Feedback on the Oranga Tamariki

Long-Term Insights Briefing 2025

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

Who is Skylight Trust?

Skylight Trust provides leadership and services for tamariki (children), rangatahi (young people) and their whānau (families), who have experienced loss, grief, trauma and tough times. Our unique offering is a full spectrum of care for tamariki and rangatahi aged 5 24 with mild to moderate mental health concerns. We provide counselling, programmes and resources. Our work is evidence-based and trauma-informed.

Our Response to the Consultation Questions on the Options

1. a) What does success look like in relation to prevention, response, and healing between now and 2040?

- Decrease in tamariki harm incidences and deaths.
- Importance of prevention and early intervention for tamariki and whānau. Whānau receiving support before coming to the attention of Oranga Tamariki (OT).
- Integration of mental health services within the framework of tamariki protection and support systems.
- Frontline services are acting with a trauma-informed approach.

- Increase in prevention education: parents/caregivers, kaiako, and tamariki are educated about children's rights, safe behavior, and early signs of abuse or neglect.
- Strong protective systems: Whānau have access to quality healthcare, mental health support, childcare, and poverty-reducing services that reduce risk factors for abuse.

b) What changes would be required to enable this?

- Greater access to and funding for parenting programmes and services. At present, our organisation is observing a strong demand from parents seeking this support, however there are limited options to achieve this.
- There is a need for strong collaboration between mental health services, educational institutions, social services, and community organisations to create a comprehensive support network, for tamariki and rangatahi.
- Oranga Tamariki to work more collaboratively with community-based local providers.
- The need for sustained long-term funding and policy commitments to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of mental health and tamariki protection services – including advocating for increased investment in preventive measures and early intervention programmes.
- Addressing underlying contributing factors such as inequitable access to primary health care and housing instability.
- Workforce capability improved by access to frequent and current evidence-based trauma-informed practices.

c) What existing or planned work could be leveraged?

- Unifying current providers to develop a more collaborative and cohesive approach to support.
- Increased access to digital support - free online support and resources that are more readily available and easy to find.

2. a) Are there any other topics that are important to consider?

   b) If yes, what are they, and why are they important?

- The importance of adopting holistic and trauma-informed approaches to care. That is, addressing not only the immediate safety needs of tamariki but also their emotional and psychological well-being.

- Importance of culturally sensitive practices, particularly in supporting Māori and Pasifika tamariki and whānau.

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, tamariki maltreatment?

- Greater access and funding to tamariki protection training for those working directly with tamariki and rangatahi. As stated by Safeguarding Children "Child protection training should be part of the registration process for any professional working with children, and part of any government licensing or funding process." (https://www.safeguardingchildren.org.nz/mandatory-reporting-on-child-abuse/). This should be considered as a first step in the consideration of mandatory reporting.
- Greater community awareness and education.
- School-based protective factors: teacher training, whole-school programmes (e.g. anti-bullying, online safety, child rights etc.), and screening measures - screening the whole school to identify risk factors earlier.
- Creating safe, stable, and nurturing environments for tamariki through community support, safe and secure housing, tackling poverty, and access to quality childcare and education.
- Longer/paid family leave.
- Improved mental health services.
- Peer groups and trauma-informed therapy sessions.
- Online/digital safety.
- Livable income / Universal basic income.
- Addressing alcohol and drug issues.
- Addressing crime and unsafe neighbourhoods.
- Reducing the unemployment rate.
- Address food insecurity.
- Address institutional racism and discrimination.
- Locally led approaches.
- Listen to the voices of tamariki and rangatahi.
- Co-creation of services through networks and partnerships.

Consultation questions on the 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)?

- Workforce capability (well-being support for OT kaimahi). It is noted that higher and more complex caseloads impact on the wellbeing of kaimahi and their ability to provide timely and effective support to vulnerable families. While increased funding and resourcing to increase the workforce is one valuable option, this does not address how current staff on the 'frontline' are being supported. Practicing trauma-informed care requires a trauma-informed workplace. That is one in which the wellbeing of the kaimahi is at its foundation.
- Information sharing: Improving appropriate secure data sharing with necessary agencies and providers. What is shared and how requires ongoing review and consideration. There is a need to balance the safety and wellbeing of at-risk tamariki, whilst also maintaining confidentiality rights for the whānau.

Consultation questions on the scenarios

5. Which scenario(s) is the most desirable and why?

- Scenario Four: The desirability of the high economic welfare (low socio-economic disparity) and high social cohesion scenario. This scenario seeks to address underlying risk factors (i.e., poverty, inadequate housing) whilst also concurrently developing a cohesive unified approach amongst community and government agencies to support tamariki and whānau in a timely and effective manner.

6. Which scenario(s) is the most likely and why?

- At present, we are closer to the disparate economy and low social cohesion scenario (Scenario One). This is evidenced by the recent report (1 April 2025) Social Cohesion in New Zealand. Is New Zealand's social fabric fraying? and the 2023 report A Fair Chance for All. and its underlying research. Factors include, high cost of living, Indigenous inequities (systemic barriers), housing crisis, etc. contributing to poverty and risk factors.

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?

    - Agreeing with the need for a long term, bipartisan approach that can navigate all possible futures and their opportunities and challenges.

    b) what are the challenges for this scenario? And what changes would be required to meet the challenges?

    - Uncertainty of future government priorities and funding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our response emphasises the critical need for a holistic, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive approach to child protection.

Success by 2040 hinges on prevention, early intervention, robust support systems, and strong community collaboration. Key changes required include increased funding, better integration of services, and addressing systemic issues such as healthcare access and housing instability.

Leveraging existing initiatives and enhancing digital support can further strengthen these efforts. Ultimately, achieving a high economic welfare and social cohesion scenario will require sustained commitment and a unified approach across all sectors.

While there are many opportunities and challenges presented by the future, there is much that can be done now.