

**DECEMBER 2020 UPDATE**

**The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre**



**Vasantha Krishnan**  
General Manager

Kia ora koutou katoa.

Remember all of those exciting plans you made for the year ahead on New Year's Eve 2019? Well, whatever you had planned for this year probably hasn't happened and instead your 2020 has likely been filled with a host of novel experiences: social distancing, lockdowns, quarantines, excessive hand sanitising and (let us not forget) panic buying toilet paper...

This very special and challenging year is nearly behind us. Despite having brought with it some really tough situations, it has also shown how we can work together in unprecedented circumstances. As 2020 comes to a close, I am both uplifted and reassured by all the ways people across the social sector and Aotearoa in general have worked to keep everyone safe, calm and prepared to weather this global crisis.

It's been an amazing privilege to have been part of New Zealand's public

service response to COVID-19 and to see the uptake in interest and understanding of research, data and evidence more broadly during this time. For all of us, we have had to look at developing new ways of working and engaging, many of which have also continued in various formats.

The Evidence Centre has maintained a flow of research publications over the past quarter. We've published reports on everything from proactively supporting children and young people during COVID-19; insights into how to increase attendance at youth justice FGCs; family violence and sexual violence; training and development for caregiving whānau.

Thank you all for your strength, resilience and innovation throughout 2020 and I look forward to seeing you all back in 2021 for what I hope will be a much happier and easier year...

Meri Kerihimete me te Hape Nū Ia,  
Vasantha.

**Our Research Seminars**

**Supporting children and young people through COVID-19 and beyond**

This seminar featured Sonia Sharp and Georgina Gates presenting an evidence scan conducted by Ernst & Young, in collaboration with the Evidence Centre.

Through an evidence scan of eight jurisdictions, this research investigated how care and protection and youth justice systems had responded to the pandemic, focusing on the practical changes and innovations that services providers and agencies put in place and the impact this had on children and young people, their carers/families, practitioners and service providers.

[Watch the seminar here.](#)

**Cumulative jeopardy: in the ongoing challenge of working with maltreating families, what works?**

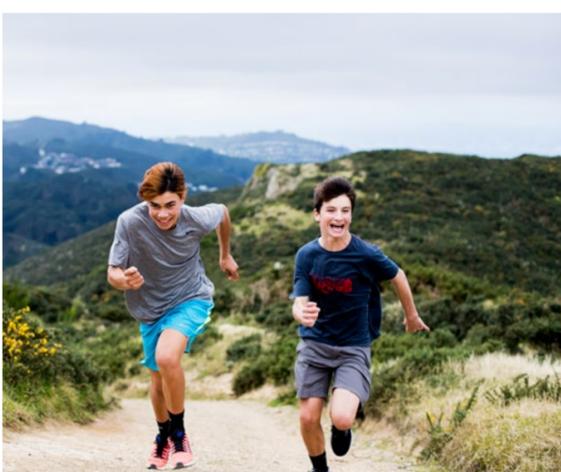
This seminar featured child and family psychologist Sarah Whitecombe-Dobbs presenting research about what works in the ongoing challenge of working with maltreating families.

The presentation answered the question "What evidence is there that parenting interventions conducted with parents who maltreat their children, reduce the incidence of further child maltreatment?" and finished with a discussion about systemic and research approaches that may reduce ongoing child abuse and neglect in Aotearoa.

[Watch the seminar here.](#)

**Our Recent Publications**

*The Evidence Centre works to build the evidence base that helps us better understand wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children, young people, and their whānau.*



**Wrap around a little more**

This study, funded by the Ian Axford (New Zealand) Fellowships in Public Policy and prepared by Rachel Galanter, explores which current early interventions and universal services support the wellbeing of tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau who need additional support.

[Read the report here.](#)

**Ngā Ripo – training and development for caregiving whānau**

The Ngā Ripo – Journeys of Change report was commissioned in late 2017 to evaluate six pilot programmes that provided training and development opportunities for caregiving whānau.

The pilots got underway not long after Oranga Tamariki was established and were one of the first things we did to improve learning opportunities for caregiving whānau.

[Read the report here.](#)

**Therapeutic care evidence brief**

The purpose of this evidence brief is to provide a description of 'therapeutic care' and outline essential aspects of the therapeutic care environment. Therapeutic care incorporates a range of interventions, or 'ways of working', usually stemming from a variety of therapeutic techniques or theories presented and employed in different ways.

[Read the evidence brief here.](#)

**Proactively supporting children and young people during COVID-19**

As countries emerge from the pandemic response, the recovery phase will bring with it complex social and wellbeing needs, triggered by the economic impacts of industry shut-downs and strict quarantine measures.

In this context, an international scan was undertaken to identify how jurisdictions responded to the crisis, and understand what lessons can be applied to efforts in supporting tamariki and whānau through what is anticipated to be a very challenging time ahead.

[Read the evidence scan here.](#)

View [our website](#) to catch up on all of our latest research.

**Increasing victim and whānau attendance at FGCs**

Research suggests that justice and recidivism outcomes are better when victims and whānau participate in justice processes. However, in New Zealand, victim and family/whānau attendances at youth justice FGCs are low.

This report from the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) presents insights from an exploratory work on barriers to FGC participation for victims and whānau, and suggestions on behavioural science informed approaches to increase victim and whānau attendance at Youth Justice FGCs.

[Read the report here.](#)

**Family violence and sexual violence evidence briefs**

Oranga Tamariki is leading two projects as part of the Joint Venture Family Violence and Sexual Violence: services for children and young people who are victims of sexual violence and services for children and young people who display concerning or harmful sexual behaviours (HSB).

The Evidence Centre recently completed two evidence briefs for this work programme.

[Read the evidence briefs here.](#)

**COVID-19 related work**

Researchers have proven over the years that when faced with challenges, ingenuity can yield innovative results. The pandemic has been no exception and the Evidence Centre undertook a number of projects to help better serve the needs of Aotearoa's children, young people and their whānau during this time.

This included monitoring trends and undertaking a range of pulse surveys to understand what was being experienced and how we can support key stakeholders.

Read more about our proactive data releases from [June](#) and [October](#) and find out more about our COVID-19 related pulse surveys [here](#).

**Meet Sarah Gibson: Research Translation and Dissemination Advisor**



**Sarah Gibson**  
Research Translation and Dissemination Advisor

Sarah is Research Translation and Dissemination Advisor for the Evidence Centre, which means that she's responsible for bridging the gap between the Evidence Centre and the outside world. She facilitates opportunities to use research, data, and insight to produce meaningful publications and communications and drives content development and delivery for our key audiences.

She attended the University of Manchester in England and completed her Masters Degree in Political Science and Political Theory. After working in the voluntary sector supporting refugees and asylum seekers to build new lives in the U.K., she moved to Berlin where she lived for five years (yes, she does speak German!) before migrating to Wellington in 2016 and joining the Oranga Tamariki transformation.

Sarah doesn't have a great deal of free time because she has a 10-month-old baby at home, but when she does get to relax she likes to explore Aotearoa's DOC tracks and best restaurants, and run around Wellington's windy waterfront.

*I never thought I'd end up in New Zealand, but here I am! When I first arrived here, I read a chapter from a book called "Watching the Kiwis: New Zealanders' Rule of Social Interaction – an Introduction" which is written by a New Zealand anthropologist who details the rules of social interaction of a New Zealanders... It was an eye-opener!*

*Anyway, I survived the hard bit and now feel pretty at home here with a mince and cheese pie in hand on any given day. I also feel tremendously lucky to have been part of the Oranga Tamariki transformation and continue to contribute to what I see as a huge and compelling challenge for Aotearoa.*