

EVIDENCE CENTRE UPDATE

EVIDENCE CENTRE TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS FOR TAMARIKI

THE ORANGA TAMARIKI EVIDENCE CENTRE



Kia ora koutou katoa.

At the end of last month, New Zealand released its first Wellbeing Budget, building on treasury's Living Standards Framework (LSF), published last December, which introduced a suite of wellbeing measures. Child poverty, domestic violence and mental health have come to the fore as priorities across the social sector, reinforcing the important role of evidence in informing policy and practice to improve outcomes for all New Zealanders. As part of Budget 19, Oranga Tamariki has been invested in to support a range of new and enhanced services for children and young people in care and youth justice systems.

Since our last newsletter, we have published work on a variety of topics including research around how children might be affected by benefit reductions and research on how welfare and tax settings might affect children's involvement with care services. At the end of June 2018, the benefit deductions affected an estimated 2.3 per cent of all children in New Zealand and the proportion of New Zealand children who were ever in families affected was much larger. Read more from the research and how it might support future policy development on our [Latest](#)

[Research](#) page.

Our last Evidence Centre seminar and the ninth in the series featured two presentations; one from Dr. Duncan McCann who works with the Analytics and Insights team within the Evidence Centre at Oranga Tamariki, the other from Dr. Karen Harris, a Senior Advisor in the Voices of Children and Young People team at Oranga Tamariki. Duncan discussed research from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) on children's educational engagement and achievement for those with differing levels of care and protection experience; Karen talked about a project named *The Educational Experiences of Children in Care* which provides insights from children and young people, caregivers, social workers, and educators relating to children's experiences, achievements, engagements, and outcomes in education. Keep an eye out on our webpage for the seminar videos!

As always, we love to hear from our friends across the social sector, so please get in touch if you have any questions or ideas. And keep an eye on our [Research](#) page for regular updates and interesting publications.

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. Recently, we've been focussing on the effects that benefit reductions could have...

How Do Welfare and Tax Settings Affect Children's Involvement with Child Protective Services? A large body of international research has shown that low income increases the risk of poor outcomes for children. This recent report outlines key findings from recent experimental and quasi-experimental welfare and tax policy studies that have examined whether the link between income and child maltreatment is causal, with the aim of informing discussions on welfare policy settings.

A number of the studies described in this brief have found a significant relationship between low income and neglect, but the link with physical abuse or other types of abuse is less clear. There is also some evidence that investment in financial supports for families experiencing material or financial hardship can substantially reduce downstream care and protection related service costs. That said, it is important to note that the majority of families, whether in income poverty or not, do not harm their children – either through neglect or other forms of harm. The impact of lower income may be mitigated by the presence of protective factors, such as social connections and support. Read more from the report [here](#).

Section 70A and Children In October 2017, the incoming Government said that it intended to remove the section 70A benefit reductions that apply when a sole parent supported by benefit does not seek child support. This research brief aimed to support future policy development by addressing the questions such as 'How are children affected by the reductions?' 'How might removal of section 70A reductions impact on children affected by reductions?' and 'How else could claims for child support be encouraged?'

At the end of June 2018, the benefit deductions affected an estimated 2.3 per cent of all children in New Zealand. The proportion of New Zealand children who were ever in families affected was much larger. An estimated 11 per cent of all children were in a family affected by section 70A benefit reductions at some time by age six. Children already at high risk of persistent poverty and adverse childhood experiences are disproportionately affected.

Among other findings, the research brief showed that Section 70A benefit reductions disproportionately affect children already at high risk of persistent poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Children in families affected were more likely to come to the attention of the care and protection system. Read the full report [here](#).

Tim Maloney: Identifying Causal Effects in Research and Evaluation Tim Maloney is Professor of Economics and Co-Director of the Centre for Social Data Analytics (CSDA) at the Auckland University of Technology, and Chief Economist at the Ministry of Social Development (MSD).

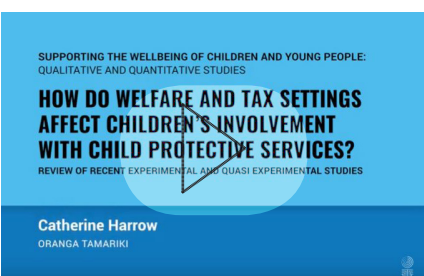
MSD's Client Experience and Service Design teams hosted a trial design training workshop with Tim, in order to explore formal methods for identifying what works and what doesn't work in social policy interventions. Tim shared his knowledge about good practice, highlighting the challenges in achieving robust impact measurement / evidence.

Identifying Causal Effects in Research and Evaluation provided an overview of randomised controlled trials and a range of quasi-experimental approaches that can be adopted to estimate programme effects. Practical examples and actual case studies were used to motivate the potential and drawbacks of each of these approaches. You can read more from Tim's presentations [here](#).

RESEARCH SEMINARS

Supporting the Wellbeing of Children and Young People: Qualitative and Quantitative Studies

This was the eighth in a series of seminars hosted by the Evidence Centre. The event featured two presentations; one from the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, discussing some recent welfare and tax policy studies that examine the link between income and child maltreatment, the other about children and young people's views on what makes a good life, from research conducted by Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) and Oranga Tamariki.



How do welfare and tax settings affect children's involvement with child protective services?

Catherine Harrow is an analyst within the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre. Catherine gave a brief overview of some recent experimental and quasi-experimental welfare and tax policy studies that have examined whether the link between income and child maltreatment is causal. This area has particular relevance for decision-makers who need to understand the potential costs or benefits of different welfare policy settings.



What makes a good life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing.

Donna Provoost is the Director (Strategy, Rights and Advice) at OCC and Kiri Milne is General Manager, Voices of Children and Young People at Oranga Tamariki. Donna and Kiri discussed the report *What makes a good life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing*, which shares the views of over 6000 children and young people, including children and young people in care. It discusses what wellbeing means to children and young people, what helps and what gets in the way. The report was designed to inform the government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, but it has wider implications for all professionals working with children and young people in both the government and non-government sector.

FROM THE ARCHIVE: Thinking about 'child poverty': Concepts, frameworks, measures, trends, and targets.

Dr. Bryan Perry is a Principal Advisor in the Ministry of Social Development's Strategic Issues & Investment team, and has responsibility for MSD's reporting on poverty, inequality and hardship. He was in the core team for developing the 2015 Child Material Hardship Package and worked on the Child Poverty Bill; his knowledge of poverty measures and data is outstanding. You can find his presentation on our website, [here](#).

HAERE RĀ PAUL



Paul Kissack is the Deputy Chief Executive for Policy and Organisational Strategy at Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children. His group includes the Evidence Centre.

Paul joined Oranga Tamariki in April 2017, at the beginning of the new Ministry, on a career break from the UK Civil Service. Prior to joining Oranga Tamariki he was the UK's Director General of Children's Services, based at the Department for Education, and head of the Department's policy profession.

In that role, Paul established the UK's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme – a major programme to trial new approaches to care and protection in England. The evaluation findings from the programme have supported a new, independent 'What Works Centre for Children's Social Care'.

Paul is a career Whitehall civil servant, leading various economic and social policy teams in the UK Treasury and leading the Cabinet Secretary's office. He is due to leave Oranga Tamariki at the beginning of July to return to the UK as his wife Emma takes up a role of Executive Director of Strategy and Governance at UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) – a new body created to establish the best possible environment for research and innovation in the UK. Paul and Emma have three young children.

I feel extraordinarily lucky to have been part of the leadership of Oranga Tamariki over the last two years. Establishing a new organisation, with refreshed values and a clear mandate for change, has provided a rare opportunity to think deeply about the services we provide and the way we work. And throughout that process there has been a very strong appetite from senior officials and Ministers alike that our work should be evidence-informed at every stage.

I'm immensely proud of the work carried out by the Evidence Centre to support the design of our new operating model, and their work has been pivotal to securing \$1.1bn of additional investment over the next four years to deliver that model. I'm also delighted that, while the vast majority of the new funding will rightly go straight to frontline operations, there will also be significant additional funding to undertake research and evaluation over the next four years to ensure we continue to build the evidence base of what works to keep children safe in New Zealand.

I've enjoyed being able to bring some of my international experience to the task over the last couple of years. But much more than that, I've enjoyed having my own views challenged by the New Zealand evidence, and my own ways of thinking tested and changed by beginning to understand kaupapa Māori approaches.

I've also been hugely impressed by the strong data infrastructure in New Zealand. The Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) is an exceptionally powerful tool, allowing researchers and policymakers to answer questions quickly that I know would be unanswerable in the UK – or take a lot longer. And this ability to link data will prove invaluable as the Evidence Centre continues to support the Government's wider child wellbeing agenda.

So, I'll be leaving New Zealand in July with some useful lessons and new ways of thinking to take back to the UK, and feeling very optimistic about Oranga Tamariki and its research partners, and evidence-based policy-making here. I wish you all well on the journey ahead.