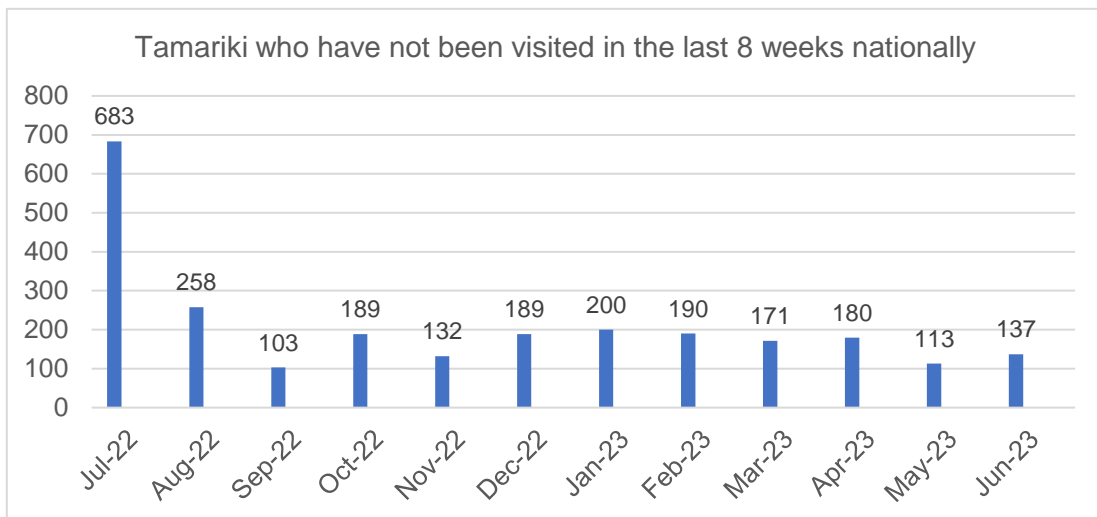
The Monitor reports that caregivers, whānau and tamariki feel the needs of tamariki and rangatahi are not being met, including access to specialist supports like counselling and orthodontics, and receiving pocket money.

In addition, there is a concern raised that a lack of care options undermines placement stability and in turn, aroha as a whole, with 135 tamariki spending 2,043 nights in a motel.

Response

Social Worker visits

While the Monitor notes that there has not been an improvement in social worker visits, available data indicates that there has been a decline in the number of outstanding visits to tamariki nationally during the report period. It is worth noting, that the NCS and Oranga Tamariki policies do not require social workers to complete visits to children in care every eight weeks, and that visit frequency is assessed on individual need. Where no assessed frequency has been identified, eight weekly visits is the proxy measure.



The introduction of Whiti, a tool to support social workers to plan and manage their work, allows greater visibility of whether visits are occurring to support concerns to be addressed quickly. The roll out of Whiti saw a significant reduction in the number of overdue visits on any one day since its launch in August 2022. This can be attributed to kaimahi recording their visits more efficiently and in a more timely way, regardless of whether it happened on time. While the Whiti system is not a stand-alone mechanism to resolve all overdue visits, it does provide sites with increased visibility, which is helpful in identifying barriers and areas of concern.

Investigations

We acknowledge the Monitors concern regarding Reports of Concern (ROCs) that are incorrectly assessed as 'No Further Action' (NFA) for tamariki and rangatahi in care. As signalled in the report, a process is in place where a weekly report is provided that highlights all ROCs made for tamariki and rangatahi in care, which allows any NFA decisions to be reviewed and monitored at a national level. Where there is an NFA decision made, a rationale must be provided by the relevant site which is then reviewed at the national level alongside the relevant practice leader, site manager and regional manager. The case remains on the report until there is confidence that approach is adequate to ensure the safety of the tamariki and rangatahi. Where issues are identified, these are then discussed directly with the regional manager.

We know that in the last five years, there have been improvements made to the process for our kaimahi to record incidents of children experiencing harm in care and that there is greater awareness that a report of concern needs to be actioned, rather than concerns being solely addressed through the existing social work plan. This has enabled more accurate recording of harm and types of abuse and has therefore enabled more thorough reporting. 2023 saw the highest number of reports of concern for tamariki and rangatahi in care with 2,425 reports being made. There have been improvements in practice in relation to promptness of responses to allegations of abuse or neglect made about tamariki and rangatahi in care, the consistency of recording and reporting of allegations, the informing of those involved in the outcome of their report, and the provision of support to tamariki and rangatahi to caregivers. This has contributed to what appears to be an upturn in the volume of harm in care incidents, whilst in reality, the organisation is simply getting better and recording and processing incidents.

Despite these improvements, we acknowledge that ensuring ROCs are assessed correctly needs to remain a focus for Oranga Tamariki.

The Monitor is concerned that child and family investigations for children in care are completed by staff who are "not experienced in doing them". A range of considerations are taken into account when allocating investigations to kaimahi, including:

- What is in the best interests of the child
- Matching the complexity of the investigation with the experience of the social worker
- The necessary cultural competence requirement
- The needs of kaimahi and individual circumstances

It is also important to make the distinction between two types of assessment:

1. The Initial Assessment. In November 2022, the Oranga Tamariki Chief Executive issued a Letter of Practice Expectation that social workers with less than 12 months experience as a registered and practising social worker would not complete initial assessments. The expectations as outlined in the letter from the Chief Executive are being monitored both by National Office and through Regional Manager reporting lines. This monitoring shows that the expectations are being met.
2. The Child and Family Assessment. Social workers without 12 months experience may undertake these assessments, but they are supported through regular supervision, guidance of more

experienced practitioners, the Oranga Tamariki induction and the 'He Akoranga' collaborative learning forums.

Improving engagement

To improve engagement, Oranga Tamariki has moved its annual survey of the experiences of children in care, Te Tohu o te Ora, from a paper-based questionnaire to an online questionnaire, delivered to tamariki and rangatahi on Oranga Tamariki devices by their social workers, to tackle the risk of respondents saying what they think their social worker wants to hear. This is a great step towards meaningful engagement with tamariki and rangatahi, beyond the NCS requirements of frequency of visits. Similarly, in the past year we have changed the methodology, which has seen a significant upturn in response rate from 23 percent to 47 percent, so our engagement with tamariki, rangatahi and caregivers is becoming more meaningful. There is also a collaborative project with HUIA Publishing to produce a suite of practice tools and resources to support engagement with tamariki and rangatahi, which will be implemented in early 2024. This all contributes to Oranga Tamariki gaining a better understanding of how to improve the children's system.

Updates to All About Me Plans

The 12-month measure for updating plans appears to be a source of confusion. Lead indicator analysis does not consider whether the plans were reviewed as required, rather it uses 12 months as a proxy measure for determining whether a plan is 'current enough' for us to be able to assess other aspects of practice that are required to be evidenced. For AAMP, the Practice Centre³ clearly states that "We must check that all assessments are up to date and that all aspects of the plan have relevant actions identified within six weeks of tamariki and rangatahi entering care. The entire plan must be reviewed and reassessed at a minimum of every six months."

Financial independence of tamariki and rangatahi

It can be difficult to open bank accounts for tamariki and rangatahi without the signature of a guardian, and work is underway to make improvements in this area. Oranga Tamariki has introduced purchase cards for both tamariki and caregiver social workers for incidental low-cost items up to \$40 (and \$250 in emergencies) for child related expenses.

2. Tamariki and rangatahi are more involved in decisions about them

Themes identified

The Monitor states that 86 percent of assessments and plans contain views of tamariki and rangatahi, but some tamariki and rangatahi did not know that their views were being included in a plan or that a plan existed. There was significant positive feedback noted around tamariki and rangatahi seeing their voices in their plan.

The Monitor noted there was evidence of positive collaboration with VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai, and an increase in tamariki and rangatahi involvement in care transition planning, from 78 percent in 2021/22 to 91 percent this year.

The report notes that complaints from tamariki and rangatahi are consistently low (16 this year), however Oranga Tamariki is not able to give information on the outcome of complaints and solutions. 731 complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman, a 53 percent increase from last year. Between July 2022 and March 2023, there were 195 grievances made by rangatahi in youth justice residences (39 percent justified) and 62 grievances made by tamariki and rangatahi in care and protection residences (66 percent justified).

³ All About Me plan | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki

Response

Plans and decision making

Oranga Tamariki are pleased that the Monitor has acknowledged the significant evidence of good involvement of tamariki and rangatahi in decision-making, as this is congruent with our core value to put tamariki first⁴. We are also pleased with our ongoing relationship with VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai and the mahi they do which enables tamariki and rangatahi to have a meaningful contribution to their care plan.

Complaints and grievances

The Oranga Tamariki Feedback and Complaints team has strengthened practice over the last year to promote greater levels of understanding about the process, by updating website information and development of leaflets and engagements at site level. Whilst formal complaints made by tamariki and rangatahi (progressed through the Oranga Tamariki Complaints Team) are low, from quality assurance checks, 84 percent of complaints had evidence of either a partial or full response. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done to ensure complaints processes are accessible for all children in care.

Grievances raised by tamariki and rangatahi in residences decreased this year to the lowest level across our three years of reporting, which is not necessarily a positive outcome, as we want tamariki and rangatahi to be able to communicate any issues to us.

We are working to increase awareness of access to the complaints and grievance process by:

- Developing forms and guidance that better meet the needs of rangatahi have been developed including improvements to the 'What's Up' form. These will be implemented in three pilot residences in early 2024 along with a webform that enables rangatahi to complete a grievance form electronically
- Teaching rangatahi how to make a complaint as a social skill: Two comic books have been developed, one aimed at younger tamariki and one at older rangatahi, these have been developed around the rights of rangatahi to facilitate teaching self-advocacy as a social skill. The comic books have been launched to four Residences as part of a pilot before full roll out later in 2024
- Implementing a pilot to provide a voicemail option to enable rangatahi to make a complaint by leaving a phone message is underway at three residences
- In residences, we have developed a new Standard Operating Procedure around grievances, to ensure kaimahi are inclusive, relational and restorative during these procedures; this will be implemented in 2024

Actions taken to support disabled tamariki to be involved in decisions made about them include:

- He Akaronga (a regular forum for Service Delivery kaimahi to come together for shared professional development, reflection and kōrero) 'See and Engage' session focused on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and the right of disabled tamariki and rangatahi to have their say and how kaimahi can support this. A further He Akoranga focussed on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and neurodiversity will be delivered in early 2024
- Funding VOYCE Whakarongo Mai to provide support and advocacy for tamariki with significant communication needs

⁴ Oranga Tamariki Strategic Intentions. Available at: [Oranga Tamariki Strategic Intentions 2020-2025](#)

- We have developed a specific section on the Practice Centre with guidance to support social work practice,⁵ as well as a variety of other resources⁶

A training package has been developed for complaints investigators and is being reviewed and will be incorporated into Residences Workforce Development Strategy.

3. Tamariki and rangatahi are less likely to move between homes

Themes identified

Over the three years, placement stability has improved where 25 percent of tamariki and rangatahi moved within the year, down from 48 percent in 2020/21. However, the Monitor states that the caregiver approval process can take “months” and legal support is not provided to whānau caregivers.

The report notes that there is a shortage of care options that undermines placement stability. Care partners having incomplete AAMP makes it difficult to adequately care for tamariki and rangatahi.

In addition, the Monitor reports that 39 percent of caregivers used the entitled respite (max 20 days), and there was mixed feedback of the experience of respite.

Response

Oranga Tamariki is pleased to see that improvements in placement stability have been recognised by the Monitor. Having a safe, secure home is crucial to achieving oranga. Our own data makes it clear that “repeated changes and transitions of care placements have a cumulative impact”⁷ on the oranga of tamariki and rangatahi in care. Oranga Tamariki has worked hard to enable improved placement stability to be achieved, so that tamariki and rangatahi are able to flourish. This stability is partially attributable to the high rates of support for tamariki and rangatahi to have contact with their whānau, amounting to 90 percent of cases reviewed in 2022/23.

Oranga Tamariki provides a comprehensive suite of resources for social workers to develop understanding about helping tamariki and rangatahi to have meaningful connections whilst in care, which helps stabilise care placements. These include:

- the Practice Approach
- Tū Māia
- He Akoranga which has provided three sessions on Whakamana te tamaiti

For 98 percent of tamariki their plan contained details on contact arrangements with members of their family, whānau or family group.

Oranga Tamariki acknowledges that further work is required to ensure there is a sustainable array of care options while also providing our existing care partners with the information required to care for tamariki and rangatahi.

⁵ [Whakamana te tamaiti or rangatahi through advocacy | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

⁶ [Support tamariki and rangatahi with FASD | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#), [Working with disabled tamariki and their whānau or family who may need specialised out-of-home care | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

⁷ [Cumulative harm | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

4. Fewer rangatahi leaving care are being supported

Themes identified

The Monitor stated that fewer rangatahi had an assessment of their life skills as part of their move to independence, down to 38 percent this year, from 43 percent in 2021/22.

The Monitor stated that more rangatahi were offered a referral to transition services, up to 71 percent, but they are often too late. The Monitor also said that fewer rangatahi had a transition plan developed, down from 54 percent in 2021/22 to 48 percent this year.

The Monitor highlighted that 29 percent of rangatahi were not offered the choice to be referred to a Transition Support Service provider, and tamariki and rangatahi do not always know their rights.

Response

The Monitor has rightfully identified that more work is required to ensure assessment numbers improve for rangatahi leaving care.

As at 30 June 2023, there are 1,625 rangatahi actively working with a transition worker. Transition support data is currently being developed to be included in Whiti, which is expected to give sites and regions greater visibility of performance and action needed for their respective areas in relation to referrals. We are also including 17.5-year-olds not referred into regular reporting to highlight those for who action is urgent.

71 percent of rangatahi were offered a referral to Transition Support Services (TSS), with 64 percent accepting, therefore 29 percent of rangatahi who are eligible have not been offered the opportunity to be referred.

Our data tells us referral rates have continued to increase year on year:

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Percent eligible referred (target group)	44%	59%	60%	64%

TSS is a voluntary, consent-based service, and rangatahi have the ability to decline support if they wish. Funding for transition support is not contingent on accepting a referral to a transition provider.

Rangatahi who do not wish to be referred to a transition provider are still able to access advice and assistance (including financial assistance) from Oranga Tamariki up until their 25th birthday. This is usually through the Transition Assistance Helpline but can also be through their local site. In addition, rangatahi who are not referred to a transition provider will be proactively contacted by the Transition Assistance Helpline after they leave care, up until the age of 21 years to maintain contact and continue to offer support.

There is work underway to help increase referral rates, life skills assessment and transition planning. This includes:

- new functionality for recording of these activities on CYRAS and a guide for kaimahi
- visibility for sites and regions of where these actions are required through a Transitions page on Whiti
- targeted assistance and training to lower performing regions

We are also implementing a letter of entitlement that rangatahi will receive prior to leaving care to ensure they are aware of and have a written record of their transition related entitlements, how to access support and who to contact if the support they are receiving is not meeting their needs.



A final evaluation of TSS, focusing on outcomes, is due in July 2024. The evaluation will help inform how Oranga Tamariki can continue to improve the service and to increase the uptake of support when it has been offered.

5. *Caregivers continue to need more support*

Themes identified

The Monitor has noted that from the Oranga Tamariki caregiver survey, 45 percent of caregivers were satisfied with the support from Oranga Tamariki, slightly down from last year, with Māori caregivers satisfaction dropping from 52 percent in 2021 to 43 percent in 2022.

The Monitor states that caregiver support plans are a requirement of the NCS and 61 percent of caregivers that need a support plan have one, with 79 percent receiving the support that is in their support plan. There has been a significant increase in caregiver visits happening at the agreed frequency, but it remains at 47 percent, up from 29 percent in 2021/22.

The Monitor highlights some concerns that the caregiver approval process takes too long, and in some situations “months”. Oranga Tamariki is not providing enough support to caregivers, with money and lack of services being key issues. There were 108 caregiver complaints this year.

Response

It is important to highlight that 88 percent of caregivers stated that they felt respected by their social worker from our latest data, which is an increase from 81 percent of caregivers in 2022.⁸ In the 2022 caregiver survey, only 16 percent of caregivers were dissatisfied with the support they were receiving from Oranga Tamariki.

Caregiver support plans

We know around 98 percent of caregivers have a support plan but that only 67 percent on average have one that is current (updated within the required timeframe). This is a metric we have been reporting on weekly and we recognise this is an area where improved planning to meet timeframes and ensure plans remain current is required.

The Monitor states that caregivers raised “*concerns they had when they did not receive plans*” for the tamariki and rangatahi entering their care. However, our data shows that between 57 and 69 percent of the caregivers surveyed say they have received plans (AAMP, My Rights My Voice, Welcome to our home).

We appreciate the observation from the Monitor regarding the caregiver approval process taking “months” in some cases. It is important that we get caregiver decisions right, so that tamariki and rangatahi live in safe and secure homes and we appreciate the acknowledgement Oranga Tamariki is making thorough assessments on prospective caregivers.

The Monitor notes that Oranga Tamariki kaimahi say that “*whānau are not being provided with funding to obtain legal advice about taking on tamariki, and that whānau are not provided with material items, such as beds, to enable them to take tamariki in*”. However, Practice Centre guidance clearly states the support whānau caregivers are entitled to⁹ and all caregivers are entitled support under the Establishment and Set Up Grant¹⁰. We help people caring for tamariki or rangatahi who

⁸ How well is Oranga Tamariki supporting caregivers? Available at: [How well is Oranga Tamariki supporting caregivers? | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

⁹ [Caregiver support | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

¹⁰ [Child Support, Unsupported Child's Benefit and Orphan's Benefit | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

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are not in the custody of the Oranga Tamariki Chief Executive to apply for financial support through Child Support, the Unsupported Child's Benefit and the Orphan's Benefit.

We support caregivers to apply for the Unsupported Child's Benefit by:

- Discussing what support they need to apply for the Unsupported Child's Benefit – this may include helping them to talk directly with Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora (Ministry of Social Development)
- Ensuring they have a letter to support their application that confirms they are caring for te tamaiti or rangatahi who is unable to live at home
- Helping the caregiver provide any other documents requested by Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora (Ministry of Social Development), such as a birth certificate

In addition, we may work with caregivers to:

- help them understand the financial impact of caring for te tamaiti or rangatahi and the support they may require
- encourage them to find out what financial support they or te tamaiti or rangatahi are eligible for
- support and enable them through advocacy to navigate the systems effectively (for example, we could contact the Ministry of Social Development for them)

Oranga Tamariki is committed to continuing to work with iwi and NGO partners who feel communication is a barrier to meeting the needs of tamariki and rangatahi in care.

6. Collaboration and information sharing between government agencies remains a barrier

Themes identified

The Monitor states that agencies are starting to work better together, particularly at a local level, but Government agencies do not always work effectively, particularly in education and health. Delays prevent access to services.

The Monitor states that a lack of information sharing destabilises placements and that the health system does not hold information for the in-care population. The Monitor notes that information is sometimes not shared until a crisis occurs.

Iwi social service providers have expressed concerns that poor communication of Oranga Tamariki policies and practices creates barriers in meeting health needs for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

Response

Oranga Tamariki is pleased to see improvements in collaboration and information sharing between government agencies is being recognised by the Monitor. Dame Karen Poutasi's review to prevent abuse of children¹¹ identified information sharing as an area for improvement, and all six commissioning government agencies have reviewed their policies and practices to improve this issue.

The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan (OTAP) is in place to ensure that government agencies are responding to the needs of children, rangatahi, and their families and whānau before issues and challenges escalate, further impacting on the wellbeing of whānau. The implementation plan for the Action Plan is to work towards significant and measurable results in the areas of healthcare, housing, education and supporting rangatahi to transition to independence.

¹¹ [Final-report-Joint-Review-into-the-Childrens-Sector.pdf \(orangatamariki.govt.nz\)](#)

The six-monthly report back (covering the period of July to December 2022) states that “agencies have been working to establish good cooperation, robust communication channels and collective responsibility, buy in and commitment”. The report demonstrates that most of the implementation plan commitments have been completed.

The review of Gateway Assessments is an example of agencies including Oranga Tamariki, Manatū Hauora, Te Whatu Ora and Te Aka Whai Ora, Ministry of Education and the Paediatric Society working collaboratively. Workshops held between these agencies have supported new and strengthened connections and understanding of individual roles and responsibilities.

A further example of system collaboration is Nga Pirihiimana, New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki working together to develop Fast Track, a new integrated response pathway to respond and support children involved in serious and persistent offending.¹² There have been more than 250 tamariki who have been through the Fast Track programmes, and 80 percent have not gone on to reoffend.¹³

7. Access to health services continues to be a challenge

Themes identified

The Monitor notes that the data provided demonstrates improvements in most areas, including disability identification and support (up to 95 percent from 85 percent last year).

The Monitor identifies similar themes to the Independent Children’s Monitors Access to Primary Health Services and Dental Care report, including poor access to services and supports, and information not being shared with caregivers.

The IDI data shows that approximately 70 percent of tamariki and rangatahi in care had been seen by a GP in the twelve months to 30 June 2021.

Response

The findings identified by the Monitor in the Experiences of Care report 2022/23 are similar to the findings from the *Access to primary health services and dental care 2024* report. Some of the themes include:

- a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Government departments in the children system
- continual improvement of data collection, storing and sharing
- continual improvement of guidance, policies and training for kaimahi and caregivers

Commentary on how Oranga Tamariki is working in collaboration with health agencies to improve outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi in care can be found in our response to the Monitors *Access to primary health services and dental care 2024* report. This response notes that:

- We will continue to develop and implement the relational, inclusive and restorative practice approach, including oranga assessment reports and other practice tools. This will support kaimahi to understand health and disability needs within the context of the overall wellbeing of tamariki and whānau
- We will continue to develop the health and disability knowledge and capability of kaimahi through the Disability Strategy
- We will review our self-harm and suicide guidance, then consider the improvements that can be made to reporting at the same time

¹² [Oranga Tamariki Action Plan Implementation - 6-monthly report back](#)

¹³ [Whangārei and Rotorua Fast Track youth offender support | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

Oranga Tamariki continues to recognise the importance and value of collaborating with our Health partners and contributing to Health-led initiatives. Two Health-led initiatives underway are focused on:

- reviewing guidance aimed at supporting parents with mental health and addictions to raise healthy children (Supporting Parents, Healthy Children¹⁴)
- reviewing Let's Get Real, a framework for supporting those working with people and whānau experiencing mental health and addiction needs, to include what Child and Adolescent Mental Health clinicians need to know when working with tamariki in care¹⁵

8. Access to education support continues to be a challenge

Themes identified

The Monitor noted that there have been improvements in the completion of individual assessments of educational needs, with education needs in 92 percent of current plans, up from 89 percent in 2021/22, however, there is a lack of assurance that these needs are being met.

There is a concern that there are difficulties in accessing educational support services, and a continuation from last year's finding that government agencies are not consistently working together to meet educational needs.

The Monitor notes that Oranga Tamariki is not able to report on school attendance and it is a requirement to obtain this information termly (once per term) under the NCS.

The report shows slightly better performance in indicators for educational needs in plans and access to play and activities, but slightly lower performance in 0-5 years enrolment and 6-15 enrolment.

Response

Oranga Tamariki is pleased to see the Monitor has recognised the continual improvement in individual assessments of educational needs. It is also important to recognise that while enrolment in education is a priority, the position of Oranga Tamariki is to enrol 1 to 4 year olds in care in ECE, provided it is in their best interests. This will usually be the case but not always.¹⁶

School attendance

Oranga Tamariki has successfully undertaken a proof of concept (POC) to establish whether data sharing with Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga the Ministry of Education (Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga) for the purpose of receiving school attendance and enrolment data is possible.

It is preferred to receive the data from the central source instead of engaging with schools at an individual level for data reporting consistency, identity matching, inclusion of ECE data, and administrative reasons. We are not in a position yet to establish a regular data share with Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga, and therefore we are not able to provide data on school attendance. We are in the process of finalising our processes and agreements with Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga.

Working collaboratively

Through OTAP, two in-depth needs assessments were carried out, which highlighted various ways Oranga Tamariki and Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga, Ministry of Education can work together to

¹⁴ [Home | Whāraurau \(wharaurau.org.nz\)](#)

¹⁵ [Real Skills | \(wharaurau.org.nz\)](#)

¹⁶ [Supporting tamariki with their education and training needs | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

support tamariki and rangatahi in education, and rangatahi transitioning from care and youth justice. These include:

- Oranga Tamariki and Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga have overlapping responsibilities to meet the education needs of tamariki and rangatahi in care or youth justice.
- Tamariki and rangatahi in care or youth justice need stable, supportive learning environments that support them through transitions.
- There is not enough support for the additional learning needs of tamariki and rangatahi in care or youth justice.
- Caregivers need additional support to ensure that the education needs of tamariki and rangatahi in their care are met.
- Additional supports are needed for rangatahi to be able to access and continue with education. Many rangatahi in this cohort often have difficulties accessing educational and training opportunities. Some require further knowledge of what is available as well as additional support to access educational or training services.
- There are barriers for rangatahi accessing financial support to undertake further education. Rangatahi in this cohort can have difficulties accessing government financial support such as student allowances.
- Additional support is needed to enable rangatahi to access workplace learning opportunities. While education is important to rangatahi, many want to be in some form of paid employment. This is an avenue by which rangatahi could be supported into education and training (and earn while they learn).

Oranga Tamariki and Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga have introduced a Lead Education Advisor for Children in Care role, with a key focus on improving attendance and supporting tamariki and rangatahi in care to re-engage with school if they have been stood down or excluded.¹⁷

9. Oranga Tamariki is starting to improve data collection and monitoring

Themes identified

The Monitor stated that Oranga Tamariki has continued to make improvements in self-monitoring and reporting and provided additional data this year and developed a self-monitoring framework.

The Monitor has noted that whilst internal data gaps have narrowed, they still persist from the Experiences of Care report 2021/22. The Monitor is concerned that Oranga Tamariki was not able to use the Caregiver Information System (CGIS) to generate operational data because it would take “two full reporting periods” to inform performance.

The report notes that the lead indicators are indicative of practice, but there is a lack of visibility for Oranga Tamariki to be able to understand compliance with the NCS.

Response

Oranga Tamariki is pleased to see the Monitor recognise the improvements we have made in self-monitoring, including the development of the self-monitoring framework.

Improving CGIS

The introduction of CGIS provides greater visibility of caregiver information, and supports our NCS objectives, improving visibility of data related to our work with caregivers. CGIS has given our teams visibility of a caregiver’s journey with us from when they first inquire to when they’re approved, their availability, matching caregiver skills to the needs of tamariki or rangatahi, the ability to identify

¹⁷ [OTAP in action: better education support for tamariki in care | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

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learning needs and offer support to strengthen placements (reducing disruptions for tamariki and rangatahi), capturing more thorough information throughout the caregiver lifecycle, and positioning Oranga Tamariki to engage and support caregivers in a greater way.

There is a programme of improvements being made to CGIS, which will allow us to obtain data on a variety of different measures, including:

- welcome to our home visits completed
- support plan goals reports
- post-approval training completed reports
- provisional caregivers that were closely monitored reports

Lead indicators

This year we selected 16 lead indicators to provide a framework for assessing our performance against the National Care Standards in order to demonstrate compliance. These indicators focus on the foundational aspects of practice that, if we get right, position us well to meet our regulatory obligations and the needs and expectations of children in care. While the lead indicators for assessment and planning are not currently highlighted in the 'lead indicators' set, they are still actively monitored and reported by Oranga Tamariki as a core component of our self-monitoring, and the results are described in our 'Compliance report against the National Care Standards'. For example, our compliance report is able to tell us:

- that around 60 percent of tamariki plans set out actions to be taken by partners or other professionals working with te tamaiti, and there was evidence in casework that the social worker was regularly engaging with those partners/professionals to ensure those actions were underway in 79 percent of those cases.
- for 87 percent of tamariki, there was evidence in casework that the social worker was carrying out their actions as set out in the plan (an increase on the 81 percent in the previous reporting period).
- 28 percent of tamariki have some form of education issue that arose during the review period that needed to be addressed. In most cases (86 percent), there was evidence that the social worker took steps, including consultation with others, to address those issues.

We look forward to updating the Monitor on our work programme to address the findings in their report.