



18 December 2023

s9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe s9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 27 October 2023 to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki), requesting information around Oranga Tamariki processes for child abuse and neglect. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I have addressed each of your questions below.

*What are your processes for determining whether or not to follow up on reports of child abuse/neglect?*

Oranga Tamariki takes all allegations of harm seriously and has a statutory responsibility to assess reported concerns, regardless of the level of evidence or proof provided. Anyone who is worried about a child or young person can make a Report of Concern (RoC) to Oranga Tamariki. This happens usually when they believe te tamaiti has been or is likely to be harmed, ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived, or they have serious concerns about the wellbeing of te tamaiti.

In assessing the RoC, our primary focus is understanding whether harm has occurred, what type of harm has occurred, the oranga (wellbeing), strengths and protective factors within the whānau or family group, whether te tamaiti is safe, understanding any future risk of harm and what supports and plans are needed. For every RoC made, we do not pre-determine the response to the report of concern but follow our assessment approach to understand whether there are current concerns about oranga (wellbeing), including safety, and the actual circumstances and situation of the whānau.

Regardless of whether a RoC appears to be of a serious nature, or concerns the child's immediate wellbeing, if an individual has concerns for the wellbeing of tamariki, it is the role of Oranga Tamariki to undertake the following steps as part of the Report of Concern pathway:

- consider the concern
- determine the appropriate response for te tamaiti and their whānau
- complete an assessment appropriate to the level of concern

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- put in place the support or intervention that te tamaiti and their whānau require if necessary.

The following Oranga Tamariki webpages have more information about the decisions and pathways considered:

- [Overview of the intake decision response tool | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)
- [Report of concern response pathway | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#).

*What steps or processes have been implemented to reduce the abuse carried out by the people that are meant to be protecting our tamariki? Can you discuss areas of improvement that you've identified?*

Oranga Tamariki is committed to shifting decision making and resources to enable our communities to design and deliver care responses for tamariki in need. While pēpi, tamariki or rangatahi are in the care or custody of the chief executive, we must ensure a safe, stable and appropriate care arrangement for them that addresses their oranga needs, preserves their connections, recognises the importance of their whakapapa, and supports them to achieve their aspirations and potential.

We have plans and actions in place that continue to guide our transformation journey. Pivotal to this is the Oranga Tamariki Future Direction Plan, approved by Cabinet in August 2021, in response to the recommendations of the report from a Ministerial appointed Advisory Board, Hipokingia ki te Kahu Aroha Hipokingia ki te Katoa (Te Kahu Aroha) following the attempted uplift of a 6-day old pēpi from hospital in 2019.

Te Kahu Aroha called for greater focus and faster movement towards supporting Māori and community led responses around the safety of tamariki and rangatahi Māori, including: A greater investment in, and progress towards Māori and community led collectives to lead in the prevention of harm to tamariki and whānau; clarity on the role and purpose of Oranga Tamariki within the wider system; work to increase the mana of social work, and empower social workers to deliver best practice and bringing the voices of tamariki and a strong evidence base to inform decision making. A stronger focus on supporting Māori and community-led responses has been our focus and continues to be at the forefront of our work.

Transforming a system of such importance is not easy and has had challenges. We accept that there are high expectations of us and that we need to be publicly accountable. Our work continues against the backdrop of rising costs of living and the economic impact of COVID-19 disrupting the lives and wellbeing of tamariki and their whānau. This year, significant weather events, including Cyclone Gabrielle, have also impacted our communities. Despite this, we have taken many positive steps and made significant progress over the year.

For a comprehensive update on actions we are taking I would encourage you to read our latest Annual Report available [here](#).

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*What disciplinary measures have been taken toward staff who have been accused of abuse?*

Oranga Tamariki has in place a disciplinary policy which outlines the process to be undertaken from an employment perspective where concerns of misconduct or serious misconduct may occur. Where identified issues have arisen the appropriate disciplinary processes have been undertaken.

Guidance is available to all Oranga Tamariki Managers to support them and their staff through the disciplinary process, and to ensure that the process is impartial, fair, prompt, and consistent. Managers must consult with an Oranga Tamariki Human Resources (HR) Advisor prior to commencing a disciplinary process, to ensure that contractual and legal obligations are met and that all the relevant delegations are understood and followed. There are a range of outcomes that may apply dependant on the circumstances and seriousness of the issue this ranges from first written warning to dismissal (either with notice or without notice).

Oranga Tamariki intends may make the information contained in this letter available to the public by publishing this letter on our website with your personal details removed..

I trust the information provided is useful. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with us directly by contacting [OIA\\_Requests@ot.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@ot.govt.nz). Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman by contacting them on 0800 802 602 or [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Nāku noa, nā



Julie Miller

**General Manager  
Monitoring and External Relationships**