

OIA-CE-2024-02595

25 October 2024

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Tēnā koe

Thank you for your email, received on 27 September 2024, to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) requesting information on the number of Reports of Concern (ROC) relating to family violence, and on the number of children not yet allocation to a social worker. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

ROCs are made when a member of the public, professional, family member or other person or organisation raises concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a child or young person with Oranga Tamariki. When a ROC is received, a social worker, usually based at the National Contact Centre, will complete an initial assessment of the concerns and if it is determined that Oranga Tamariki should be involved, the case is referred to a site to be allocated to a social worker.

ROCs that raise concerns about Family Violence and/or Sexual Violence may be made directly to Oranga Tamariki, or may be considered first by a multi-agency team. In many cases, NGOs participate in such multi-agency teams. Multi-agency teams assess safety and need, and consider the most helpful response. This response will in some cases include ROC being made to Oranga Tamariki, but may include other types of support, such as from a specialist family violence prevention and support service.

Nearly 75,000 (54,000 individual) children and young people came to the attention of Oranga Tamariki in the 2023/24 financial year through a report of concern.

You can find more information about ROCs [here](#).

I have addressed each of your questions below:

The absolute number and percentage of reports of concern related to family violence that have been reported to Oranga Tamariki by Police, listed as of 1 July for every year data is available.

People who make ROCs describe concerns using language that makes sense to them. People may also unsure about elements of what they have heard or observed, or may

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only be partially aware of what is happening. This means information shared in a ROC may or may not be accurate and may only reflect some of what is happening.

Social Workers at the National Contact Centre gather information to help understand the possible concerns, and this is recorded as descriptive text. Although Oranga Tamariki does categorise findings following the completion of an assessment, ROCs can include information describing multiple forms of alleged and sometimes overlapping issues that are not easy to cleanly categorise.

For these reasons, we are unable to provide the absolute number and percentage of ROCs related to family violence per year without carrying out a review of each individual case file. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation.

The number of children and young persons waiting for Oranga Tamariki to allocate them to a social worker at end June 2023, interpreted as per Written Parliamentary Question 55596 (2024).

When a ROC is made the National Contact Centre (NCC) appoints a social worker to do an initial assessment of the concerns using the Decision Response Tool (DRT). During the initial assessment phase, the social worker will gather and assess information, develop a decision response, and then record their decision response. You can find more information about the DRT [here](#).

Using the DRT tool, a social worker can determine a pathway for responding to the ROC. There are 4 potential pathway options; No Further Action, Refer to Service, Child and Family Assessment (CFA), or Investigation. If it is determined that a CFA or investigation is required, the ROC is accepted and sent to the relevant site for action. It is given a timeframe for response of either 24-hours, 48-hours, or 10-days, reflecting the seriousness of the concerns and assessed risk of harm.

Once received by site, the site will consider the ROC, and in some cases will change the pathway or initial response timeframe due to changing circumstances or a better understanding of the issues. A social worker is allocated to cases that remain open and is required to establish initial safety within the required timeframe. Overdue unallocated cases are those which have passed this timeframe and are yet to be allocated to a social worker. In response to your question, as at end June 2023, there were 1,481 children whose cases were overdue to be allocated to a care and protection social worker.

I wish to stress that allocating cases does not keep children safe on its own. Risk is reduced when social workers engage with children and families to address safety and wellbeing concerns. For this reason, Oranga Tamariki is cautious about allocating cases to social workers if, due to factors such as vacancies or higher than usual levels of recent incoming work, social workers based at the site are already working at their full capacity.

Please also note that Oranga Tamariki undertake a range of measures that support safety while cases are awaiting allocation to a social worker. Cases are allocated

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according to urgency and need, with a particular focus on allocating 24-hour and 48-hour response timeframes, ROCs involving babies and infants, and matters of a nature that require Police involvement, first. Our focus on allocating the most urgent cases quickly means almost all cases that are unallocated at any point in time are those assessed as requiring a response within 10 days. Unallocated cases are also regularly reviewed and monitored by Supervisors and Practice Leaders to assess risk and actions required that need to be made. Further, as needed, notifiers are contacted to ascertain if circumstances have changed in a way that would warrant more urgent attention.

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

I trust you find this information useful. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise them with Oranga Tamariki. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by contacting them on 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Rachel Leota
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