

Report

Date: 18 June 2020

Security Level: In Confidence

To: Hon Tracey Martin, Minister for Children

File reference: REP-OT/20/6/122

Update on current early intervention work and next steps

Purpose of the report

- 1 This report provides an update on current early intervention work being jointly led by the Child Wellbeing Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, in collaboration with Te Puni Kōkiri.

Executive Summary

- 2 The Child Wellbeing Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, and Te Puni Kōkiri are working together on a collaborative approach to early intervention, with three key strands:
 - **prototyping whānau planning approaches** to meet the needs and aspirations of whānau with children, and by doing so identify the strengths, gaps and weaknesses of existing early interventions at a whānau level
 - supporting iwi and communities to lead **local planning processes** that shape how and when early interventions are delivered, coordinated, and respond to local needs
 - **joining up across government** to both pool information, data, and resources to support the whānau and community-led approaches and respond to the local needs of children, young people, whānau and communities, and learn from these approaches in ways that drive strategic system-level changes to policy and service settings.
- 3 This paper provides an update on all three aspects, and seeks your agreement to include an update on the approach as part of your upcoming Cabinet paper on supporting children and young people of interest to Oranga Tamariki during COVID-19 recovery (to be considered by the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on 22 July 2020).

Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **Note** that the Child Wellbeing Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children, and Te Puni Kōkiri are working together on a collaborative approach to early intervention
- 2 **Note** that in 2018 the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee invited you to report back on the future direction of approaches to coordinate early intervention for children and their families and whānau with early signs of need [SWC-18-MIN-0171 refers]
- 3 **Agree** that the 2018 report back requirement be fulfilled as part of your upcoming Cabinet paper on supporting children and young people of interest to Oranga Tamariki during COVID-19 recovery (to be considered by the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on 22 July 2020).

Anita West
Deputy Chief Executive
Policy and Organisational Strategy
Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children

Date

Hoani Lambert
Tamariki Advocate Deputy Chief Executive
Voices of Children
Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children

Date

Maree Brown
Director
Child Wellbeing Unit
Department of the Prime Minister and
Cabinet

Date

Hon Tracey Martin
Minister for Children

Date

A fundamental re-think of the early intervention system is underway

- 4 In the second half of 2019, you tasked the Child Wellbeing Unit at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet with working alongside Oranga Tamariki to lead cross-agency work to support iwi, Māori organisations and communities to develop local approaches to early intervention, as part of the next stage of policy work under the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy). We are also now working closely with Geoff Short, in his new role as Deputy Chief Executive Policy and Partnerships at Te Puni Kōkiri.
- 5 This followed Cabinet agreement to further develop cross-agency policy work on: reducing child poverty; mitigating socio-economic disadvantage; tackling racism, discrimination and stigma; advancing child wellbeing for those aged 0-6 years, particularly in the first 1,000 days; and extending whānau-centred approaches to improve child and youth wellbeing [CAB-19-SUB-0085].
- 6 Sustainable, locally led approaches are needed for early intervention that bring together the right lead organisations and partners – government and non-government. In many cases, by the time children and young people come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki, a range of government interventions have failed to respond effectively to the needs of their families and whānau.
- 7 Approximately 95,000 children and young people and their families and whānau have multiple, often complex needs – including the combined impacts of poverty, racism and discrimination, long-term unemployment, low income, poor housing, unaddressed physical and mental health needs, alcohol and drug abuse, and family violence.
- 8 These factors present risks for child wellbeing, and (particularly in combination) increase the likelihood that a child or young person will need care or protection or commit a criminal offence. Over 60% of this group are Māori. These factors are likely to be exacerbated by economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and anticipated recession.
- 9 For these children and young people to achieve the outcomes of the Strategy, a fundamental re-think is needed, with specific focus on offering early support to lift the wellbeing of families and whānau, and reducing the number of Māori children and young people who come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki.

We are applying a whānau-centred, iwi and community-led approach

- 10 In line with the principles of the Strategy (particularly that Māori are tangata whenua and the Māori-Crown relationship is foundational; children and young people's wellbeing is interwoven with family and whānau wellbeing; and early support is needed), we are approaching this work at three interconnected levels:
 - **prototyping whānau planning approaches** to meet the needs and aspirations of whānau with children, and by doing so identify the strengths, gaps and weaknesses of existing early interventions at a whānau level
 - supporting iwi and communities to lead **local planning processes** that shape how and when early interventions are delivered, coordinated, and respond to local needs
 - **joining up across government** to both pool information, data, and resources to support the whānau and community-led approaches and respond to the local needs of children, young people, whānau and communities, and learn from these approaches in ways that drive strategic system-level changes to policy and service settings.
- 11 Taking a place-based approach, we are starting to work with iwi and Māori organisations in a small number of areas where low child wellbeing is prevalent, and where participating iwi and community groups have clear mandate from their iwi leadership, strong local relationships and connections, and capacity and willingness to lead the process. We intend to build this up over time as the knowledge develops for wider coverage, including through building on the Children's Teams transitions [SWC-18-MIN-0171 refers].
- 12 Whānau-centred early intervention initiatives fit well with the framework and approach of Whānau Ora and the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies to build whānau strengths. In this

instance, we are prototyping approaches to rebuild capacity and resilience of whānau with children.

- 13 This approach aligns with Cabinet agreement to the recommendations of the 2018 review of Whānau Ora that included:
 - growing investment in the commissioning approach
 - increasing cross-government engagement in Whānau Ora
 - exploring localised commissioning opportunities.
- 14 Utilising the Whānau Ora provider network and approach will give practical effect to Cabinet's agreement to extend whānau-centred approaches to improve child and youth wellbeing [SWC-19-MIN-0085 refers]. The Minister for Whānau Ora has indicated his support for this work.
- 15 In terms of timeframes, we are working at the pace of our partners. We aim to have a number of whānau-led prototypes and community-led planning processes up and running in the second half of this year, with outcomes and proposals for change across all three levels to emerge over the next two years.

Update on prototyping whānau-led approaches

- 16 Following from your initial engagement with the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency (WOCA) Executive in December 2019, officials have been working with WOCA to develop whānau-centred approaches to early intervention through prototyping activities.
- 17 A prototype approach enables us to develop policy in partnership with iwi, Māori organisations, and other government agencies. As we are delivering on whānau needs and aspirations we can test solutions and identify barriers early on. These insights can build an evidence base and enable continuous improvement and momentum for meeting complex needs at a level of detail that's not possible from a central position.
- 18 In March 2020, we agreed a conceptual model, and in April 2020 WOCA presented officials with a proposal to begin whānau-led prototypes **s 9(2)(f)(iv)** spread throughout the North Island. The next step is to determine appropriate working and funding arrangements, so that we can proceed to detailed design.
- 19 The proposal for the prototype is to focus on providers working with whānau with children to avert crisis (for example, by utilising available funding and services to sort out immediate issues and stressors). The providers will use a navigation approach, with kaiārahi working alongside the whānau to build a plan, access the services and supports needed to achieve the goals of the plan, and in doing so stabilise the whānau. Kaiārahi would have access to a flexible fund to support the whānau plans.
- 20 The different cohort possibilities will be worked through as part of the detailed design process. A key principle underpinning the approach is to 'meet whānau where they are'. We may look to prototype different approaches with different cohorts, for example: young mums supporting children from maternity through the early years; whānau where there has been a family violence notification; whānau with young children that have identified reports of concern; or whānau with children at risk of offending.
- 21 Notwithstanding the potential cohort or service pathway, there are number of benefits to working on early intervention with WOCA and its provider network:
 - **rapid and local roll-out and support** – WOCA has identified a mix of rural, urban, and iwi partners that are grounded in their communities, who also have the systems and infrastructure in place to establish this prototype once detailed design is completed
 - **strong experience and trusted relationships** – providers and kaiārahi have the mana and trust of communities to help whānau in complex situations
 - **whānau-led, mana-enhancing and aspirational** – this represents a paradigm shift from ongoing service delivery and supporting needs, to sustainable, whānau leadership.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Timing is dependent on availability of funding, detailed design processes, and local readiness

- 23 We note that there is still a high degree of co-design required to determine the details of the prototypes, which would include an assessment of 'readiness' at a local level. As such, we anticipate that the implementation of the prototypes would need to start small and scale up as readiness increases.

Oranga Tamariki has been working with Te Puni Kōkiri to identify potential funding options to support the prototype activities

- 24 Oranga Tamariki is not yet in a position to make any funding commitments, as we are awaiting decisions from the Minister of Finance on your request to carry forward a 2019/20 underspend in Vote Oranga Tamariki to 2020/21.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

- 26 Further work would also be needed to determine the most appropriate funding mechanism,

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

We are working across agencies to finalise our thinking in this area, and will report back to you and the Minister for Whānau Ora on the best mechanism to be used.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

Update on and next steps for iwi and community-led planning processes

- 28 In addition to the whānau-led prototypes, we have been working with a small number of iwi and community groups to establish locally led planning process for early interventions. Iwi and local communities are best placed to judge what will work, and they have the potential to build stronger and more enduring relationships with children and young people and their families and whānau.
- 29 We are applying a four-stage process for supporting iwi, Māori organisations and communities to lead and shape the local approach:
- **Connect:** initial engagement, and establish intention to work together
 - **Power up:** formalise working arrangements, including funding for capacity or delivery of prototypes
 - **Focus and plan:** understand the current state, develop proposals and test new ideas
 - **Reconfigure and review:** redesign or reshape services to achieve equity and resonance with communities. Continuously review for effectiveness.

30 Following your initial engagement late last year with iwi and iwi social service providers in Rotorua, Whakatāne and Whanganui, officials from the Child Wellbeing Unit and Oranga Tamariki have been working with

s 9(2)(g)(i)

31 This work was interrupted by the travel restrictions imposed during the higher Alert Levels during our response to COVID-19, and as a result of the iwi and provider groups, like us, focusing on ensuring the safety and security of their communities during that time. We are now restarting this engagement.

32 The next stage is to formalise working arrangements in order to get the community planning approaches underway. The following sections outline next steps for each group.

s 9(2)(g)(i)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Community-led planning is resource intensive and will likely require government support

- 39 We have previously advised that these community planning approaches require significant resource from iwi and community, and government support will be needed.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

- 41 Oranga Tamariki will explore funding possibilities within baselines following decisions from the Minister of Finance on the 2019/20 underspend.

Update on joining up across government

- 42 Government agencies and service providers must be integrated and responsive to the prototype and planning activities. This may include configuring, tailoring and redesigning (where appropriate) programmes and services wherever possible, to better meet the needs of families and whānau, as well as helping to identify service gaps.
- 43 Such a reconfiguration would likely include a mix of services funded by a range of social sector agencies. Some aspects will likely require Ministerial decisions before they can be implemented (for example, if they require additional or redistributed funding).
- 44 A systematic approach to early intervention needs to engage a number of government agencies, have the ability for shared governance, responsibility and accountability on specific measures, the ability to set up specific partnerships with iwi and Māori organisations, pool funding, and, over time, develop a shared investment strategy.

A partnered approach between Oranga Tamariki, the Child Wellbeing Unit and Te Puni Kōkiri provides a strong starting point for leadership and collaboration

- 45 Given our shared interests in child and whānau wellbeing, Oranga Tamariki, the Child Wellbeing Unit and Te Puni Kōkiri are working closely together on early intervention. A partnered approach provides a strong starting point for necessary leadership and collaboration across government, and enables a broad approach to enhance child wellbeing.

- 46 There is interest from the Accident Compensation Commission, s 9(2)(f)(iv) in joining this partnership approach.
s 9(2)(f)(iv)

But there is still a way to go

- 47 Many government agencies are working to deliver their services differently and earlier to achieve something different for whānau most at risk of poor life outcomes. There is a shared intention to deliver in ways that build whānau strengths, enable self-determination and uphold the Treaty of Waitangi. Greater cohesion is needed to avoid duplication and gaps.
- 48 Many social service agencies understand that success requires the ability to address the needs of the whole whānau via trusted connectors or providers, but a single agency approach can be limited to address the whole picture. As a result, various programmes are being planned, scaled up or are in place utilising a third-party navigator or connector. Government could work together better to integrate approaches for maximum efficiency and local flexibility.
- 49 In addition to the work outlined in this paper, there is a wide range of work underway across government that seeks to ensure that we provide children with the best start in life. Child development is strongly shaped by the wellbeing of their parents and whānau, and their capacity to provide a loving, nurturing home environment. Quality early health, education and social services and informal support networks also play vital roles. There is significant value in

expanding evidence-based initiatives to support early language acquisition and self-regulation in children, as well as broader steps to support quality early childhood education and health services. In the medium term this could form part of a shared cross-agency investment strategy with the aim of ensuring that all parents and whānau are able to access the knowledge, formal and informal support services, and the material resources needed to help their children thrive – from the antenatal period onwards.

- 50 The Public Sector reforms provide greater impetus and opportunity for agencies to work more collaboratively. We are working in line with the direction of the reforms, and considering how these new approaches could be applied to support the achievement of the Strategy outcomes for tamariki and whānau.

Pooling resources, information and evidence, and connecting our engagement

- 51 To develop a clearer picture of the current landscape of early intervention planning and coordination approaches available at the individual whānau/child plan level, the Child Wellbeing Unit has commissioned an independent report. § 9(2)(f)(iv)
- 52 To build the evidence base and inform the prototyping and planning work, Oranga Tamariki has undertaken research and evaluation to better understand the impacts of three specified early intervention services and models we currently invest in: Family Start, Strengthening Families, and Social Workers in Schools [REP-OT/20/2/014 refers], and is now preparing a synthesis report to identify common themes. § 9(2)(f)(iv)
- 53 While this research and evaluation helps to build the evidence base in relation to specific programmes and services, there is a lack of system level information on the overall effectiveness of government's current investment in programmes and services and other supports to improve parental, family and whānau confidence, knowledge, capacity and resources to support their children and young people (including those intended to alter the behaviour and conduct of the children and young people that has led to a report of concern).
- 54 As previously advised, to ensure government is well-placed to respond to plans and prototypes, further work with other government agencies is needed to understand the sector-wide investment in early intervention services at a national, regional and community level. This work will help to:
- articulate the role Oranga Tamariki investment plays in the system to support its coordination responsibilities, and the respective roles of other agencies
 - understand what similar services and supports are currently offered in communities, schools and homes, and how these interact
 - ensure that, in response to the prototyping activities, there are 'no gaps, no overlaps' in the provision of services and supports for tamariki and whānau at a local level.
- 55 We intend to progress this work with other agencies through the Social Wellbeing DCEs Group, to develop a cohesive approach to understanding current investment in early interventions. Following discussion with the Social Wellbeing DCEs Group, we will work with other agencies and report back to you with more details of timing and scope.

Next Steps

- 56 We will discuss the further work outlined in this paper with Social Wellbeing DCEs, and continue to update you on progress regularly via the Oranga Tamariki Update.
- 57 We propose that your upcoming Cabinet paper on supporting children and young people of interest to Oranga Tamariki during COVID-19 recovery (scheduled to be considered by Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on 22 July 2020) include an update on the overall direction for

early intervention, including the whānau-led prototypes and community planning approaches, and seek an invitation to report back on progress in 12 months.

- 58 This would satisfy the requirement to report back to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on the future direction of approaches to coordinate early intervention for children and their families and whānau with early signs of need [SWC-18-MIN-0171 refers].