

Regional hui themes and feedback

January to March 2020

From late January to mid-March 2020, 19 hui were held around Aotearoa to provide a greater understanding of how the Independent Children's Monitor, Office of the Children's Commissioner and Office of the Ombudsman are strengthening independent oversight of the Oranga Tamariki System and what each agency's role and function is.

As the host of the regional hui, the Monitor heard many views that came through and we will be including everyone's feedback in our mahi. This document outlines, from the Monitor's perspective, the most common themes that came up throughout hui across Aotearoa. They represent your views and opinions as we've heard them.

The themes are also visually represented, looking at current state and the desired future state. You can see the [graphic recording of themes on our website](#).

Overarching themes

Following each hui, we received strong and encouraging feedback around how helpful it was to have visibility and understanding of all the agencies, their functions and roles and how important it is for the agencies to work together to provide independent oversight to improve outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi. In particular, from across the country, we heard how important it was to understand the Ombudsman's role, and how complaints can be made.

In addition, participants were clear that the agencies needed to focus on building trust and confidence with the public, and remember that monitoring is more than just compliance.

Ensuring hui were across the country and in smaller regions was also essential, allowing iwi, providers, government agencies and other sectors to meet with the oversight agencies, and each other, face-to-face to ask the important questions and understand how, and why, the oversight will occur.

It was always our intention that these hui be the start of our engagement and it was encouraging to hear from you that we are on the right track as we continue to build, develop and grow our engagement.

We know that relationships are essential not only from a national level but also from a regional and local level and these relationships are driven and guided by communities like yours.

Te ao Māori

Current state	Desired future state
There is a lack of Māori social workers, or those with appropriate skills/understanding of te ao Māori, to work with tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau.	Ensuring that te ao Māori is genuinely embedded with the mahi underway, and having a clear understanding of what that looks like.
There is a lack of trust and confidence in the Oranga Tamariki System that it can deliver what it needs to and for our tamariki and their whānau.	Ensuring the right partnerships are created, including those with iwi, to help reach tamariki, rangatahi and whānau, and using these partnerships to build trust and confidence
There is no “one Māori view and one size does not fit all.”.	Ensuring there is strong engagement with tamariki, rangatahi and whānau and those who support them to reflect many views

Oranga Tamariki

Current state	Desired future state
There are varying strengths of relationships and communication across the country, with information not always shared with other providers and loops of communications not always closed.	Relevant government agencies working together; and ensuring the right plans are in place to reflect what is needed and this is communicated in a way that works for all.
Oranga Tamariki is not used to (or good at) taking on a community based supportive role or understanding the importance of early intervention and doesn't provide the support needed for whānau.	Use community providers as a key part of the communities they work with, as an essential part of the System, to help relieve some of the pressure by being included in early stages of engagement.
A lack of transparency around decision-making and not using information from other sources who also work with Tamariki, rangatahi and whānau.	Social workers are more connected with the communities they work with – taking a strengths-based approach and talking with those who know what is happening.

Funding and support

Current state	Desired future state
A view the system is “jaded” – some providers are already struggling to provide quality services due to a lack of funding, while others fear they will lose funding.	There is investment in relevant communities to take up social work or fund those kaimahi already working within social services to gain social work qualifications.
Providers are funded for certain age groups, such babies, young children or 18-year-olds, so their jurisdiction to deal with age groups outside their contracts is limited.	Providers’ mahi with tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau is recognised and resourced.
Whānau who have tamariki placed with them are not always entitled to funding.	Whānau who have tamariki placed with them are well supported and resourced to look after these tamariki.

Systems and services

Current state	Desired future state
The system is not accessible and takes for granted that people understand the process; dealing with government agencies is difficult, as some people find them hard to understand and navigate, and it becomes onerous.	The system is easy to navigate and there are people to support others to understand the process.
There is a loss of trust and confidence in the System being able to deliver what whānau and tamariki need, and a feeling that you need to be “in the system” to access help and services, and once you get access, the timeliness of services, or even referral, is too slow and services are not available when needed.	Early intervention and access to services are provided when needed, including for those with disabilities and their parents.
The process of becoming a provider is challenging and there are several barriers.	Accreditation processes reflect the way providers work and is a service user friendly process.

Communication

Current state	Desired future state
There are communication issues with those who have English as a second language and those with low literacy rates.	Develop different ways of communicating using different channels that meet the needs of all tamariki, whānau and people, including those with disabilities.
There are multiple meetings with tamariki to "hear their voices", but it's all the same to tamariki and this creates fatigue.	There will be an ethical approach to engaging with tamariki and if the information already exists it is accessed before re-engaging with tamariki.
When agencies request information, the loop is not always closed, and people/providers are unsure of the outcome and how the information they have provided will be used.	We feedback to people what we did with their information and the outcome.

Historic systemic issues

Current state
A deep distrust in the System from whānau, including both tamariki and whānau being too scared to speak out because of possible repercussions.
Concerns around inter-generational experience in the care system.
There are biases that exist in the system currently and across the board, and poverty is an issue.

Strengthening independent oversight legislation

Current state	Desired future state
A lack of legal support and understanding the rights.	Legislation should cover all tamariki, including pre and post-care.
Concern over the removal of family court lawyers and the impact this is having on judicial decisions.	

At one hui, a concern was raised that not everyone has the capacity or capability to write effective submissions, and it's difficult to navigate the submission process

The Monitors approach

Desired future state
Whānau need to be seen through different lenses (Iwi, tamariki, rangatahi), understanding there is no “one Māori view, one size does not fit all”, individual circumstances are recognised, understood and adapted to.
The need for the Monitor to understand the community and be connected to it.
Relationships need to be formed across the sector, regionally and locally, as this mahi can't be done in isolation given all the various touch points within the System, including Health, Education, Justice and Police.

Questions

- **How will people know the oversight agencies are working together and making a difference?**
 - When tamariki, rangatahi and whānau tell us what's changed and improved in their lives and that they are getting the services they need
- **How will this mahi be resourced to avoid overlap and duplication?**
 - Each oversight agency has a clear mandate, role and function. From a user perspective, there is no wrong front door and there are clear guidance pathways.
- **What teeth will the Monitor really have?**
 - This will be reflected in the new legislation. The Monitor will publish reports and agency responses to publicly hold them to account. Reports will also be tabled in Parliament in the future.

Useful links

[Family Service directory](#)

[The Office of the Children's Commissioner](#)

[The Office of the Ombudsman](#)