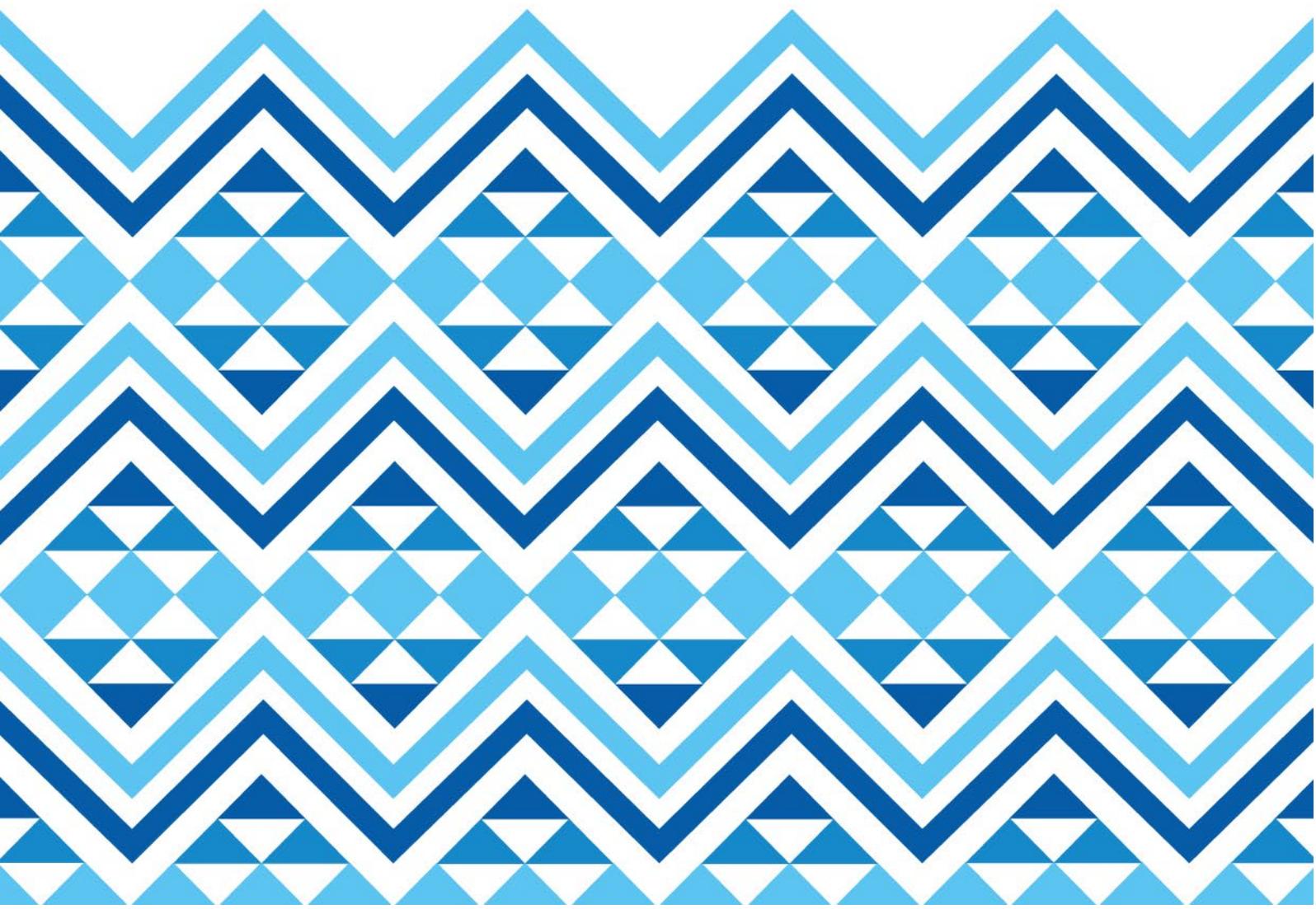


Long-term insights briefing

How can we better prevent, respond to, and enable healing from, child maltreatment between now and 2040?



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Introduction

What is a long-term insights briefing (LTIB)?

All government departments are required to produce a LTIB at least once every three years under Section 8 of the Public Service Act 2020¹.

The purpose of a LTIB is to make information publicly available about medium- and long-term trends, risks, and opportunities that affect or may affect New Zealand and our society. Long-term insights briefings encourage aspirational thinking and provide opportunity for inter-agency collaboration and engagement with key stakeholders and partners.

LTIBs are independent of Ministers and government policy. They are developed to generate discussion on the selected topic with the intention that this may inform strategic future direction.

Our topic question

We consulted with the public on our proposed topic between 1 November and 29 November 2024. The topic question, which we initially proposed and sought feedback on was:

“How can we improve the early identification of, and support for, children and young people at risk of maltreatment between now and 2040?”

The public consultation has informed this draft briefing, and we have tried to reflect and integrate what we heard from the responses we received into this LTIB draft. We subsequently revised our topic question.

Our revised topic question is:

“How can we better prevent, respond to, and enable healing from, child maltreatment between now and 2040?”

Definitions of each of these terms are provided below.

The rationale for why we selected this topic and a summary of the feedback we received on the proposed topic can be found in Appendices 1 and 2 (refer pages 27 and 32)

Key definitions

“We” is defined as all New Zealanders. It includes all the relationships and supports that surround tamariki and children, their parents, and caregivers, whānau and families.

“Maltreatment” includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to family violence.

¹ Public Service Act 2020 (N.Z.). [Public Service Act 2020 No 40 \(as at 16 December 2024\)](#), [Public Act 8 Long-term insights briefings – New Zealand Legislation](#)

“Prevention” is all New Zealanders taking every opportunity to avoid and address (further) harm to children and young people.

“Respond” can be defined as taking any form of action against child maltreatment. There are many actions an individual might take to respond to child maltreatment which might include: checking in with whānau or a neighbour, seeking advice from a teacher or GP, or seeking advice or support from community or statutory services. While individuals have an important role at the community level to respond to child maltreatment, it is important to acknowledge the system infrastructure that facilitates a response. ‘Response’, therefore, includes early intervention, support (not necessarily exclusive to formal or specialist services), and policies and resources that enable and build capacity to respond².

“Enable healing” is “a focus on supporting recovery, redress and restoration”, or the “spaces and supports that enable healing, recovery and restoration for people, families, whānau, and communities, trauma and violence informed ways of working” (p. 35)³. We have chosen a definition of healing borrowed from Te Tokotoru Prevention and Wellbeing model, which has been used to inform Te Aorerekura | National Strategy for the Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence.

How you can become involved

We are seeking your feedback on this draft briefing. We have developed some potential future scenarios and options in relation to our topic, based on the responses from the first round of public consultation on topic selection, available evidence, and key documents. We would value your insights and perspectives on these options and scenarios and have provided some questions, as prompts, to help guide your feedback on pages 7, 13, and 23. You can choose which questions to respond to and how you format your response.

Feedback can be sent via email to LTIB@ot.govt.nz. Please submit your feedback by 5pm on Monday 12 May 2025.

² Hagen, P., Tangere, A., Beaton, S., Hadrup, A., Taniwha-Paoo, R., & Te Whiu, D. (2021). *Designing for equity and intergenerational wellbeing: Te Tokotoru*. [TeTokotoru October InnovationBrief 2021.pdf](#)

³ Te Puna Aonui. (2021). *Te Aorerekura: The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence*. <https://tepunaaonui.govt.nz/assets/National-strategy/Finals-translations-alt-formats/Te-Aorerekura-National-Strategy-final.pdf>

About this briefing – understanding trends, drivers, and future options

Future options

We have developed some options as to how we might better prevent, respond to, and enable healing from, child maltreatment. These options have been informed by the trends, drivers, and scenarios outlined within this briefing, as well as the responses from the first round of public consultation, 7 Questions Futures Technique with Oranga Tamariki leaders, available evidence, and key documents. These options are not definitive solutions, rather, they are provided to generate discussion.

We are interested in your vision of what prevention of, response to, and healing from, child maltreatment looks like in 2040 and how that could be achieved.

Trends

There are numerous trends that are likely to impact how child maltreatment is prevented and responded to between now and 2040. We have chosen to focus on several key, evidence-based, trends that were highlighted through the feedback we received through the public consultation. These trends are:

- the increasing use of technology
- increasing pressures within the children's workforce
- demographic change, and
- devolution (i.e., the transfer of power and resources to communities).

Drivers

Socio-economic disparity⁴ and social cohesion (or lack thereof) have been selected as the main drivers of maltreatment for the purposes of this briefing, based on their evidenced relationship with child maltreatment and because public consultation respondents considered these factors the 'most likely'⁵ to have an impact on the early identification of, and support for, children and young people at risk of maltreatment (previous topic question). These drivers are also likely to impact on the prevention, response, and healing from, child maltreatment (revised topic question).

Scenarios

We used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory model⁶ to consider the interaction between the drivers and trends on 'whānau, family, and households', 'local and community environments', and the 'broader socio-political environment' in relation to the prevention of, responses to, and healing from, child maltreatment.

The model proposes that the development of a child is centred within a system of multiple levels of relationships.

⁴ This was termed as socio-economic disadvantage in the public consultation. This has been reframed as socio-economic disparity to be less deficit based.

⁵ 5-point scale – very unlikely to very likely

⁶ Bronfenbrenner, U. 1989. Ecological systems theory. *Annals of Child Development*, 6, 187- 249.

The use of the ecological model highlighted different roles within the system and enabled us to identify challenges, opportunities, and options between now and 2040. The output from this exercise informed four futures thinking exploratory scenarios (refer pages 23 - 25 and Appendix 3).

How can we better prevent, respond to, and enable healing from, child maltreatment between now and 2040?

Below are some options we, as New Zealanders, government, and Oranga Tamariki, could focus on to realise the opportunities and meet the challenges identified through this briefing. These options are not mutually exclusive and could be reinforcing. For example, a long term multi-partisan strategy and action plan could include devolution and workforce components. We welcome your feedback on these options including their scope and rationale.

Consultation questions on the options

Thinking about the below options:

1. a) What does success look like in relation to prevention, response, and healing between now and 2040?
b) What changes would be required to enable this?
c) What existing or planned work could be leveraged?
2. a) Are there any other topics that are important to consider?
b) If yes, what are they, and why are they important?
3. Given the role of the LTIB is to be aspirational and future focused, what other opportunities are there for the prevention of, response to, and healing from, child maltreatment?

Option	Detail
<p>1) Develop and agree a long term (e.g., 10-15 year), multi-partisan strategy and action plan, with legislative backing including duties for different government agencies that acknowledges the importance of children and prioritises their needs and wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing child maltreatment is too big a challenge for one agency or Minister. We need a multipartisan approach involving government, iwi, and community ownership. Although Oranga Tamariki leads the children's system, it is not solely responsible for the safety and wellbeing of New Zealand's children. Legal obligations on the other agencies within the children's system need to be strengthened⁷. Sustained change will not come from reactionary responses to specific events, but by the development and implementation of evidence-based, long-term strategies. Greater cross-agency commitment (and oversight) is needed to prioritise child safety and wellbeing, including through joint commissioning, standardisation of commissioning processes to minimise service gaps and duplication within and across regions, and to support mutually beneficial reporting and shared accountabilities within communities.⁸
<p>2) Address the root causes of child maltreatment through a balance of reinforcing universal, targeted,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence is clear that child maltreatment is symptomatic of deep-seated societal problems, such as material deprivation⁹ and the ongoing impact of colonisation (e.g., intergenerational trauma).¹⁰ Responses to child maltreatment tend to focus on the presenting issues of the day, rather than addressing the underlying causes. Successive governments have failed to consistently invest in children at a societal level, resulting in tamariki (and their whānau) experiencing housing instability and inequitable access to primary

⁷ The New Zealand Police, the Ministries of Health, Education, Justice, Social Development and Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children have legislated responsibilities under the Children's Act 2014.

⁸ For example, this could include:

- commissioning networks of partners to assess Reports of Concern, which is a growing practice around the motu and needs investment to be normalised, including to assess the need and resources in the whānau of relevant tamaiti and make sure integrated supports are in place for the tamaiti to be safe and well
- pooling funding through cross-government and placed-based 'backbones' to reduce unnecessary procurement, contract management and reporting costs, such as the Manaaki Tairāwhiti Iwi-led partnership and South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board.

⁹ Skinner, G. C., Bywaters, P. W., & Kennedy, E. (2023). A review of the relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect: Insights from scoping reviews, systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Child Abuse Review*, 32(2), e2795.

¹⁰ Keddell, E. (2023). Recognising the embedded child in child protection: Children's participation, inequalities and cultural capital. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 147, 106815.

<p>community-led and whānau-centred approaches.</p>	<p>health care, education, and social supports. Addressing basic needs, such as poverty, job, and housing insecurity, can remove service access barriers and provide opportunities to heal.¹¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Poverty indicators and reduction targets shine a useful light, but there seems to be a lack of public understanding of how different lead measures that government can more directly control can influence these (lag) headline measures. There is also discord about government's role relative to personal responsibility of parents and caregivers, and of their family and whānau and wider communities. • Evidence also suggests government should support social cohesion, noting our increasing diversity and understanding of intersectionality (including of ethnicity, gender, and disability identities).
<p>3) Improving public awareness and understanding, through education and social action campaigns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be greater acknowledgement of the scale and impact of child maltreatment, amongst the New Zealand public. • A prevention campaign to raise awareness, understanding, and empathy could be undertaken to provide information on how to identify child maltreatment, how to respond appropriately, and where to go to for advice. This could be done via e-learning and social media platforms to educate parents, caregivers, and the public about child maltreatment prevention. • Concerted effort is also needed to emphasise the value of children, and to educate parents, caregivers, and the public about healthy parenting techniques. Social norms need to change so that informal help seeking, and support are normalised within communities.
<p>4) Grow collective workforce capability for the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term funding cycles for local initiatives may prevent sustainable, long-term solutions. They prevent the embedding of services within a community that are essential for the requisite building of trust and rapport. Stronger, more trust-based relationships between families and service providers may encourage early intervention and reporting of maltreatment. • Similarly, competitive funding models that pit services against each other can result in a duplication of services within a geographic region and disincentivise collaboration, learning and development. Greater cross-agency oversight, a commitment to joint commissioning, and the standardisation of

¹¹ For example, integrated supports could be prioritised for children who are under 5 and their family or whānau, especially for in utero–1-year-olds whose family or whānau experience significant poverty-related stress (such as mental health and addiction challenges, housing transience and/or a parent in prison) without further stigmatising or marginalising anyone.

	<p>commissioning processes may prevent the duplication of services and inconsistent standards of practice across regions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater emphasis on informal supports with a focus on prevention, early intervention, and healing may relieve pressure on formal services and remove the need for statutory intervention. Consideration and funding should be given to support environments that strengthen communities and nurture families and whānau, preventing the escalation of potential issues and enabling healing. • The Oranga Tamariki Practice Approach encompasses aspects of trauma-informed care, such as providing children and young people with opportunities to participate in decisions about things that affect them and drawing on multiple sources of information to develop an understanding of the situation. However, Oranga Tamariki and other children’s agencies could become more trauma responsive as organisations by integrating knowledge of trauma into policies and processes, thereby avoiding retraumatising those we work with. The adoption of a kaupapa Māori approach to support tamariki and whānau to heal from trauma, would fulfil an important function in preventing intergenerational harm¹².
5) Devolution to shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objective of devolution is to increase the freedom that people have to live the lives they value and have reason to value¹³. • Partnership and devolution of power are essential in enabling community led solutions that create the requisite conditions for healing to occur. Devolution would require a response from the whole children’s system, not just Oranga Tamariki. The needs and aspirations of tamariki and whānau who come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki are too complex and dynamic for one agency to support (unless they can offer a very broad spectrum of timely supports available, similar to Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies). • A devolution strategy could:

¹² Buchanan, C. (2022). *Linda Tuhiwai Smith: Healing our trauma*. E-tangata. [Linda Tuhiwai Smith: Healing our trauma | E-Tangata](#)

¹³ Fry, J., & Wilson, P. (2023). *Let it go: devolving power and resources to improve lives*. [Let it go: Devolving power and resources to improve lives - NZIER working paper 2023/02](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ replace current funding models to provide local entities with greater flexibility in how funds are allocated, spent and monitored (e.g., via mutually beneficial reporting on contracts for shared outcomes), ensuring they can tailor services to whānau needs. ○ invite iwi and other NGOs that have the capacity and desire to support their hapū and iwi to grow whānau resilience to safeguard child wellbeing and prevent maltreatment to present proposals to assume responsibility for caring for whānau with the stated objective that all proposals that meet certain criteria will be accepted and funded. ○ for other organisations, invite proposals with appropriate transitional funding to help local organisations build infrastructure and capacity to test and refine devolution models, gain experience and demonstrate success, including networks to facilitate knowledge sharing and support among local agencies. ○ conduct comprehensive reviews of existing laws and regulations to identify and amend provisions that hinder devolution, including as part of pilots that take a ‘learn by doing’ approach to implementation, and with legal advisory services to help local agencies navigate new regulatory landscapes and ensure compliance during transition. ○ develop clear governance frameworks that define roles and responsibilities to maintain coordination of outcomes and shared accountability at both local and central levels (e.g., placed-based Joint Ventures under the Public Service Act overseen by a lead minister with a broad portfolio/s and delegations to regional Associate Ministers).
<p>6) Improve technology system interoperability, including data sharing and data quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interoperability and sharing of systems and data, including use of all-of-government platforms, supports more timely, efficient and effective policy and operation decisions. There are opportunities to better integrate children’s agencies data into the Social Investment Agency’s regional data explorer, to improve transparency for communities. ● Ensuring future platforms and systems protect Māori data sovereignty, with a focus on ethical data use and privacy, is essential. This may involve integrating principles into future systems that safeguard Māori data and ensure it is used in ways that benefit Māori communities. ● We will need to develop tailored digital inclusion strategies to ensure all communities can access and benefit from digital services. This includes partnering with Māori digital experts to ensure services are culturally appropriate and effective. Digital literacy programmes specifically aimed at

	<p>Māori and minority communities could be a beneficial investment in ensuring equitable access to digital services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any technology options would need to manage the risk that technology-based monitoring tools (including AI) infringe on the privacy and autonomy of families, potentially leading to over-surveillance. • The way in which we understand the needs and opportunities for people with multiple ethnicities is constrained by the way in which data is measured, collected, analysed, and interpreted. Policies and strategic decisions are, therefore, not informed by or reflective of the experiences of an increasingly diverse New Zealand. • The focus of the LTIB of the Ministry for Pacific Peoples in 2023 was improving data equity¹⁴. A similar focus on how we better measure the growing intersectionality of identities within New Zealand e.g., ethnicity, gender, disabled identities would enable a better response to the needs of tamariki, whānau, children, and families and ensure their voices are informing and influencing our policies and practices.
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¹⁴ Ministry for Pacific Peoples. (2023). *Improving Pacific data equity: Opportunities to enhance the future of Pacific wellbeing*. [2.-Appendix-1-The-Ministrys-LTIB-Pacific-Data-Equity-Opportunities-to-Enhance-the-Future-of-Pacific-Wellbeing.pdf](#)

Key trends that create opportunities and challenges for the prevention of, response to, and healing from, child maltreatment

Consultation questions on the trends

Thinking about the below trends:

4. What opportunities and challenges do these trends present in relation to the prevention of, response to, and healing from, child maltreatment (and the options presented on pages 8 – 12)?

Increasing adoption of technology

Technology is defined here as the use of digital channels, AI and automation, and cloud-based services¹⁵. The Covid 19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies¹⁶ globally. This trend has continued in New Zealand, with every measure from the Stats NZ Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Supply Survey showing an increase in 2023, compared to 2021¹⁷.

While an increase in the adoption of technology has facilitated greater networking and data sharing opportunities, it has also necessitated policies and processes to ensure data and information remains secure.

We heard the concerns of our public consultation respondents regarding the use of technology, particularly the use of predictive analytics to enable early identification of children. We acknowledge the threat to Māori data sovereignty, the ethical and privacy risks associated with increased use of technology, and the potential for stigmatisation and harm.

We have chosen to focus on the increasing adoption of technology, as we believe it is important to appropriately address these concerns and look for solutions, given the inevitability of this trend.

In addition to the above concerns, there are other challenges presented by the increasing adoption of technology. Some of these include:

- Families in low-income or rural areas may lack access to data or the necessary infrastructure, limiting their ability to benefit from digital services.
- Technology-based monitoring tools may infringe on the privacy and autonomy of families, potentially leading to over-surveillance.

¹⁵ Digital.govt.nz. (2021). *Report summary: Digital insights from the public service response to COVID-19*. [Report summary: Digital insights from the public service response to COVID-19 | NZ Digital government](#)

¹⁶ O'Toole, C., Schneider, J., Smaje, K., & LaBerge. (2020). How COVID-19 has pushed companies over the technology tipping point – and transformed business forever. *McKinsey & Company*. [COVID-19 digital transformation & technology | McKinsey](#)

¹⁷ Stats NZ. (2023). *Information and communication technology supply survey: 2023*. [Information and communication technology supply survey: 2023 | Stats NZ](#)

- Predictive systems may unintentionally stigmatise or target vulnerable communities if biases exist in the algorithms.
- Technology can't fully replace the relational aspects of social services and child protection work.
- Online disinformation and misinformation about parenting practices may mislead families and increase risk to child safety and wellbeing.

The increasing adoption of technology offers significant opportunities for individuals and families, communities, and government.

- Online resources, campaigns, and e-learning platforms can educate parents, caregivers, and the public about child maltreatment prevention and healthy parenting techniques.
- Virtual parenting programmes and support groups foster stronger family bonds and reduce isolation.
- Social media can disseminate prevention messages widely and quickly.
- Telehealth services and online counselling provide accessible support to families in remote or underserved areas.
- Technology facilitates collaboration between children's agencies, schools, healthcare providers, and law enforcement through secure data sharing.
- Digital platforms and secure data sharing can also support:
 - transparency of community level needs and aspirations and visibility of iwi, NGO and community organisations' capability, capacity and coverage
 - matching of support services to whānau needs and aspirations (e.g., by community leads / coordinators / navigators)
 - tracking of changes, and service gaps and failings, experienced by whānau to support regional and system level commissioning (e.g., to develop capability).

Increasing workforce pressures

The children's workforce is defined as kaimahi who are responsible for the protection and wellbeing of children and young people and, therefore, have statutory obligations under Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the Children's Act 2014.¹⁸

The sustainability of this workforce is uncertain due to reduced capacity and capability. In 2023, the Social Workers Registration Board conducted a survey to understand the current composition of the social work workforce ($N = 4,411$).¹⁹ The corresponding report identifies workforce sustainability as a key challenge facing the profession.

¹⁸ Oranga Tamariki. (2023). *Dame Karen Poutasi Review: Overview of the current children's system in New Zealand New Zealand*.

¹⁹ Social Workers Registration Board. (2023). *Annual Social Worker Workforce Report 2023: A high-level overview of the social worker workforce in 2023*. [SWRB Annual WF Survey Report 2023.pdf](#)

Sixteen percent of respondents planned to leave the profession within the next five years, citing retirement (46%), burnout (34%), or high workload (28%) as the main reasons for their departure. This equates to a potential loss of over 1,400 social workers, nationwide, over this period. This is salient as one in three survey respondents (32%) said they focussed on care and protection, including child, youth, and whānau support work.

The attraction, growth, development, and retention of the Oranga Tamariki practice workforce is the focus of the draft Social Work and Professional Practice 'Workforce Strategy' 2025-2028 currently under development.

Workforce capacity was identified by over 80% of public consultation respondents as likely or very likely to impact on the early identification of, and support for, children and young people at risk of maltreatment.

These concerns regarding capacity were echoed in the qualitative responses, coupled with comments relating to reduced capability, such as a lack of training and support, and to a chronic lack of funding.

Workforce capacity has very real implications for the reported quality of relationship between tamariki and rangatahi and their social workers. Te Tohu o te Ora, the survey of tamariki and rangatahi experiences in care, shows evidence of increased wait times and reduced support from social workers²⁰. One in ten tamariki and rangatahi said that their social worker did what they said they would do 'not much of the time/never' and one in four tamariki and rangatahi feel they can talk to their social worker 'not much of the time/never'

The Ministry of Social Development produced a gaps report as part of Actions 29 and 30 of Action Plan 1 of Te Aorerekura | National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence (FVSV)²¹. The report thematically analysed public feedback to identify FVSV service gaps.

The report highlights the limited capability of the FVSV workforce for children and young people, including a lack of early intervention and long-term healing services, a lack of specialised sexual violence services, the need for improved training for the workforce to recognise and respond appropriately to signs of FVSV. Work to address training gaps has already begun through the Te Aorerekura Entry to Expert Capability Framework E2E and the Specialist Family Violence Organisational Standards. 'Strengthening our workforce' is one of seven key focus areas for the current Action Plan (2025-2030)²².

²⁰ Oranga Tamariki. (2023). Te Mātātaki 2023 report. [Te Mātātaki 2023 | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

²¹ Ministry of Social Development. (2024). A report outlining family violence and sexual violence service gaps in New Zealand. [Report-on-gaps-in-FVSV-services-April-2024.pdf](#)

²² Te Puna Aonui. *Te Aorerekura Action Plan 2025-2030*. [Second-Te-Aorerekura-Action-Plan.pdf](#)

Exposure to family harm is one of the reasons contributing to an assumed higher level of case complexity for social workers²³. This is coupled with increased rates of substance use and declining mental health²⁴. Higher and more complex caseloads impact on the wellbeing of kaimahi and their ability to provide timely and effective support to vulnerable families. Increasing case complexity and load presents a significant challenge to the sustainability of the children's workforce as highlighted by the Social Workers Registration Board survey²⁵.

Opportunities presented by increasing workforce pressures include:

- Devolvement of services to community and iwi organisations resulting in greater responsiveness, noting these organisations also face capacity issues.
- Technology (e.g., AI, telehealth) could be used (safely) to relieve pressure on professionals.

Challenges presented by increasing workforce pressures include:

- Heavy workloads reduce relational approaches to working with whānau.
- Increasing case complexity results in less emphasis on prevention.
- Impact on staff wellbeing
- Short-term funding cycles for local initiatives may prevent sustainable, long-term solutions.

Demographic change

In the 5 years to December 2024, the New Zealand population has grown from 5,040,400 to 5,356,700. This rise is projected to continue over the next eight years, with a projected increase to between 5.28 to 5.85 million by 2033²⁶. With this growth comes greater diversity. The Māori and Pacific Peoples populations are among our fastest growing²⁷. The Māori population increased by 14.4%²⁸ and Pacific Peoples population increased 15.9 %^{29, 30} compared to 6.3% for the general New Zealand population between 2018 and 2023. Migration is also driving the ethnic diversification of New Zealand society. Over 135,000 people, mostly from India, the Philippines, China, South Africa, and Fiji, migrated to New Zealand in the year to July 2023³¹.

²³ Oranga Tamariki. (2022). *Complexity of tamariki interacting with Oranga Tamariki – reports of concern compared to entries to care*. [Complexity of tamariki interacting with Oranga Tamariki – reports of concern compared to entries to care | Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children](#)

²⁴ Ministry of Health. (2024). Mental health and problematic substance use. [Mental Health and Problematic Substance Use | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

²⁵ Social Workers Registration Board. (2023). *Annual Social Worker Workforce Report 2023: A high-level overview of the social worker workforce in 2023*. [SWRB Annual WF Survey Report 2023.pdf](#)

²⁶ Stats NZ. (2023). Population estimates and projections. [Population estimates and projections | Stats NZ](#)

²⁷ Stats NZ. (2023). *First results from the 2023 Census – older, more diverse population, and an extra 300,000 people between censuses*. [First results from the 2023 Census – older, more diverse population, and an extra 300,000 people between censuses | Stats NZ](#)

²⁸ Stats NZ. (2023). *Māori*. [Māori, Place and ethnic group summaries | Stats NZ](#)

²⁹ Stats NZ. (2023). *Pacific Peoples*. [Pacific Peoples, Place and ethnic group summaries | Stats NZ](#)

³⁰ People can identify with more than one ethnic group, and are counted for each group they identify with

³¹ Stats NZ. (2023). *Record net migration gain*. [Record net migration gain | Stats NZ](#)

Increasing ethnic diversity creates some tension for how the needs of all groups are acknowledged and met, while recognising the status of Māori as tangata whenua and promoting rangatiratanga.

The 2023 Census shows that 1 in 20 adults identify as LGBTIQ+³². The Youth19 study estimated that 10% of young people in the general population identify as LGBTIQ+ and questioning but this number increases to 15% of those involved with Oranga Tamariki³³.

The population of New Zealand continues to age³⁴. The median age of the population increased to 38.1 years in 2023, compared to 37.4 years in 2018³⁵. Although the economic impacts of an aging population have been considered^{36, 37}, the implications relating specifically to children have either not been thoroughly explored or are not publicly accessible.

It is estimated that 10% of children and 18% of adults in New Zealand are disabled. This equates to 17% of the total population or 1 in 6 New Zealanders who are disabled³⁸. Methodological differences in how the data was collected in the last iteration of the *Household Disability Survey*, from which these statistics were taken, prevent us from making definitive predictions as to whether the prevalence rate of disability is increasing. However, there is a strong correlation between age and disability³⁹, an increasing awareness and acceptance of neurodivergence⁴⁰ and the impact of Covid-19⁴¹. The implications of this are that it is likely that a greater number of people will need more care and support to meet their needs in the future. This is particularly salient for children, 76% of whom have unmet needs. For over half of disabled children currently enrolled in school (51%), the unmet need was education related (e.g., teacher aide, assistive technology)⁴².

These changing demographics will require existing services to adapt to become (more) accessible and appropriate, while creating a demand for new community-led and whānau-centred approaches.

³² Stats NZ. (2024). 2023 Census shows 1 in 20 adults belong to Aotearoa New Zealand's LGBTIQ+ population (corrected). [2023 Census shows 1 in 20 adults belong to Aotearoa New Zealand's LGBTIQ+ population \(corrected\) | Stats NZ](#)

³³ King-Finau, T., Archer, D., Fenaughty, J., Sutcliffe, K., Clark, T., & Fleming, T. (2022). The health and wellbeing of takatāpui and rainbow young people who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki. The Youth19 Research Group, The University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

³⁴ Stats NZ. (2022). *National population projections: 2022(base)–2073*. [National population projections: 2022\(base\)–2073 | Stats NZ](#)

³⁵ Stats NZ. (2023). *2023 Census population counts (by ethnic group, age, and Māori descent) and dwelling counts*. [2023 Census population counts \(by ethnic group, age, and Māori descent\) and dwelling counts | Stats NZ](#)

³⁶ Yadav, U. (2023). *How is our ageing population shaping the future workforce?* [How is our ageing population shaping the future workforce? | BERL](#)

³⁷ van Rensberg, M., Domican, S., & Kennedy, A. (2021). *The economic impacts of an ageing population in New Zealand*. The Treasury. [Background Paper for the 2021 Statement on the Long-term Fiscal Position: The Economic Impacts of an Ageing Population in New Zealand - September 2021](#)

³⁸ Stats NZ. (2025). 1 in 6 New Zealanders are disabled. [1 in 6 New Zealanders are disabled | Stats NZ](#)

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ Sutherland, D. (2024). More adults are being diagnosed as neurodivergent. Here's how employers can help in the workplace. [More adults are being diagnosed as neurodivergent. Here's how employers can help in the workplace | News | Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington](#)

⁴¹ Ferrari, A. J., Santomauro, D. F., Aali, A., Abate, Y. H., Abbafati, C., Abbastabar, H., ... & Bell, M. L. (2024). Global incidence, prevalence, years lived with disability (YLDs), disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs), and healthy life expectancy (HALE) for 371 diseases and injuries in 204 countries and territories and 811 subnational locations, 1990–2021: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021. *The Lancet*, 403(10440), 2133-2161.

⁴² Stats NZ. (2025). Disabled people need more care and support. [Disabled people need more care and support | Stats NZ](#)

Opportunities presented by demographic change include:

- Policy shifts toward supporting multigenerational households may emerge, benefiting families where older relatives live with and support younger generations.
- Initiatives that recognise and value traditional caregiving practices that strengthen kinship relationships and keep tamariki with their whānau.
- Increasing diversity engenders greater understanding, facilitating new and inclusive perspectives and policies.

Challenges presented by demographic change include:

- Misinterpretation of cultural practices by children’s agencies can lead to unjustified interventions or failure to identify maltreatment.
- Lack of cultural competence or understanding of diverse populations among professionals may result in inappropriate or ineffective responses.
- Newly arrived immigrant families may lack extended family or community support, leaving them vulnerable to stressors that increase the risk of child maltreatment.

Devolution

Devolution describes the shifting of decision-making, resourcing, funding, and service provision away from centralised control and closer to whānau. The objective is to increase people’s freedom to live the lives they value. This creates an environment that enables self-determination, the exercising of tino rangatiratanga, and greater responsiveness and transparency⁴³. The OECD has reported a trend toward the increased sharing of responsibilities over the last 10 years⁴⁴. New Zealand’s Public Service Act 2020 reinforces this trend by fostering a spirit of service to the community and requiring Chief Executives to build capability for partnering with Māori.

It is also supported by the Crown settling historic Treaty claims through cultural and financial redress, which has built Māori capability and capacity to partner with the Crown including through local co-governance arrangements⁴⁵.

The public consultation on the LTIB topic question asked respondents the extent to which different groups⁴⁶ should have responsibility for identifying and supporting children and young people at risk of maltreatment. Respondents were asked to rate this on a scale of 0 (no responsibility) to 4 (full responsibility). Nearly all groups were attributed some level of responsibility (rating 1 or higher), however, 5% of respondents ($n=2$) felt local government has no responsibility.

⁴³ McIlraith, J. (2021). *Decentralisation*. Oranga Tamariki. [Decentralisation-Evidence-brief.pdf](#)

⁴⁴ OECD. (2019). *Making decentralisation work: A handbook for policy-makers*. [g2g9faa7-en.pdf](#)

⁴⁵ Public Service Commission. (2025). *Public Service Act 2020 reforms*. [Public Service Act 2020 reforms - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission](#)

⁴⁶ Groups included “Whānau and Family”, “Iwi and Hapū”, “Individuals, Parents and Caregivers”, “Community”, “Central Government”, and “Local Government”

Respondents felt that 'Whānau and Family', 'Individuals, Parents, and Caregivers', and 'Iwi and Hapū' have the highest levels of responsibility with nearly all respondents (93%) attributing a responsibility rating of 3 or 4 to these groups. Within these groups, respondents placed emphasis on the responsibility of whānau and family, with 76% of respondents feeling they should have full responsibility, followed by individuals, parents, and caregivers (74%, full responsibility) and iwi and hapū (67%, full responsibility).

While all respondents attributed some level of responsibility to community (rating 2 or higher), there is a lower proportion of respondents feeling they should have full responsibility (63%). Half of respondents (51%) felt central government should have full responsibility, while 7% provided a rating of 1 for central government responsibility.

Local government had the lowest responsibility rating, with 40% of respondents feeling they have full responsibility, driven by the highest levels of respondents rating 0 (5%) or 1 (15%) for local government responsibility.

These findings were supported by the qualitative responses, which stressed that the responsibility for identifying and supporting tamariki and rangatahi sits within communities. Iwi, hapū, and hapori are considered best placed to support and improve wellbeing outcomes for tamariki and whānau.

This sense of collective responsibility for tamariki is echoed in the findings of the *Engaging all New Zealanders* survey. This nationwide survey was completed by 1,597 people, aged 18 years and over, in early 2022^{47, 48}. Seventy percent of participants agreed that everyone had a responsibility to care for tamariki and rangatahi in their community, while 47% felt a personal responsibility to support the tamariki and rangatahi in their communities, with whom they had no personal relationship. In the past 12 months, 45% of participants worried about a child or young person (who was not their own) and wanted to help. Of those who were in this situation, 72% talked to someone about it and/or took action without involving formal services.

The feedback we received through the consultation process and the findings from the *Engaging all New Zealanders* survey indicate a strong inclination towards devolvement, consistent with the global trend. This presents a significant challenge for government to trust and facilitate locally led decision-making and initiatives.

Similarly, the summary of feedback received from interviews conducted in October – December 2024 of an Oranga Tamariki internal report, pending publication, highlights examples of positive community support and the need for better preparation and support for whānau caregivers.

⁴⁷ Oranga Tamariki. (2023). *Engaging All New Zealanders survey report*. [Children In New Zealand Communities - Survey Findings 2022](#)

⁴⁸ The findings in this report were weighted to the total New Zealand population according to region, age, gender and ethnicity using 2018 Census data

Opportunities presented by devolution include:

- Localised services build stronger, trust-based relationships between families, whānau, and service providers, which may encourage early and more effective intervention and reporting of maltreatment.
- Families and whānau may feel more comfortable engaging with providers who understand their needs within their community and cultural context.
- Local authorities and organisations can respond more quickly and effectively to emerging issues, adapting services to meet specific needs in their area.

Challenges presented by devolution include:

- Long-established centralised models inevitably create institutional inertia. Changing mindsets and practices to embrace local decision-making is a significant challenge. In particular:
 - centralised funding models, with fixed criteria or ring-fenced funds, limit the flexibility needed for regional equity and local tailoring.
 - legislative and regulatory structures may be designed around centralised control, making it difficult to legally and smoothly transition to a more decentralised model.
 - shifting decision-making authority raises questions about who is responsible for outcomes and how to maintain clear lines of accountability.
 - Current accountability systems discourage learning and would need to be redesigned to support this under devolution
- Central government agencies can fear loss of control, while local entities can be wary of increased responsibility without commensurate support because:
 - devolution will result in fragmented service delivery. That is because people are different and have different needs that can be addressed in different ways. Consistency should be looked for in outcomes, not inputs and outputs.
 - local agencies or communities may not have the financial or human resources required to manage and deliver complex social services.
 - without clear legal and policy parameters for devolution, local actors might hesitate to take on new responsibilities due to uncertainties around roles, funding stability, and long-term support.
- With multiple local agencies involved, coordination and information sharing may become difficult, leading to service gaps and the potential for children to fall through the cracks if agencies fail to collaborate effectively.

What drives child maltreatment?

A driver is a root cause of a risk or protective factor i.e., factors known to increase the risk of, or protect against, child maltreatment.

Socio-economic disparity

- Definition: Socio-economic disparity can be defined as the unequal distribution of resources, resulting in individuals having reduced access to these resources, leading to a reduced ability to participate fully in society⁴⁹. Living in disadvantaged social and economic circumstances has adverse outcomes such as poverty, financial stress, and unstable housing⁵⁰, and can contribute to intergenerational harm. We also know, through the Microsimulation Model, that socioeconomic factors have an impact on disparity for tamariki Māori in the care and protection system⁵¹.
- Impact/ implications: Evidence shows that socio-economic disadvantage is associated with many factors that increase the risk of child maltreatment, including child poverty⁵².
- Level of un/certainty: Socio-economic disparity is a consequence of how income and wealth are re/distributed by government. How this will evolve between now and 2040 is highly uncertain. For example, it could be impacted by a significant economic shock or successive government policy changes, including how economic supports are targeted to disadvantaged families.

Social cohesion

- Definition: Social cohesion (or inclusion) means the degree to which communities ensure all people feel recognised and accepted; are free from prejudice and discrimination; and can meaningfully participate in society⁵³.
- Impact/ implications: Evidence shows that living in a community with strong social cohesion has a protective effect against child maltreatment⁵⁴.
- Level of un/certainty: Social cohesion is said to have declined in New Zealand since the Covid-19 pandemic⁵⁵ and within the global context of increased political populism⁵⁶.

⁴⁹ University of Sydney. (n.d.). *Economic inequality and disadvantage*. [Economic Inequality and Disadvantage - Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences](#)

⁵⁰ Bywaters, P., Skinner, G., Cooper, A., Kennedy, E., & Malik, A. (2022). *The relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect: New evidence*. Nuffield Foundation. [RelationshipBetweenPovertyChildAbuseandNeglect_Report.pdf](#)

⁵¹ Oranga Tamariki. (2020). *Factors associated with disparities experienced by tamariki Māori in the Care and Protection System*. [Factors associated with disparities experienced by tamariki Māori | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

⁵² Skinner, G. C., Bywaters, P. W., & Kennedy, E. (2023). A review of the relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect: Insights from scoping reviews, systematic reviews and meta-analyses. *Child Abuse Review*, 32(2), e2795.

⁵³ Ministry of Social Development. (2019). Social inclusion in New Zealand: Rapid evidence review. [Social inclusion in New Zealand](#)

⁵⁴ Te Puna Aonui. (2021). *Te Aorerekura: The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence*. [https://tepunaaonui.govt.nz/assets/National-strategy/Finals-translations-alt-formats/Te-Aorerekura-National-Strategy-final.pdf](#)

⁵⁵ NZ Royal Commission COVID-19 Lessons Learned | Te Tira Ārai Urutā. (2024). *Whitiki New Zealand: Lessons from COVID-19 to prepare New Zealand for a future pandemic Summary report Pūrongo Whakarāpopoto*. [Summary Report | Covid-19 Lessons Learned](#)

⁵⁶ Wajner, D.F., Destradi, S., Zürn, M. (2024). The effects of global populism: assessing the populist impact on international affairs, *International Affairs*, 100(5), 1819 - 1833, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaae217>

- This has been exacerbated by the proliferation of online disinformation/misinformation and harm (via digital and social media)⁵⁷, resulting in racism and discrimination felt by Māori, Pacific Peoples and Ethnic Communities⁵⁸. The influence of global trends, technology, societal norms, and government regulation and investment mean the evolution of social cohesion between now and 2040 is highly uncertain.

⁵⁷ Gluckman, P., Spoonley, P., Bardsley, A., Poulton, R., Royal, T. C., Sridhar, H., & Clyne, D. (2023). Addressing the challenges to social cohesion. Kōi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures. [Addressing the challenges to social cohesion – Kōi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures](#)

⁵⁸ Ministry for Ethnic Communities. (2024). Ethnic evidence: Increasing the visibility and value of New Zealand's diversity. [MECEthnicEvidenceReport2024.pdf](#)

Scenarios

Key drivers that have high levels of uncertainty and impact can be used to generate possible future scenarios, and are therefore a useful tool for policy development. The following quadrant (Figure 1) illustrates four possible scenarios based on our two drivers: socio-economic disparity (ranging from low to high) and social cohesion (ranging from low to high).

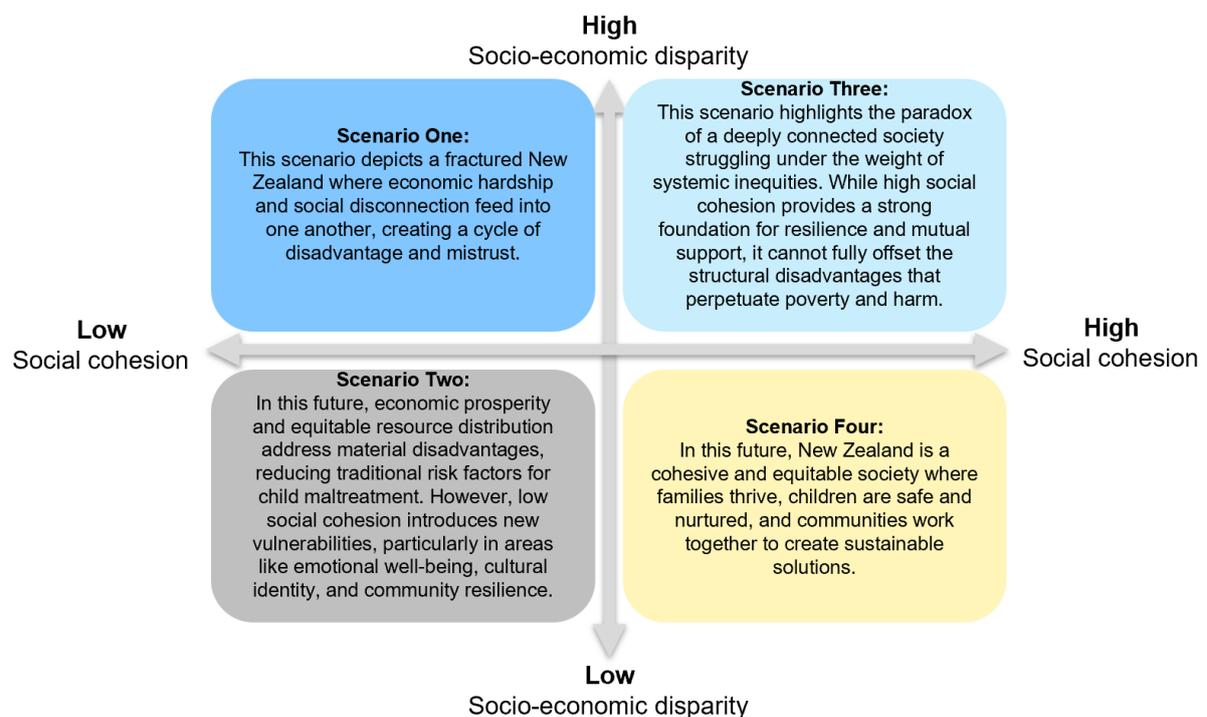
The four quadrants display the different combinations of these factors, visualising how varying levels of socio-economic disparity and social cohesion may result in differing scenarios. These drivers interact with the future trends to create challenges and opportunities, distinct to those scenarios. A high-level summary of the scenarios, including a comparison of the challenges and opportunities (refer Table 1) is provided below. For more detail, please refer to Appendix 3 (pages 38 - 41).

Consultation questions on the scenarios

Considering the trends outlined on pages 13 - 20:

5. Which scenario(s) is the most desirable and why?
6. Which scenario(s) is the most likely and why?
7. Thinking about one of the scenarios:
 - a) what are the opportunities for this scenario? And what changes would be required to realise the opportunities?
 - b) what are the challenges for this scenario? And what changes would be required to meet the challenges?

Figure 1. Scenario-generation quadrant



Scenario 1

Scenario one is characterised by low social cohesion and high socioeconomic disparity.

- Entrenched poverty and inequality
- Fragmented social bonds
- Worsening child wellbeing
- Weak and distrusted institutions
- Rising social tensions
- Environmental and climate vulnerability

Scenario 2

Scenario two is characterised by low social cohesion and low socioeconomic disparity.

- High material wellbeing
- Fragmented social bonds
- Decline in community participation
- Challenges to child and family wellbeing
- Cultural disconnection
- Increased reliance on formal system

Scenario 3

Scenario three is characterised by high social cohesion and high socioeconomic disparity.

- Strong community networks
- Persistent economic inequality
- Resilience in the face of hardship
- Challenges to systems and institutions
- Rising pressure on younger generations
- Mixed outcomes for children

Scenario 4

Scenario four is characterised by high social cohesion and low socioeconomic disparity.

- Equitable economic conditions
- Strong social connections
- Thriving children and families
- Inclusive and culturally responsive systems
- Community and civic engagement
- Resilience to future challenges

Table 1. Comparison of the opportunities and challenges in the four scenarios

Scenarios	One: Low social cohesion, high socio-economic disparity	Two: Low social cohesion, low socio-economic disparity	Three: High social cohesion, high socio-economic disparity	Four: High social cohesion, low socio-economic disparity
Opportunities	<p>Local leaders and organisations could step in to address gaps left by failing institutions, fostering small-scale social cohesion.</p> <p>Targeted government interventions in housing, education, and income support could begin to alleviate economic pressures.</p> <p>Māori and Pacific communities could drive cultural reconnection and resilience, even in the absence of broader social cohesion.</p>	<p>With strong economic foundations, resources can be directed toward prevention including mental health, early childhood education, and family support programs.</p> <p>Technology can be leveraged to build new forms of social connection and support, especially for isolated individuals.</p> <p>Transparent and culturally responsive government policies can compensate for weakened social cohesion by building trust in formal systems.</p>	<p>High social cohesion creates opportunities for collective advocacy to push for systemic change, such as housing reform or equitable resource distribution.</p> <p>Iwi led and community driven initiatives could address gaps left by government systems, creating innovative models for supporting families.</p> <p>Cultural practices and values may mitigate some of the mental health and social consequences of economic disadvantage.</p>	<p>Reduced material hardship and strong social bonds allow children to grow into thriving adults, breaking cycles of disparity.</p> <p>New Zealand could serve as a global model for balancing economic equity with social cohesion, attracting talent and investment.</p> <p>Collaborative approaches to environmental, economic, and social challenges ensure long-term sustainability.</p>
Challenges	<p>Cycles of poverty and trauma may persist, affecting future generations.</p> <p>Rising societal distrust and fragmentation could lead to increased crime, violence, and social unrest.</p> <p>Cultural disconnection and inequality may erode New Zealand's identity as a fair and inclusive society.</p>	<p>Without strong social bonds, children may experience emotional neglect or a lack of meaningful relationships, impacting long-term wellbeing.</p> <p>Social isolation and disconnection could lead to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness despite material security.</p> <p>Weakened cultural and community ties may lead to a fragmented society with diminished social resilience in the face of crises.</p>	<p>Without systemic intervention, social cohesion alone cannot address root causes of poverty and disparity.</p> <p>Over reliance on informal support networks risks overwhelming communities already stretched thin.</p> <p>If economic disparity worsens, even high cohesion may falter under prolonged stress, leading to frustration and disillusionment.</p>	<p>High social cohesion and economic wellbeing may lead to complacency, with less urgency to address emerging risks or inequalities.</p> <p>Even in an ideal scenario, some groups (e.g., recent immigrants, people with disabilities) may risk being left out if inclusivity efforts are not actively maintained.</p> <p>Communities may overburden themselves with support responsibilities, risking burnout if formal systems fail to keep up.</p>
Conclusions	<p>Breaking out of this trajectory would require a combination of systemic reforms, community-led initiatives, and renewed efforts to rebuild social cohesion. Without intervention, the long-term effects could be deeply damaging for children and future generations.</p>	<p>To thrive in this scenario, New Zealand would need to invest in fostering social connections, strengthening cultural practices, and creating inclusive spaces for collective engagement.</p>	<p>Realising the potential of such a future would require integrating grassroots strengths with systemic reforms that address the root causes of socio-economic disparity.</p>	<p>Vigilance would be needed to maintain these conditions, for high social cohesion and low socioeconomic disparity to continue enabling New Zealand to be a resilient, inclusive, and thriving nation.</p>

Conclusion

Government agencies are required to publish a LTIB at least once every three years. We have chosen to focus on *'How can we better prevent, respond to, and enable healing from, child maltreatment between now and 2040?* The LTIB provides an opportunity for individuals and organisations to be a part of the conversation on this topic, thereby influencing the direction of future decision-making. The LTIB also provides an opportunity for Oranga Tamariki to gather valuable perspectives and insights to enable us to better understand and address the critical issues.

Public consultation on this draft will close on Monday 12th May 2025. The feedback we receive will be incorporated into the final version of the LTIB. This document will then be presented to parliament by the Minister for Children and published by the end of July 2025.

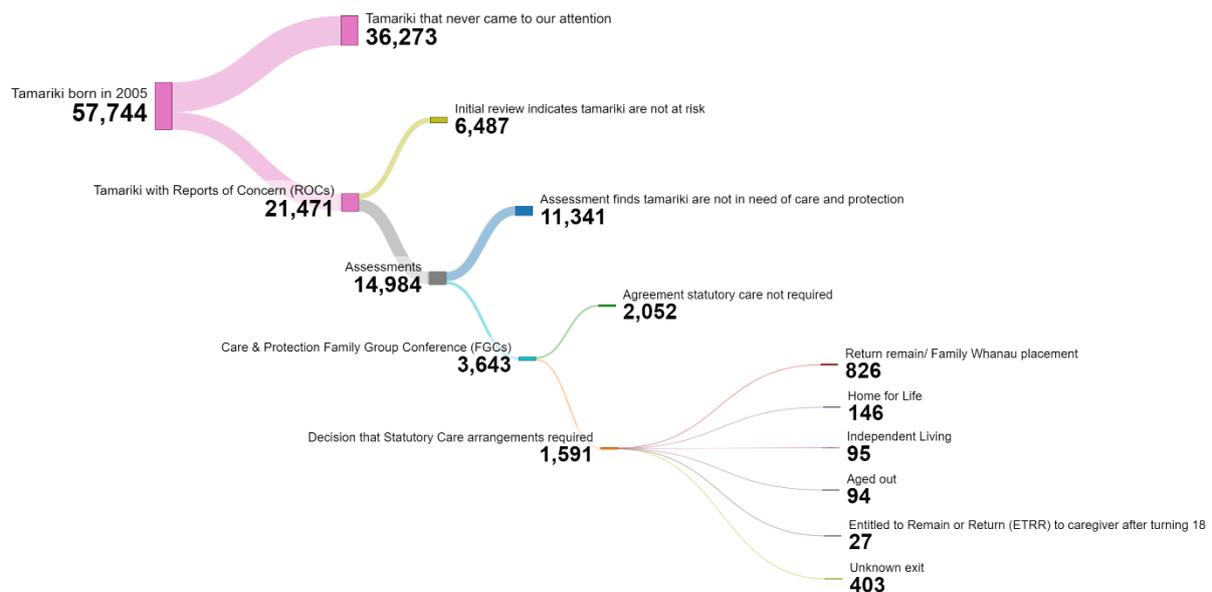
Appendix 1 – Why we chose this topic

Too many children and young people in New Zealand experience maltreatment

Understanding the extent of harm experienced by tamariki and rangatahi in New Zealand is complex, involving multiple data sources. These data will always underestimate the scale of the problem, as many cases of maltreatment, particularly neglect, are unreported and, therefore, not captured in official statistics⁵⁹. However, what is well understood is that child maltreatment is a significant and long-standing problem in New Zealand, the consequences of which prevent children from achieving their potential. For example, Oranga Tamariki had some level of engagement with almost two out of every five children born in 2005 by the time they turned 18-years-old⁶⁰.

Figure 2 (below) shows the level of involvement children born in New Zealand in 2005 had with Oranga Tamariki until age 18- years (noting this does not include children with youth justice involvement).

Figure 2. Care involvement for children born in 2005⁶¹



What happens early in a child's life, particularly in the first 1,000 days, has a significant impact on their lifelong outcomes⁶². The long-lasting and negative effects of child maltreatment can have a devastating impact on the wellbeing of both the child and their family.

⁵⁹ Oranga Tamariki. (2021.). *At a glance: Prevalence of harm to children in New Zealand*. [At-A-Glance-Harm-to-Children-in-New-Zealand.pdf](#)

⁶⁰ Oranga Tamariki. (2024). *Strategic Intentions, 2024/25-2029/30*. [Oranga Tamariki Strategic Intentions 2024/25 - 2029/30](#)

⁶¹ *ibid*

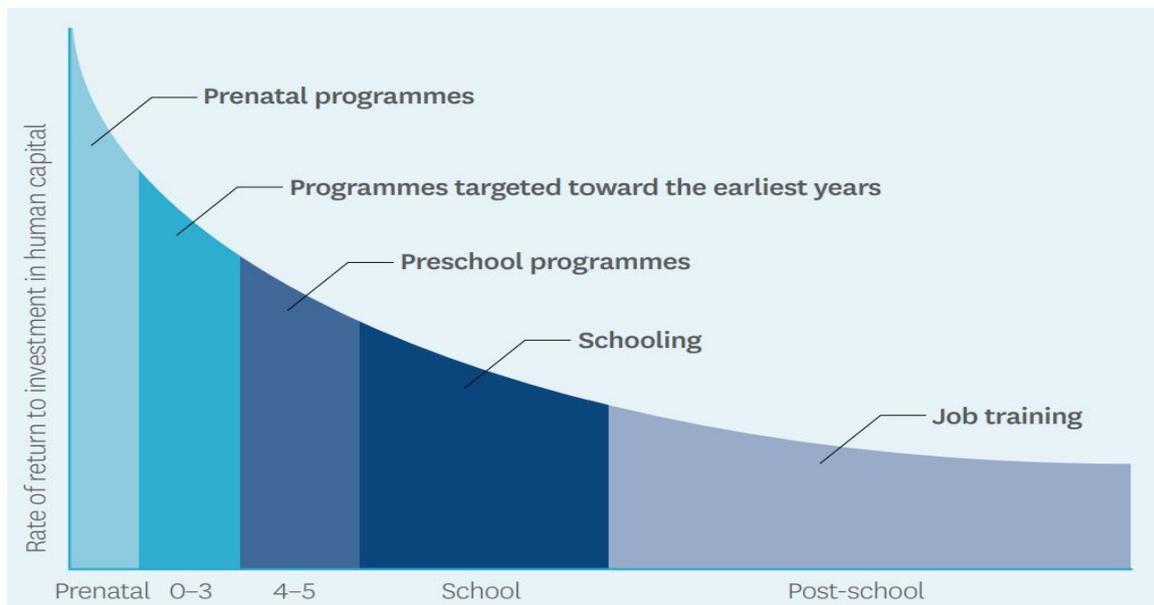
⁶² Draper, C. E., Yousafzai, A. K., McCoy, D. C., Cuartas, J., Obradović, J., Bhopal, S., ... & Okely, A. D. (2024). The next 1000 days: Building on early investments for the health and development of young children. *The Lancet*, 404(10467), 2094-2116.

These effects include poor educational attainment, reduced earnings, poor mental and physical health, and increased likelihood of intergenerational maltreatment⁶³. Opportunities for early intervention and response are, therefore, essential for preventing future risk of harm⁶⁴.

Responding early to child maltreatment results in benefits to individuals, communities, and New Zealand

Effective prevention and response to child maltreatment has significant benefits for individuals, families, whānau, and communities, resulting in social returns on investment and reductions on future costs for government. The powerful economic impetus to act early to reduce intergenerational disadvantage has been widely demonstrated. The below graph (Figure 3), adapted from the work of Heckman⁶⁵, illustrates that investment in the early stages of a child's life results in reduced social spending and greater economic benefits.

Figure 3. Return on early investment in human capital



The Microsimulation Model is an analytical tool developed by Oranga Tamariki, using data from the Statistics NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), that facilitates an understanding of child wellbeing in the context of their family, and involvement by social sector agencies.

⁶³ Madigan, S., Cyr, C., Eirich, R., Fearon, R. P., Ly, A., Rash, C., ... & Alink, L. R. (2019). Testing the cycle of maltreatment hypothesis: Meta-analytic evidence of the intergenerational transmission of child maltreatment. *Development and psychopathology*, 31(1), 23-51.

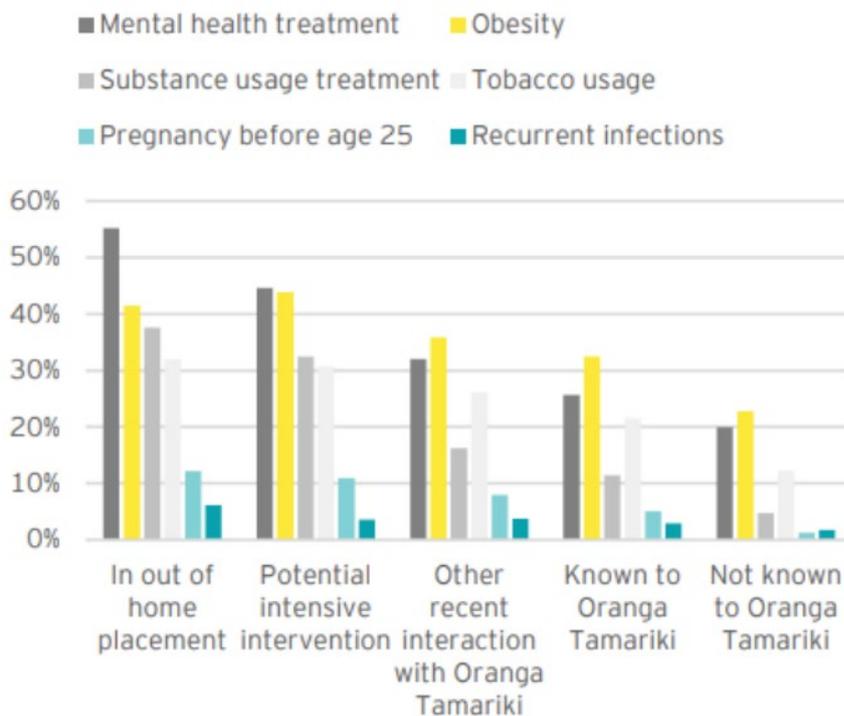
⁶⁴ Lambie, I. (2018). *It's never too early, never too late: A discussion paper on preventing youth offending in New Zealand*. Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor

⁶⁵ Heckman, J. J. (2022) as cited in Morreau, J. & Low, F. (2023). *Early investment: A key to reversing intergenerational disadvantage and inequity in New Zealand New Zealand*. Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures. [Koi-Tu-Early-investment-Evidence-Brief.pdf](#)

The model can be used to observe actual, and simulate possible, pathways children’s lives can take to understand future service use and outcomes, and to inform planning and investment decisions. The model can also be used to inform social investment decisions by modelling the impact of interventions and how they flow through the life-course.

We know from the Microsimulation Model that the average estimated future government spend for children who have had a statutory care and protection intervention by the age of 5 years is \$420,392. This is 3x more than the average estimated future government spend for children who have never had a statutory care and protection intervention (\$129,504)⁶⁶. This shows how children who experience more intensive levels of statutory care and protection can have a greater number of interactions with social services across their life, highlighting the importance of early response. Figure four also illustrates the adult health outcomes experienced by those with different levels of statutory involvement.

Figure 4. Projected lifetime incidence rates of adult health outcomes for 14 – 16-year-olds, segmented by Oranga Tamariki operational area⁶⁷



⁶⁶ EY. (2025). Social investment blueprint: Embedding a social investment process within Oranga Tamariki

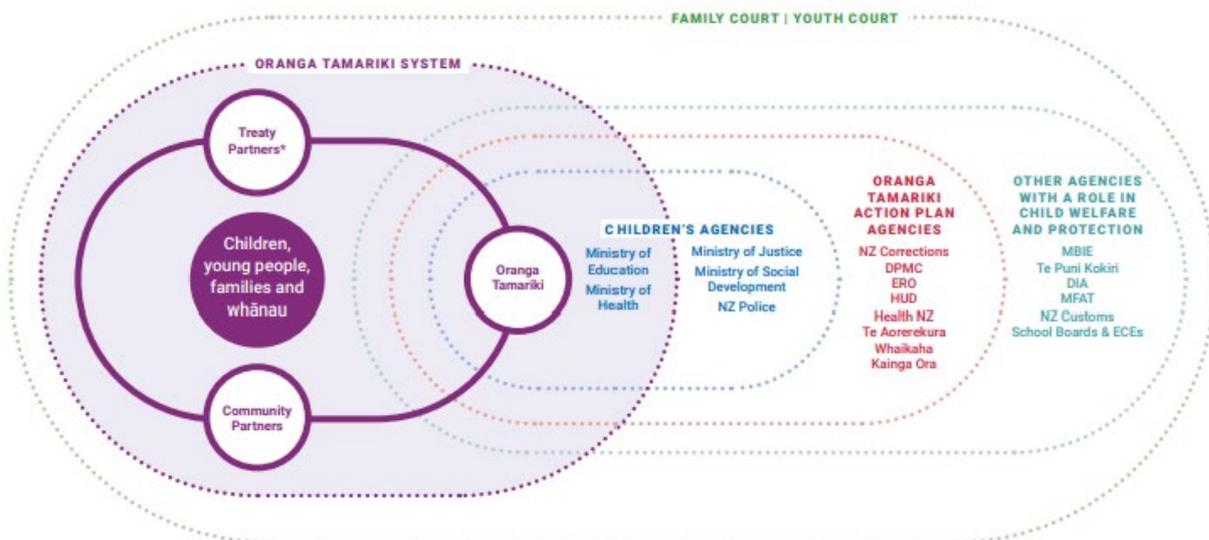
⁶⁷ EY. (2025). Social investment blueprint: Embedding a social investment process within Oranga Tamariki



Oranga Tamariki has a key responsibility to lead the children's system

Thinking about 'How can we better prevent, respond to, and enable healing from, child maltreatment between now and 2040' is important for us to deliver on our role as the government's lead on the children's system, including to coordinate the development of the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan under Part 1 of the Children's Act 2014. The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan requires children's agencies⁶⁸ to work together to achieve the outcomes of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy for the children of interest to Oranga Tamariki. Figure five provides a simplified view of the interrelationships that make up the children's system in New Zealand.

Figure 5. The New Zealand children's system



* We define our Treaty Partners as Māori whānau, marae, hapū, Iwi and Kaupapa Māori groups and organisations.

This topic will also help us to realise our international obligations to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and is a demonstration of our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, specifically the principle of protection. It is particularly important for the Crown to honour our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, given the over representation of tamariki Māori at every level of the care and protection and youth justice systems.

The prevention of, response to, and the facilitation of healing from, child maltreatment are areas in which Oranga Tamariki are already involved, to some degree. For example, The Oranga Tamariki Strategy, delivery plan, operating model, current performance focus, and long-term outcomes have an increasing focus on prevention and early intervention. This includes commissioning and supporting locally led innovation through nine Enabling Communities prototypes and ten Strategic Iwi Partnerships (six are also Enabling Communities prototypes).

⁶⁸ The New Zealand Police, and the Ministries of Education, Social Development, Health, and Justice. We also work with other agencies that work with children including the Department of Corrections, Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, Kainga Ora – Homes and Communities, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

These initiatives are intended to prevent children from coming to our attention and needing a formal care response, and support children in care. However, one of the purposes of the LTIB is to generate aspirational and future focused thinking. While this topic builds upon existing work, Oranga Tamariki sees significant opportunities for children in the areas of early intervention and prevention, and we are interested in suggestions on how these areas might develop and grow in the next 15 years.

In addition, the safety and care of tamariki and rangatahi is something that is not the sole responsibility of Oranga Tamariki; it concerns all New Zealanders. Oranga Tamariki have selected this topic as we would like all New Zealanders to play a role in addressing child maltreatment, and would like to hear their views on how this could best be achieved between now and 2040.

Appendix 2 – Feedback on the proposed topic

What did people think about our proposed topic?

We consulted with the public on our proposed topic between 1 November and 29 November 2024. Our proposed topic was: *How can we improve the early identification of, and support for, children and young people at risk of maltreatment between now and 2040?*

The feedback from the public consultation showed strong support for the proposed topic (95% [$n = 44$] of survey respondents considered this a suitable topic).

Analysis of public consultation responses

Consultation was done via an online survey, which asked for feedback on:

- the suitability of the topic,
- the opportunities and barriers to early risk identification and effective responses,
- the extent to which different groups in society have responsibility for identifying and supporting children and young people at risk of maltreatment, and
- the future trends and factors most likely to have an impact on how we can improve the early identification of, and support for, children and young people at risk of maltreatment between now and 2040.

The survey was a combination of both quantitative and qualitative questions. Basic demographic information was also collected.

We received 48 responses via the online platform and five email submissions. Most responses were received from individuals with a professional interest in the topic and groups or organisations. We also received feedback from caregivers and individuals who are care experienced. These categories were not mutually exclusive. The majority of respondents identified as New Zealand European.

Our ability to achieve a wide range of perspectives was limited by our online, structured, survey that was written in English and was time restricted. However, we also reached out to some key stakeholders, who submitted written responses.

The quantitative questions asked which factors were most likely to impact on the early identification of, and support for, children and young people at risk of maltreatment. Socio-economic disadvantage was identified by more than 90% of respondents as likely or very likely to have an impact. Social cohesion and trust in public institutions were also considered likely or very likely to impact on the early identification of, and support for, children and young people at risk of maltreatment. These results have informed the drivers we selected to develop scenarios of what the future might look like, to inform options for responding to the trends, risks and opportunities identified through this briefing.

Respondents were also asked to provide their thoughts on opportunities, barriers, and concerns relating to the topic question. These open-text responses were recorded verbatim, and each response was reviewed and used to form key themes. While the responses led the development of the observed themes and patterns, we found that these themes align with the three strategic shifts of Oranga Tamariki: Whakapakari Kaimahi | Enable our people, Mana Ōrite | Enable our Partners, and Rato Pūnaha | Lead the system⁶⁹.

Public consultation identified seven key themes. These are:

Systems

Much of this theme was comprised of the responses relating to system barriers. These included information sharing, short-term thinking and funding models, a lack of cohesion between agencies, and the interface between Oranga Tamariki and other services. This theme is encapsulated well in the below quote...

“The system is the biggest barrier. Oranga Tamariki should not have to do this on their own and OTAP is not doing enough to seal the chasms that exist between the other ministries”.

Other sub-themes related to the evolving role of government, that Oranga Tamariki has an insufficient focus on prevention, and the need to address poverty.

Community

Responses showed two inter-related sub-themes within the theme of ‘community’. The first of which is the ‘willingness of community to engage’. This theme, illustrated in the below quote, highlighted the willingness of the community to take responsibility for child maltreatment while recognising that there was a lack of awareness and education in the community about what child maltreatment looks like and what to do about it. Respondents also talked about poor access to services and low levels of trust in government and the resultant challenges.

“Emphasis must be placed on the fact that all members of New Zealand society need to be informed about children and young people who experience abuse. Then everyone needs to take responsibility to act to protect and inform appropriate authorities in an informed way”.

The second sub-theme, ‘enabling communities’, showed respondents’ support for building local communities and strengthening engagement, providing support within the community, and providing opportunities for healing and restoration.

⁶⁹ Oranga Tamariki. (2024). Strategic intentions 2024/25 – 2029/30. [Oranga Tamariki Strategic Intentions 2024/25 - 2029/30](#)

Workforce

Responses highlighted concerns regarding Oranga Tamariki social worker capacity, service capacity and wait times, and the lack of training in the community, as illustrated below.

“Teachers, GPs, nurses are not routinely trained in child protection thus they are not equipped to recognise and respond to those early risk indicators. They need this training so they can refer on for support and service support”.

Respondents were concerned about the lack of support for social workers and the lack of support and investment in community in relation to training and development.

Prevention

Respondents strongly believed in the effectiveness of prevention, highlighting its role in ending intergenerational harm and the need for greater emphasis on preventative approaches

“Investing in preventing the situations that may lead to abuse to happen at the first place, is much [more] effective than responding to the incidents/cases which has not led to any significant decrease in child protection matters”.

“Maltreatment often starts with neglect and if responded to at this level does not need to reach the 'big stuff' (physical harm, sexual abuse). Currently, our response to neglect is that it is nothing compared to what else we see - we need to significantly change this mind set”.

Risk

Respondents raised concerns regarding the use of risk measurement tools and their potential for stigmatisation, particularly the use of predictive risk modelling and its associated ethical issues.

“Early risk identification is problematic. It relies on the idea that one can 'predict' which children are more likely to be maltreated and ignores the underlying conditions that pre-empt maltreatment (such as poverty and racism)”.

Respondents were concerned about the risk of “surveillance without help” and further marginalising vulnerable whānau and communities.

Early identification

This theme highlighted the clear need to explore the relationship between early identification and prevention. While the identification of children at risk of maltreatment was considered critical to preventing harm and achieving better outcomes for children, there was concern regarding the use of individual risk factors that can stigmatise families and whānau. The possibility that families and whānau may disengage with services for fear of scrutiny should be considered.

“Addressing the early identification of, and support for, tamariki and rangatahi at risk of maltreatment is essential to ensuring they live in safe, nurturing environments where they can flourish without restraint or harm”.

Support

This theme was divided into two smaller sub-themes. Respondents had concerns about the current accessibility and quality of support but clear ideas about what support should look like.

Respondents’ main concerns related to a lack of funding for services, short-term contracts, a lack of culturally appropriate services (particularly in regions), a lack of trauma-informed or trauma-responsive services, and the eligibility threshold for support services.

“There is a gap between what the 'community' see and 'risk/need for early preventative intervention, and what the State Care and Protection system sees as requirement for provision of support”.

In year 2 of the survey that informs a recent report to understand the experiences of tamariki and rangatahi in care⁷⁰, there were less positive responses from tamariki and rangatahi participants to the question, *Do you know your ancestry whakapapa?* indicating a lack of cultural support and culturally appropriate services in regions as issues for tamariki and rangatahi.

To address some of these issues, respondents talked about the need to support the whānau system rather than focussing on individuals, to work with whānau sooner, and to help them identify support networks in their communities and hapori.

The themes identified in the public consultation have informed the draft briefing, and we have tried to reflect what we heard from the responses we received and integrate this into this LTIB draft. We have subsequently revised our topic question.

⁷⁰ Oranga Tamariki. (2023). Te Mātātaki 2023 report. [Te Mātātaki 2023 | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

Amended topic question

The topic question which we initially proposed and sought feedback on was:

How can we improve the early identification of, and support for, children and young people at risk of maltreatment between now and 2040?

Our revised topic question is:

How can we better prevent, respond to, and enable healing from, child maltreatment between now and 2040?

We heard respondents' concerns regarding early identification, particularly the use of individual risk factors in identification and the stigmatisation this can cause. We heard that identification does not necessarily equate to a response or result in support.

We have, therefore, amended the topic question to focus on prevention rather than identification, have included the words 'respond to', and have replaced 'support for' with 'enable healing'.

The inclusion of healing recognises the function that healing has in preventing the intergenerational cycle of harm. This is important considering that many of the children and young people who come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki have experienced or been exposed to family and/or sexual violence⁷¹.

In FY2018-2019, 48% of children who were subject to a Report of Concern and 61% of children who entered the care of Oranga Tamariki came from a family that had a report of a family violence incident in the last 12 months⁷².

A review of child and youth offender records ($N = 16,000$) revealed 80% had evidence of family violence in their homes⁷³. Healing is one of the key shifts in Te Aorerekura | National Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Sexual Violence (specifically shift 6), for which Oranga Tamariki is one of the responsible agencies⁷⁴.

The emphasis on healing, which we recognise encompasses a far greater reach and form beyond Oranga Tamariki, is also more closely aligned to that of our practice shift. This shift is framed by te Tiriti o Waitangi, based on a mana enhancing paradigm for practice, and draws on te ao Māori principles of oranga (wellbeing). The shift helps Oranga Tamariki work more effectively with tamariki and whānau Māori. The mana-enhancing paradigm and te ao Māori principles of oranga are relational, inclusive, and restorative, making an important contribution to healing and, therefore, have benefits for all tamariki, children, whānau and families.

⁷¹ Oranga Tamariki. (2022). *Complexity of tamariki interacting with Oranga Tamariki – reports of concern compared to entries to care*. [Complexity of tamariki interacting with Oranga Tamariki – reports of concern compared to entries to care | Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children](#)

⁷² *ibid*

⁷³ New Zealand Police. (2017). *Family Harm: A New Approach*. Wellington.

⁷⁴ Te Puna Aonui. (2021). *Te Aorerekura: The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence*. <https://tepunaaonui.govt.nz/assets/National-strategy/Finals-translations-alt-formats/Te-Aorerekura-National-Strategy-final.pdf>

The shift is a move away from a western, risk dominated practice position to a Māori-centred position. This decision is reflective of the mandate of te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, and acknowledges that the majority of the tamariki and whānau we work with are Māori, thereby creating a strong mandate to foster the oranga and resilience of tamariki and whānau Māori. A [Practice Approach](#) has been developed to achieve the shift and embed te ao Māori principles of oranga into Oranga Tamariki social work practice

The use of the words 'enable healing' is intentional and an acknowledgement of the fact that government has caused, and continues to perpetuate, harm (however unintentional) to tamariki, whānau, and hapori through our policies and practices. We recognise healing happens in whānau, families, communities, and peer and support groups, and the role of government is best placed in facilitating and funding access to quality and timely support, and through historical treaty settlements and by honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Appendix 3 – Scenarios

Scenario 1

A future scenario in New Zealand characterised by low social cohesion and high socioeconomic disparity might look like this:

Entrenched poverty and inequality

Economic pressures increase stress within families, leading to higher risks of neglect, abuse, and family breakdowns:

- Widespread poverty, housing insecurity, and unemployment become persistent issues.
- Government policies and social safety nets are insufficient or poorly implemented, failing to address the root causes of disparity.
- Vulnerable groups, particularly Māori, Pacific, and low-income families, experience disproportionate impacts.

Fragmented social bonds

The lack of social support leaves families isolated, intensifying the challenges posed by economic hardship and reducing resilience:

- Communities become disconnected, with little trust or mutual support among families, neighbours, or institutions.
- Individualism and competition replace collective responsibility, and cultural disconnection further alienates Māori and other minority groups.

Worsening child wellbeing

Children in this scenario face increased exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which have long-term effects on their mental health, education, and future prospects:

- Economic stressors combined with the absence of community support create conditions where child maltreatment, neglect, and emotional harm become more prevalent.
- Overburdened or failing child protection systems struggle to intervene effectively, leading to worsening outcomes for vulnerable children.

Weak and distrusted institutions

A lack of institutional effectiveness and accountability further alienates marginalised groups and deepens systemic inequality;

- Public trust in government, welfare systems, and social services diminishes due to perceptions of inefficiency, inequity, or cultural insensitivity.
- Institutions face difficulties in addressing complex societal problems without collaboration from communities.

Rising social tensions

Social fractures worsen, reducing the potential for collective action or collaboration to address shared challenges:

- Polarisation grows as economic inequality fuels resentment and competition for scarce resources.
- Ethnic and cultural tensions may increase, particularly if systemic inequities affecting Māori and Pacific communities remain unaddressed.

Environmental and climate vulnerability

Without coordinated efforts, communities are less resilient and slower to recover from environmental or economic shocks:

- Climate change and extreme weather events disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities, compounding their vulnerabilities.
- Low social cohesion undermines collective responses to crises, leaving individuals and families to cope alone.

Opportunities with this scenario

While the outlook is challenging, opportunities for improvement exist:

- 1) **Local leaders and organisations could step in** to address gaps left by failing institutions, fostering small-scale social cohesion.
- 2) **Targeted government interventions in housing, education, and income support** could begin to alleviate economic pressures.
- 3) **Māori and Pacific communities could drive cultural reconnection and resilience**, even in the absence of broader societal cohesion.

Challenges with this scenario

- 1) **Cycles of poverty and trauma may persist**, affecting future generations.
- 2) Rising societal distrust and fragmentation could lead to **increased crime, violence, and social unrest**.
- 3) Cultural disconnection and inequality may **erode New Zealand's identity as a fair and inclusive society**.

Conclusion

This scenario depicts a fractured New Zealand where economic hardship and social disconnection feed into one another, creating a cycle of disparity and mistrust.

Breaking out of this trajectory would require a combination of systemic reforms, community-led initiatives, and renewed efforts to rebuild social cohesion. Without intervention, the long-term effects could be deeply damaging for children and future generations.

Scenario 2

A future scenario in New Zealand characterised by low social cohesion and low socioeconomic disparity might look like this:

High material wellbeing

Economic stressors are minimal, reducing the prevalence of neglect and abuse caused by financial hardship. Families generally experience greater stability:

- Access to quality housing, healthcare, education, and stable employment significantly improves for the majority of the population.
- Income inequality is reduced, and government policies ensure strong social safety nets.

Fragmented social bonds

Social isolation increases, particularly among vulnerable populations such as elderly caregivers, single parents, and marginalised groups, despite material wellbeing:

- Societal values emphasise individualism over collective responsibility, with weaker ties between families, neighbours, and communities.
- Traditional support networks (e.g., whānau, iwi, or church groups) decline as people prioritise personal advancement or digital connections over face-to-face relationships.

Decline in community participation

While public systems ensure economic security, the lack of community engagement undermines efforts to address social and emotional well-being comprehensively:

- Participation in local initiatives, cultural events, and collective activities decreases as individuals feel less connected to their communities.
- Trust in institutions (e.g., government, NGOs) may also erode, leading to disengagement from collective decision-making.

Challenges to child and family wellbeing

Child maltreatment may shift from issues of physical neglect or abuse driven by poverty to forms rooted in emotional detachment or lack of supervision:

- Despite material security, children and families may face emotional neglect or isolation due to reduced interpersonal support.
- Rising reliance on technology for social interaction may further disconnect families and communities.

Cultural disconnection

Cultural disconnection could exacerbate mental health challenges and reduce protective factors for children and families.

- Indigenous cultural frameworks (e.g., Māori tikanga and whānau-based practices) may weaken as individualism becomes more dominant.
- Loss of cultural identity and community ties may lead to feelings of disconnection, particularly for Māori and Pacific populations.

Increased reliance on formal system

Families and individuals may feel alienated from impersonal support systems, limiting their effectiveness in addressing complex social or emotional needs:

- Formal systems (e.g., schools, social services, healthcare) take on a larger role in providing support traditionally offered by families and communities.
- While these systems are well-funded and accessible, they may lack the personal touch and cultural responsiveness that informal networks once provided.

Opportunities with this scenario

- 1) With strong economic foundations, **resources can be directed toward prevention** including mental health, early childhood education, and family support programs.
- 2) **Technology can be leveraged to build new forms of social connection and support**, especially for isolated individuals.
- 3) Transparent and culturally responsive government policies can compensate for weakened social cohesion by building trust in formal systems.

Challenges with this scenario

- 1) Without strong social bonds, **children may experience emotional neglect** or a lack of meaningful relationships, impacting long-term wellbeing.
- 2) Social isolation and disconnection could lead to increased rates of **anxiety, depression, and loneliness** despite material security.
- 3) Weakened cultural and community ties may lead to a fragmented society with **diminished social resilience in the face of crises**.

Conclusion

In this future, economic prosperity and equitable resource distribution address material disparities, reducing traditional risk factors for child maltreatment. However, low social cohesion introduces new vulnerabilities, particularly in areas like emotional well-being, cultural identity, and community resilience.

To thrive in this scenario, New Zealand would need to invest in fostering social connections, strengthening cultural practices, and creating inclusive spaces for collective engagement.

Scenario 3

A future scenario in New Zealand characterised by high social cohesion and high socioeconomic disparity might look like this:

Strong community networks

Community support systems help buffer the effects of socio-economic disparity by providing informal safety nets for vulnerable families and children:

- Communities, families, and local groups maintain strong bonds, mutual trust, and collective action.
- Māori and Pacific communities may lead in fostering whānau and family-based and communal resilience, rooted in cultural values and practices.
- Community organisations and iwi play a critical role in addressing local needs, bypassing some systemic challenges.

Persistent economic inequality

Families face daily stressors that challenge their ability to provide consistent care and stability for children, increasing risks of neglect or maltreatment despite strong social cohesion:

- Despite strong social bonds, systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, housing instability, and under-resourced public services persist.
- The gap between the wealthiest and poorest continues to widen, fuelled by stagnant wages, rising living costs, and entrenched structural inequalities.
- Vulnerable groups, especially Māori and Pacific populations, disproportionately bear the burden of this disadvantage.

Resilience in the face of hardship

While systemic poverty persists, collective resilience minimises some of the worst outcomes for children, such as homelessness or severe neglect:

- Communities innovate to meet basic needs and maintain well-being through shared resources, time-banking, food cooperatives, and localised initiatives.
- Cultural and spiritual practices provide emotional support, helping individuals and families navigate economic hardships.

Challenges to systems and institutions

While grassroots efforts address immediate needs, systemic barriers to upward mobility (e.g., inadequate education or healthcare funding) limit long-term progress:

- Trust in government systems (e.g., welfare, child protection services) may decline if they are perceived as ineffective in addressing inequality.
- Communities increasingly bypass state interventions, relying instead on local or iwi-led programs.

Rising pressure on younger generations

Despite high social cohesion, intergenerational cycles of disadvantage may remain entrenched without systemic intervention:

- Persistent socio-economic disparity leads to limited access to quality education and job opportunities for children and young people.
- Young people may carry the weight of collective aspirations for breaking the cycle of poverty, leading to stress and burnout.

Mixed outcomes for children

- Strong social bonds and cultural resilience reduce the isolation and fragmentation that often exacerbate child maltreatment.
- Persistent socio-economic pressures create chronic stress for caregivers, increasing risks of neglect or unintentional harm.

Opportunities with this scenario

- 1) High social cohesion creates opportunities for **collective advocacy to push for systemic change**, such as housing reform or equitable resource distribution.
- 2) **Iwi-led and community-driven initiatives** could address gaps left by government systems, creating innovative models for supporting families.
- 3) **Cultural practices and values** may mitigate some of the mental health and social consequences of economic disparity.

Challenges with this scenario

- 1) Without systemic intervention, social cohesion alone **cannot address root causes of poverty and disparity**.
- 2) Over-reliance on informal support networks risks **overwhelming communities** already stretched thin.
- 3) If economic disparity worsens, even **high cohesion may falter** under prolonged stress, leading to frustration and disillusionment.

Conclusion

This scenario highlights the paradox of a deeply connected society struggling under the weight of systemic inequities. While high social cohesion provides a strong foundation for resilience and mutual support, it cannot fully offset the structural disparities that perpetuate poverty and harm.

Realising the potential of such a future would require integrating grassroots strengths with systemic reforms that address the root causes of socio-economic disparity.

Scenario 4

A future scenario in New Zealand with high social cohesion and low socioeconomic disparity might look like this:

Equitable economic conditions

Economic stability reduces stressors such as poverty, housing insecurity, and food scarcity, which are major contributors to child maltreatment:

- Widespread access to quality housing, education, healthcare, and employment ensures that families have the resources they need to thrive.
- Income inequality is minimised through progressive policies, living wages, and social safety nets.

Strong social connections

Social cohesion acts as a protective factor for children, as communities collectively ensure their safety, wellbeing, and development:

- Communities are characterised by trust, mutual support, and collective responsibility.
- Māori concepts of manaakitanga (hospitality and care) and whanaungatanga (connectedness) influence national and local practices, fostering inclusive and culturally responsive relationships.
- Families rely on both formal and informal networks for support, with strong connections between neighbours, extended families, and community groups.

Thriving children and families

Children grow up in nurturing, stable environments with strong role models and support systems, reducing the risk of maltreatment:

- Families experience low stress due to access to resources, social support, and balanced work-life dynamics.
- Parenting programs, mental health services, and community-led initiatives are widely available, further strengthening families.

Inclusive and culturally responsive systems

Cultural connection and inclusivity strengthen identity and resilience, creating a sense of belonging for all groups:

- Māori-led solutions and tikanga-based practices are integrated into national policies and services, ensuring cultural equity and reducing intergenerational trauma.
- Pacific, Asian, and other cultural communities also thrive, with their values and traditions celebrated and respected.

Community and civic engagement

Communities have ownership of solutions, making interventions more effective and sustainable:

- High levels of civic engagement result in communities shaping policies and programs that directly address their needs.
- Grassroots initiatives, iwi-led projects, and public-private partnerships enhance local resilience and innovation.

Resilience to future challenges

Families and communities can adapt to challenges without significant declines in wellbeing:

- Social cohesion and economic security make New Zealand resilient to external shocks such as climate change, pandemics, or economic downturns.
- Strong community networks ensure rapid recovery from crises, with shared resources and mutual aid reducing individual burdens.

Opportunities with this scenario

- 1) Reduced material hardship and strong social bonds allow children to grow into thriving adults, **breaking cycles of disparity**.
- 2) New Zealand could serve as a global model for balancing economic equity with social cohesion, **attracting talent and investment**.
- 3) Collaborative approaches to environmental, economic, and social challenges ensure **long-term sustainability**.

Challenges with this scenario

- 1) High social cohesion and economic wellbeing may lead to **complacency**, with less urgency to address emerging risks or inequalities.
- 2) Even in an ideal scenario, **some groups (e.g., recent immigrants, people with disabilities) may risk being left out** if inclusivity efforts are not actively maintained.
- 3) **Communities may overburden themselves** with support responsibilities, risking burnout if formal systems fail to keep up.

Conclusion

In this future, New Zealand is a cohesive and equitable society where families thrive, children are safe and nurtured, and communities work together to create sustainable solutions.

Vigilance would be needed to maintain these conditions, for high social cohesion and low socioeconomic disparity to continue enabling New Zealand to be a resilient, inclusive, and thriving nation.