Dear [Name],

Thank you for your email of 15 August 2018 to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki), requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. How many registered social workers are presently employed by Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children?

2. How many unregistered social workers are presently employed by Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children?

3. Can an unregistered social worker be the author a formal reports to the family court? (and if they can)...

4. How many formal reports submitted (in the last 12 months) to the family courts have been authored by unregistered social workers?

5. How many formal reports submitted (in the last 12 months) to the family courts have been authored by registered social workers?

6. What are minimum educational qualifications required of an unregistered social worker to function as an employed social worker working for Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children?

7. What are minimum educational qualifications required of a registered social worker to, first, gain a registration and secondly, to function as an employed social worker worker for Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children?

I have addressed parts of your request together where the information requested is related. Please note that I have also renumbered the questions to run from one to seven.
1. How many registered social workers are presently employed by Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children?

2. How many unregistered social workers are presently employed by Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children?

It is Oranga Tamariki policy to employ only registered social workers or those we consider 'registerable'. Our ‘registerable’ social workers are largely comprised of graduates of qualifications recognised by the Social Work Registration Board (SWRB) who are working to attain the level of on-the-job experience the SWRB requires for registration.

Registration of social workers is currently voluntary under the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (SWR Act). The Social Workers Registration Legislation Bill was introduced into Parliament on 9 August 2017 and intends to strengthen the coverage of social work practice under the SWR Act. The Bill will make it mandatory for anyone calling themself a social worker and practicing in New Zealand to be registered by the SWRB.

Oranga Tamariki supports this Bill and it is our view that mandatory registration is necessary to ensure all social workers are competent and fit to practice. We also believe that it will increase the effectiveness and transparency of the way the SWR Act works.


For the purpose of this response, we have interpreted ‘social worker’ to relate to front line social worker roles. This definition includes social workers, senior practitioners and supervisors. As at 30 June 2018, Oranga Tamariki had 1,503 front line social workers. Of these, 71% were registered.

**Table one: Headcount of Oranga Tamariki frontline social workers by registration status as at 30 June 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration status</th>
<th>Oranga Tamariki social workers*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>1,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unregistered</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This represents headcount of employees and is not reflective of full time equivalent positions. The data is for permanent and fixed term staff only, and excludes casual staff, those on leave without pay and contractors.

As noted above, the number of unregistered social workers includes ‘registerable’ social workers, such as recent graduates with recognised social work qualifications working to gain the practical experience that will enable them to be registered.
3. Can an unregistered social worker be the author a formal reports to the family court?

Unregistered social workers are able to provide reports to the Family Court, as registration is currently voluntary. It is Oranga Tamariki practice, however, that only registered social workers provide reports to the Family Court in cases where we have been directed to do so under legislation such as the Care of Children Act 2004 (COCA), the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (OT Act) and the Adoption Act 1955.

For example, under section 132 of COCA, Judges can direct Oranga Tamariki to provide a report to assist the Judge in Family Court proceedings. Section 132 reports are used in cases where there is a dispute about the custody of a child and/or contact and where Oranga Tamariki is not a party to the proceedings. An Oranga Tamariki social worker who is a specialist report writer and/or a senior social work practitioner or supervisor completes these reports. The focus of section 132 reports is determined by a brief from the Judge presiding over the case.

4. (and if they can)... How many formal reports submitted (in the last 12 months) to the family courts have been authored by unregistered social workers?

5. How many formal reports submitted (in the last 12 months) to the family courts have been authored by registered social workers?

To provide you with the data you have requested regarding the number of reports provided to the Family Court by Oranga Tamariki registered and unregistered social workers, our staff would have to manually review individual case files to establish whether a report was provided to the Family Court in each individual case and, where a report was provided, further review would be needed to establish who completed the report and what their SWRB registration status was at that time.

As such, I refuse this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service. I have considered whether we would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested, and have concluded that, in either case, our ability to undertake our work would still be prejudiced.

6. What are minimum educational qualifications required of an unregistered social worker to function as an employed social worker working for Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children?

7. What are minimum educational qualifications required of a registered social worker to, first, gain a registration and secondly, to function as an employed social worker worker for Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children?

It is Oranga Tamariki policy to employ only registered or ‘registerable’ social workers. As the regulatory body responsible for registration of social workers, the SWRB assesses and determines the qualifications necessary to be able to practice as a registered social worker in New Zealand. Current qualifications recognised by the SWRB are listed in

If a recruited social worker holds an overseas qualification and has not achieved registration in New Zealand, they must have completed a SWRB non-binding assessment of their social work qualification. This assessment will determine whether their overseas qualification is equivalent to that of a New Zealand recognised social work qualification. Information on non-binding assessments of overseas qualifications is available on the SWRB website at http://swrb.govt.nz/for-social-workers/new-registrations/non-binding-assessment-of-an-overseas-qualification/.

Oranga Tamariki intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. We will do this by publishing this letter on our website. Your personal details will be deleted and we will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@ot.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. Information about this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by contacting them on 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

Steve Groom
General Manager Public, Ministerial and Executive Services