

## The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre



### Kia ora koutou katoa.

Welcome to June's edition of our quarterly newsletter. 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 will continue in various formats.

The Evidence Centre has maintained a flow of research publications over the past quarter.

Since March, we have published a report on Youth Justice that examines the journeys of young people and system trends and reveals some interesting insights.

Early interventions are programmes that work with families/whānau to prevent adverse outcomes. We have published a suite of evaluations, literature reviews and syntheses reports on three key programmes: Family Start, Social Workers in Schools (SWiS) and Strengthening Families. Early interventions

will also be the subject of our next seminar scheduled for mid-July. This will be an invitation-only event due to space restrictions, but we will film the event and publish footage and the slide show.

Working with young offenders can be particularly challenging and in May we published an evaluation of a pilot programme that aims to break the inter-generational cycle of offending, integrating Maori and Pacific frameworks with a Western therapeutic model.

Defining, identifying and reporting on disability is a complex area, but, using data from Statistics NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), we have produced an overview of the children and young people in Oranga Tamariki care with potential indicators of disability.

Take care and thanks as always for your interest in our work.

Noho ora mai, Vasantha.

## 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.*



### YOUTH JUSTICE INSIGHTS – SEPARATING MISCONCEPTIONS FROM FACTS

A short report that explores commonly-posed questions about the youth justice system and presents insights around the seriousness of youth crime, rates of reoffending and the relationship between care and youth justice.

Key findings revealed that youth crime has reduced across all levels of seriousness, and that this is an international phenomenon. Oranga Tamariki intervention was shown to be associated with a reduction in the frequency and seriousness of offending. Read the [full report](#).

### SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS (SWiS)

This research was undertaken to improve our understanding of the benefits that SWiS provides to tamariki and their whānau, from both kaupapa Māori and 'other knowledge' perspectives. A synthesis report, based on the He Awa Whiria methodology, was produced by the Evidence Centre, bringing together the kaupapa Māori research in kura by Te Wāhanga (NZCER), and the English-medium school research by ERO, supported by a literature review and other recent research into SWiS. Overall, findings revealed a service that is responsive, effective and holistic, but which relies on good relationships and strong community connections. The model works well for kura, but struggles with high caseloads, bureaucracy, and needs more recognition of the way SWiS works in kura. Read [the reports](#).

### FAMILY START – PROCESS EVALUATION

This flagship home visiting service has been running since the late 1990s and the process evaluation was conducted to better understand the delivery and implementation of the programme. The service was described by whānau as valuable, but the evaluation revealed that Family Start workers are under pressure. Read [the report](#).

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROGRAMME

This is an inter-agency coordination service for whānau/families with a focus on early intervention. It is a free, voluntary service and is supported by 11 key government agencies, including Oranga Tamariki. The report findings showed that the programme has changed considerably since its inception in 1997, and now operates in different ways in different locations. Read [the full report](#).

### PILOT THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Pae Whakatipuranga | Functional Family Therapy – Cross Generations is a pilot programme that aims to break the intergenerational cycle of offending for young people and improve family wellbeing. Oranga Tamariki has partnered with Police, Corrections and the Youth Horizons Trust and the developers of FFT to design and deliver the pilot. While this early evaluation points to issues with uptake, partner agencies are working well together to make operational improvements. Further work will be published later in 2020. Read the [Wave 1 evaluation report](#).

### NAVIGATING VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION IN FGCs

We produced guidance on how to best manage Family Group Conferences with a blend of virtual and in-person attendees after interviews with FGC coordinators. A set of easy-to-follow suggestions were published to assist court processes during COVID-19 lockdowns. Read [the full guidance](#).

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH IMPAIRMENTS

This report provides an overview of the children and young people with indicators of disability, focusing on those who have been or are involved with Oranga Tamariki using administrative data from the IDI. Read [the full report](#).

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

## Meet Colin Hewat: Lead Advisor, Research & Survey Design Team



Colin is the Lead Advisor of the newly established Research & Survey Design Team within the Evidence Centre. Colin always struggles to answer the standard question, "Where are you from?" He was born in Scotland, but he has a distinctly English accent due to the family moving regularly during his childhood, following his Air Force father from posting to posting across England and Germany. Colin eventually returned to Scotland to study Archaeology at Edinburgh Uni (after watching too much Indiana Jones) but it wasn't long before he was off again working and travelling in the US (mainly in Texas) and Australia. He returned to Edinburgh and kept on digging for a few years (working on sites spanning most time periods: Neolithic, Iron Age, Roman, Medieval and Modern) but then decided on a career change.

Colin did a Master's in Social and Political Studies and some post-grad study in social research methods; this led him to Wales to work for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the Social Surveys Division. After four years at ONS, an opportunity to go on secondment to Stats NZ couldn't be passed up, so Colin upped sticks again and moved to the other side of the world. The two-year secondment turned in to something much more and, after eight years living in Wellington, this is the record for the longest

he's ever lived in one place. With an almost four-year-old son, Milo, to keep him busy and grounded, his roots are now firmly established in Wellington and he's currently applying for New Zealand citizenship. When he's not working or hanging out with his son Milo, Colin enjoys tramping and squash (and tennis), brews beer in his garage and loves a good games night. Colin lives in Lyall Bay but hasn't taken up surfing (yet)!

*"I've always been fascinated by people and I find surveys a great way to gain insights about them. Social surveys have been the focus of all my roles throughout my public sector career to date, from leading the design and development of the UK's Labour Force Survey, to being part of the Questionnaire Methodology and Design team at StatsNZ, to moving to Insights MSD as a survey specialist, then on to the Ministry of Youth Development to run surveys with rangatahi. Survey design is a fascinating combination of psychology, graphic design, problem solving and data science, it's a challenging and every evolving field. I'm passionate about designing functional, insightful and engaging surveys that can help build the evidence base."*

*"When the opportunity came up in the Evidence Centre to establish a specialised survey design team, I had to apply. I was very lucky in securing my dream job and then managing to recruit three amazing individuals to form my team just before the country went into lockdown. The team started on the day New Zealand entered Alert Level 3, 48 hours before we entered Alert Level 4 lockdown, there was just enough time to say 'hello' and pick up laptops before we all had to head home. Since then the team have been busy running a series of COVID-19 pulse surveys and rapidly analysing the data so that the Oranga Tamariki leadership team have insights direct from individuals to help inform their actions. It has been quite a whirlwind couple of months. When things return to normal, we'll be looking to increase awareness of our team's existence and our function across Oranga Tamariki."*