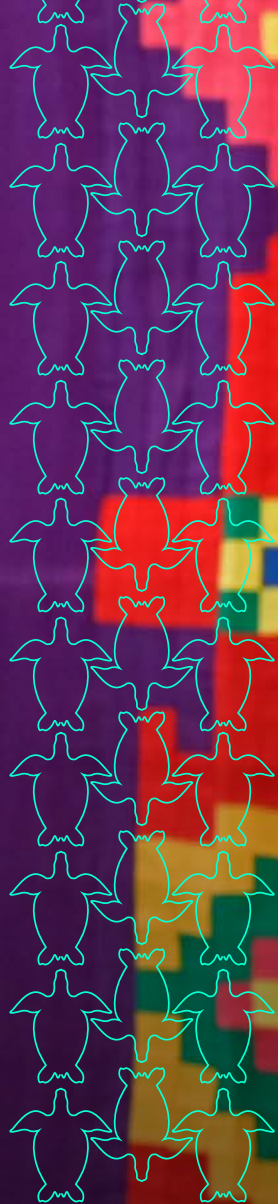




Ola manuia mo alo ma fanau Pasefika

A blessed wellbeing for our Pacific children, young people and families





Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Caveats	4
Foreword	5
Executive Summary	6
Recommendations	7
Introduction	8
Background	8
Purpose	10
Method	12
Findings	17
Section 1: Family priorities	19
Section 2: Engagement experiences with Oranga Tamariki	21
Conclusion	38
References	40
Appendix 1 – Profile of Pacific children in care	42
Appendix 2 – Personas	45
Jenny, New Zealand-born Samoan/ Cook Island/Māori, 32, Wellington	46
Saane, Tongan, 45 years, Northland	48
Jacob, Fijian, 25 years, Dunedin	50
Appendix 3 – Pacific fanau focus group guide and information	52
Appendix 4 – Online survey questions	56



Tables and Figures

Table 1. Geographic location by ethnic-specific group	13
Table 2. Type of participants	13
Table 3. Number of participants by engagement methodology	13
Table 4. Ethnicity of participants	14
Table 5. Age breakdown of participants	14
Figure 1. Number of Pacific children in care by ethnicity	43
Figure 2. Breakdown of Pacific children and young people in care by age	44



Acknowledgements

Oranga Tamariki would like to acknowledge the Pacific families, carers and social workers who participated in this exploratory research project undertaken independently by Integrity Professionals¹.

We acknowledge that many of your stories were difficult to share and thank you for your courage and trust. We would also like to thank the Oranga Tamariki Pacific Advisory Group and the Voices of Whānau and Community Team for your invaluable guidance and support.

Caveats

This report is subject to the written terms of engagement between Integrity Professionals and Oranga Tamariki. Pacific families, carers and social workers from Pacific community providers who participated in this qualitative research were the source of information. Information provided was sensitive and personal. Efforts have been made to ensure anonymity of all research participants. The findings in this final report have been formed on this basis.

The views and recommendations outlined in this report are based on the stories and feedback received from research participants and are not necessarily those of Oranga Tamariki.

1 Integrity Professionals Limited (IPRO) is a consultancy company established in 2007 specialising in Pacific partnership and engagement, strategic planning and organisational development.

A young child with dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is sitting on a grey couch. They are looking down at a smartphone held in their hands. The background shows a window with light blue patterned curtains.

Minister's Foreword

**E leai se mea e sili atu i lo lou aiga
(Samoan proverb)**

Nothing is more important than your family.

Anyone familiar with the Pacific world knows that nothing takes priority over family. Pacific people are not alone in this of course. But sometimes it seems that their voices aren't heard.

That's why the *Ola manuia mo alo ma fanau Pasefika* report is so important.

This is the first time Oranga Tamariki has gone out to Pacific people to ask them about their experiences, both as caregivers and as parents whose children have been taken into care.

It is true that some of the responses are stark and sobering. While in many cases Oranga Tamariki has been serving Pacific people and their families well, when it comes to such important areas as cultural sensitivity and awareness, providing access to information, and being responsive to families' needs Oranga Tamariki can – and indeed must – do better.

The voices in this report (and in *Talanoa Mai Tamaiki*, the voices of Pacific children and young people) will help achieve this Government's vision, which is that Aotearoa New Zealand is the best place in the world to raise children.

It is important to thank all those who have helped prepare *Ola manuia mo alo ma fanau Pasefika*: Integrity Professionals, who conducted the research; the Pacific Panel of leaders in various fields who provided wise counsel and guidance; the Voices of Whānau and Community team and others at Oranga Tamariki who helped in so many ways.

But most of all I'd like to thank the Pacific families, carers and social workers from Pacific community providers who provided their time and shared their experiences. Talking about such personal matters as having a child removed or taking a child into care is not easy. Their efforts have been worthwhile, and their voices have been heard.

Hon Poto Williams
Associate Minister for Children



Executive Summary

Context

The Oranga Tamariki Voices of Whānau and Community team commissioned Integrity Professionals (IPRO) in November 2020 to explore the experiences of Pacific families with Oranga Tamariki and where possible make recommendations based on improving those experiences. *Ola manuia mo alo ma fanau Pasefika* represents the experiences of Samoan, Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, Fijian, Niuean, Tokelauan and Tuvaluan families across Aotearoa New Zealand who have had formal interactions with Oranga Tamariki.

Method

Samoan, Tongan and Cook Islands Māori researchers used a talanoa approach to facilitate a culturally safe exchange during focus groups and semi-structured interviews. An online survey was available for those who wanted to provide anonymous responses. In total, 63 Pacific families and 10 Pacific social workers participated in this exploratory research. Focus group sessions ranged from one to one and half hours and interviews were between 40 minutes and one hour. Interviews were recorded with participants' permission.

Key Findings

There was mixed feedback from Pacific families about their experiences with Oranga Tamariki.

Social worker support was identified as a key factor in many positive interactions.

Families who had children removed, and had Oranga Tamariki Pacific social workers assigned to them, had good relationships with their social workers and communicated well with them. Those families reported that they felt a Pacific social worker understood their context and background and was passionate about helping.

However, families who had children removed and did not have an Oranga Tamariki Pacific social worker assigned to them felt that this would have given them some assurance that they were listened to and understood.

Connection to culture and understanding their whakapapa were identified as important to Pacific families. Other priorities for families included providing a caring and nurturing environment, treasuring children and young people, making positive decisions and choices, and keeping children with family.

There were different challenges and issues raised by Pacific families that primarily related to poor relationships with Oranga Tamariki and a lack of culturally informed practice. While families acknowledged the part they had played in decisions that led to Oranga Tamariki being involved in their lives, many families expressed vulnerability and confusion about formal processes. Despite some significant challenges, however, the strength and resilience of Pacific families were evident in their stories.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed by the research project team² to improve Pacific families' experiences with Oranga Tamariki.

1. Relationships

Explore relationships-based practice and the implementation of Va'aifetū practice principles (dignity, diversity of thought, respect for difference, cultural humility, and emotional intelligence).

2. Role of social workers

Support mana-enhancing practice that incorporates Pacific worldviews, models, cultural evidence and knowledge bases in line with Va'aifetū.

Strengthen cultural intelligence across the workforce and ensure practitioners can relate to Pacific families, carers and providers.

3. Partnerships with agencies and service providers

Review how effective Oranga Tamariki has been in partnering with external organisations including schools and community providers to support Pacific families whose children are in care.

4. Rights and information

Prioritise the rights of Pacific people to agency and participation through being informed in ways they understand and are meaningful to them.

Support Pacific families to understand their rights and Oranga Tamariki processes.

Explore opportunities to simplify resources and use technology to ensure Pacific families are meaningfully informed.

5. Financial support and resources

Ensure adequate access to financial support and support services for Pacific children, young people, families and carers.

6. Participation in decision-making and Family Group Conferences

Review the extent to which Oranga Tamariki processes are designed, delivered, implemented, and practised in ways that are culturally relevant and mana-enhancing for Pacific families and support their genuine participation.

Ensure there is culturally informed planning for Pacific young people transitioning home.

7. Communication

Ensure communication with Pacific families is culturally sensitive, respectful and tailored.

Ensure relational practice is embedded across the organisation to improve meaningful and timely communication.

8. Pacific culture and whakapapa

Support Pacific children and young people to strengthen their Pacific identities and understanding of their Pacific cultures.

Strengthen family finding practices across the organisation so children can learn their whakapapa.

Support the ongoing building and strengthening of children's relationships with their family and extended family.

9. Voice and needs of Pacific children and young people

Ensure there is a focus on understanding and appreciating the perspectives of Pacific children and young people as part of culturally informed planning processes.

Ensure practice and resources support recognising and treating trauma in a holistic framework.

² The research team comprises Integrity Professionals, and the relevant Oranga Tamariki teams: Voices of Whānau and Community, Evidence Centre, Professional Practice Group, Pacific Strategy Team, Voices of Children and Young People, and Learning Design and Planning.



Introduction

Background

Pacific communities are many and varied. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific cultures include those from Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Fiji, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Niue. Pacific values centre on the significance of extended family and tend to emphasise the needs and goals of the group as a whole, rather than the needs and desires of each individual (Dunlop, 2013; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991; Mulitalo-Lauto, 2001; Tiatia & Foliaki, 2005).

Children and young people are a vital component of Pacific families, and it is the quality of their relationships within families and with other members of the wider community (and interconnections between them) that impact on each individual's identity and wellbeing (Salesa, 2017).

This interconnectedness can be a protective factor and facilitate strong social wellbeing. The 'Vā' or sacred space intricately connects children, young people, families and communities. It encapsulates core values such as reciprocity, respect, genealogy, observance of tapu relationships, language and belonging, which all contribute to social wellbeing, identity and culture³. Wellbeing tends to be understood holistically and includes consideration of cultural, physical, spiritual and environmental perspectives (Health Research Council, 2005; Pulotu-Endemann, 1997). The strength of Pacific peoples often lies in the continuity of traditions woven with a collective desire for self-determination (Oranga Tamariki, 2015)⁴.

3 Ministry of Social Development (2012), Nga Vaka o Kāiā Tapu – A Pacific Conceptual Framework to address Family Violence in New Zealand Pasefika ProudR source-Nga-Vaka-o-Kaiga-Tapu-Main-Pacific-Framework.pdf [accessed on 26/7/2021]; Gray, (2001); Mulitalo-Lauto, (2001), Mulitalo (2001)

4 Oranga Tamariki (2015), Working with Pacific peoples: Va'aifetū | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki; Va'aifetū, Part II: Principles, Cultural Frameworks, Guidelines

Pacific Demographics

381,642

Pacific people were in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2018

8.1%

Pacific population of total Aotearoa New Zealand population ⁵

66.4%

of the Pacific population in Aotearoa New Zealand were born here

\$24,300

was the median income for Pacific people

7.7%

of the Pacific population had a Bachelor's degree or Level 7 qualification

23.4

years was the average age of the Pacific population compared with the general population, which was 38 years

49.7%

of the Pacific population were employed full time

24.5%

of the Pacific population had no qualification

7.1%

of the Pacific population were unemployed

30.6%

of the Pacific population were not in the labour force

63.9%

of the Pacific population lived in Auckland

91%

of the Pacific population spoke English

⁵ The 2018 Census had a low response rate overall (83%) and for Pacific people it was 65%. Statistics New Zealand subsequently introduced a new method to capture information about the resident population. Using this new approach, the Census 2018 Pacific response rate increased to 73.5%. The Census 2018 data is an official measure and has subsequently been used to highlight Pacific demographic information in this report.



Purpose

The purpose of this research was to gather insights from Pacific families and carers about their experiences with Oranga Tamariki. The research was conducted from November 2020 to July 2021.

Integrity Professionals approached Pacific families whose children have been removed and placed in the care of the Oranga Tamariki Chief Executive and Pacific carers who look after children in care ⁶. As a result of the wide recruitment approach, some social workers from Pacific community providers also shared their personal experiences as family members and their professional insights. Oranga Tamariki social workers were not included in the research because the focus was on the experiences of Pacific families with Oranga Tamariki. *Ola manuia mo alo ma fanau Pasefika* therefore shares the experiences of Pacific families, Pacific carers, and social workers who have interacted with Oranga Tamariki.

This qualitative exploratory research aims to:

- improve Oranga Tamariki's understanding of the voices, insights and experiences of Pacific families that Oranga Tamariki interacts with;
- improve Oranga Tamariki's understanding of the information and communication needs of Pacific families;
- create ethnic-specific personas to inform culturally appropriate approaches when engaging with Pacific families;
- support and contribute to the Oranga Tamariki practice framework; and
- inform the Pacific Strategy 2021 – 2024 ⁷.

The report focuses solely on the qualitative interviews, focus groups and online surveys that were undertaken with Pacific families, carers and social workers from Pacific providers.

⁶ For more information about Pacific children in care see Appendix 1.

⁷ Refer to Oranga Tamariki Pacific Strategy 2018 – 2021





Method

Overview

The approach to undertaking this qualitative research was to engage with Pacific communities and recruit Pacific families who had any experience in engaging with Oranga Tamariki. To that end, Integrity Professionals developed a discussion guide (which included a Pacific fanau focus group guide, participant information sheet and consent form (Appendix 3). The guide included the proposed questions and a procedure (run sheet) for facilitators undertaking focus groups. Oranga Tamariki provided comments and feedback on the discussion guide and approved it for use in the project. The consent form and information sheets were also translated into Samoan, Cook Islands Māori and Tongan by the Pasifika Resource Centre.

Recruitment

Pacific researchers of Samoan, Tongan and Cook Islands Māori descent led the design and development of the approach. Researchers used a snow-balling sampling technique⁹ and initial approaches were made to existing contacts in Pacific communities and Pacific community providers, in the targeted geographic locations. Oranga Tamariki regional staff were also approached by the Voices of Whānau and Community team to support the recruitment of participants, and Integrity Professionals followed up with potential families who were identified by regional offices.

The geographic locations were identified based on the number of Pacific children and young people in care across both urban and rural areas by ethnicity.

Table 1. Geographic Location by Ethnic-specific Group

Auckland	Samoan
	Tongan
	Cook Island
Wellington	Samoan
	Māori-Pacific
Timaru	Mixed Pacific

Pacific facilitators led the field work from December 2020 to July 2021. Where possible, facilitators were matched with families from the same ethnicity.

Pacific facilitators used a talanoa approach in their interactions with Pacific families. The first two focus groups were undertaken in January 2021. Feedback from these initial focus groups included a preference by Pacific families to talk privately or one-on-one with facilitators, rather than in a focus group format, due to privacy. As a result, Integrity Professionals refined the engagement approach and Pacific facilitators started offering interviews face-to-face, via Zoom or over the phone. A greater number of families were interested in sharing their stories once the methodology changed. Interviews were recorded where families gave permission.

In June 2021, an online survey was developed to encourage increased participation from Pacific families. The online survey was open from 25 June to 15 July 2021. The survey was distributed by Oranga Tamariki and Integrity Professionals. Integrity Professionals also sent the online survey to research participants who had missed their interview time and who may have preferred a more anonymous mechanism to provide feedback. Oranga Tamariki sent the online survey link to Pacific staff networks within the organisation (to view the survey questions, see Appendix 4).

Participants

As a result of approaching Pacific community providers to support the recruitment of Pacific families who had had an experience or engagement with Oranga Tamariki, some social workers were also interested in sharing their experiences. Ten social workers from Pacific community providers participated in this research. Several of the social workers were also part of a wider family group who had their own experiences with Oranga Tamariki; therefore these social workers provided insights both as professionals and as family members. Like the Pacific families and carers who participated in this research, all research participants were guaranteed anonymity; therefore further demographic information about these participants is not presented.

Several Pacific professionals who worked for schools and other community services were also part of the 63 Pacific families who engaged in the research.

In total, 73 Pacific participants shared their stories of engagement with Oranga Tamariki. A breakdown of participants by type and engagement methodology is outlined in Tables 2 and 3 below. Approximately 17% of the participants identified with more than one Pacific ethnicity.

Table 2. Type of participants (Pacific families vs social workers from Pacific community providers)

Pacific families	Social workers from Pacific community providers	Total
63	10	73

Table 3. Number of participants by engagement

Number of participants	51	22	73

⁹ A snow-balling sampling technique was used to recruit research participants. This involved initial research participants identifying other participants.

Ethnicity of participants

Most of the 73 participants were Samoan (n=26), followed by Cook Island Māori (n=19), Tongan (n=7), Samoan/Māori (n=4), Fijian (n=3), Niuean (n=3), and Tokelauan (n=2). The following were mixed ethnicities where one person was recorded: Māori, New Zealand European, Samoan/Fijian, Cook Island Māori/Māori, Samoan/Cook Island Māori, Tokelauan/Tuvaluan, Tokelauan/Tuvaluan/Māori, Tongan/Fijian, New Zealand-born Samoan.

Table 4. Ethnicity of participants

Samoan	26
Cook Island	19
Tongan	7
Samoan/Māori	4
Fijian	3
Niuean	3
Tokelauan	2
Māori	1
New Zealand European	1
Samoan/Fijian	1
Cook Island Māori/Māori	1
Samoan/Cook Island Māori	1
Tokelauan/Tuvaluan	1
Tokelauan/Tuvaluan/Māori	1
Tongan/Fijian	1
New Zealand born Samoan	1

Table 5. Age breakdown of participants*

17-24	4
25-34	15
35-44	16
45-54	12
55-64	11
65-74	2

* 13 participants did not provide their age

Analysis

Pacific consultants collated notes from focus groups, transcripts and results from the online survey, reviewed and analysed the qualitative data. Some of the experiences that Pacific families, carers and social workers shared are presented in this report and are supported by quotes. Unless otherwise stated, the experiences identified in Section 2 are from Pacific family participants. Recommendations were developed in response to those experiences.

To highlight some of the experiences of Pacific families personas were also created. These personas are fictional characters created to represent different types and experiences of Pacific families who might engage with Oranga Tamariki. They are based on the responses from focus groups and one-on-one interviews with Pacific families. Personas help to guide design and development of resources by creating an understanding of user needs. These personas can be used in reviewing existing practices and resources or in designing new ones. They can be found in Appendix 2.

Strengths and Limitations

There were a number of strengths to the approach taken. In particular:

- Integrity Professionals used existing connections with Pacific communities and Pacific community providers to reach out to potential research participants. Oranga Tamariki shared the research opportunity widely through offices across Aotearoa New Zealand. The information contained in this report reflects the 73 Pacific families, carers and social workers in Pacific community providers whom Integrity Professionals engaged with
- Tailoring the engagement approach and moving from focus groups to semi-structured interviews suited Pacific families better and allowed for greater trust and privacy
- The design and purpose of this research was broad in scope and allowed Pacific families to share their stories about their interactions with Oranga Tamariki.

There were also limitations to the research:

- The recommendations contained in this report are based on the specific feedback and experiences received from this group of participants and may not represent the views held by others
- Information gleaned from the focus groups was based on a number of families sharing their stories as a group, while other families responded with rich and more detailed responses in interviews
- Online survey responses were also not as detailed as the interviews
- The different data sets are not directly comparable – some involved collective responses in focus groups and others involved family interviews, and individual responses to an online survey.

Future Research

Future research could focus on:

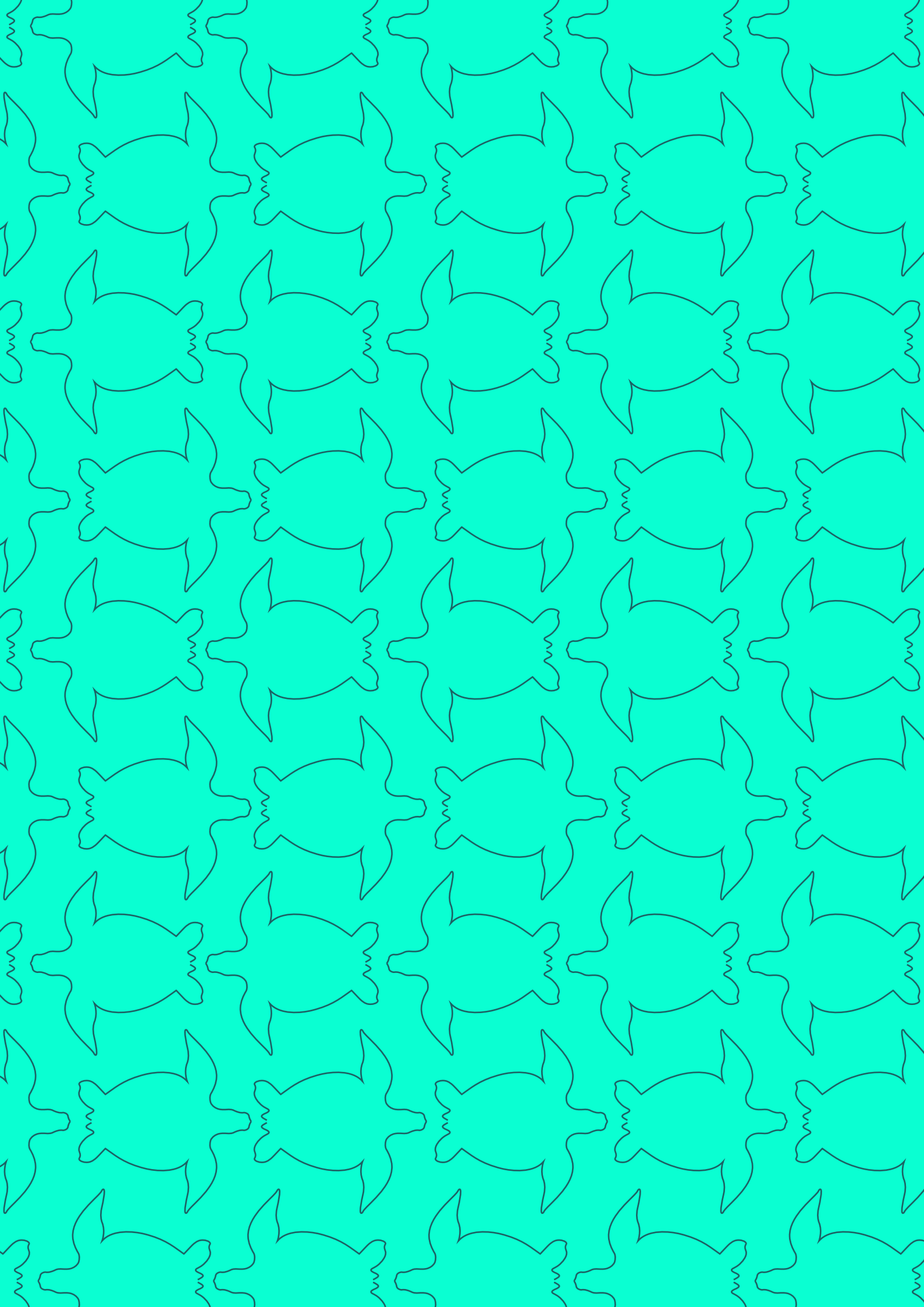
- an exploratory literature review
- aspects of the feedback identified in this research
- sourcing further qualitative data from social work staff within Oranga Tamariki to 'sense check' the issues raised and experiences outlined
- a formal engagement approach to community providers nationally to build on the findings of this report.

Report Structure

This report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1** outlines the key priorities and what was important for Pacific families, Pacific carers and social workers
- **Section 2** highlights some experiences that include both positive feedback and challenges families, carers and social workers from Pacific community providers faced engaging with Oranga Tamariki. Quotes are presented to illustrate the experiences.





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Findings Section 1

Family priorities



“O le au matua fanau”

“Our children are our treasures”

- Samoan Proverb

Family Priorities

Some of the experiences that Pacific families who had children removed, Pacific carers and Pacific social workers advised were important to them included:



Connection to culture – supporting children and young people to know who they are and where they come from and to stay connected to their Pacific culture was very important to many families. Many participants stressed that having a connection to your culture builds self-confidence and self-esteem in children. For that reason, some families suggested Oranga Tamariki run cultural workshops for Pacific families and communities that focus on nurturing children and young people.



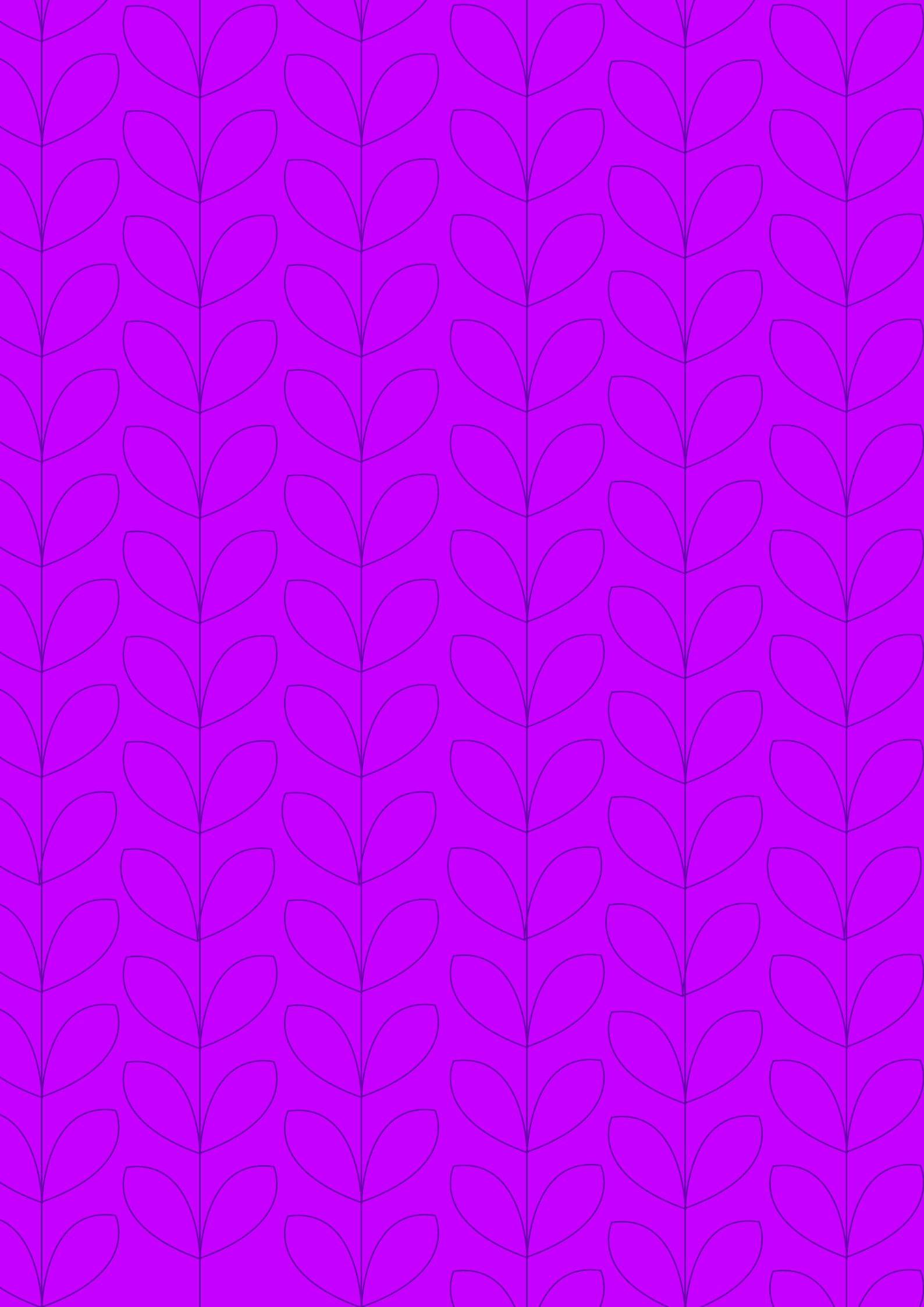
A nurturing environment that focused on wellbeing, safety, happiness and respect – all families treasured their children and were focused on providing a caring and nurturing environment, including a warm home and being supportive and encouraging so their children could grow strong.



Positive decision-making and choices – Pacific parents wanted to be confident to ask for help when they needed it, support children to attend school to gain an education qualification, participate in parenting courses or programmes, and find a job to support their family financially.



Keeping children with family – having a family plan, advice and support from Oranga Tamariki was identified as important. Many families acknowledged that in some cases it was not always possible or desirable to keep children with their family, particularly where the safety of children was compromised. This aside, families reiterated the importance of family connections as being in the best interests of the child in most situations.





Findings Section 2

**Engagement experiences
with Oranga Tamariki**



Engagement experiences with Oranga Tamariki



This section highlights the positive and challenging experiences shared by Pacific families, carers and social workers from Pacific community providers.

Experiences with Oranga Tamariki fell into the following categories:

1. Relationships
2. Role of social workers
3. Partnerships with agencies and service providers
4. Rights and information
5. Financial support and resources
6. Participation in decision-making and Family Group Conferences

7. Communication
8. Culture and whakapapa
9. Voice and needs of Pacific children and young people.

The research project team made recommendations to improve these experiences.

1 Relationships

Me 'anga'anga ta'okotai i kotou, ka manuia

You will succeed if you work together – Cook Islands Proverb

All Pacific families who participated in this research described how relationships were key to their experience with Oranga Tamariki. A family's experience and perceptions of Oranga Tamariki were based on their interactions with social workers, and how these social workers established and developed rapport with them.

Pacific families shared their experiences of different social worker relationships within the Oranga Tamariki system. Some families who had children removed and placed in the care of the Chief Executive described experiences with child social workers. Other Pacific family members who acted as carers described their relationships and experiences with carer social workers. What was clear throughout was that the quality of the relationship with social workers had far-reaching impacts on multiple domains for Pacific families.

Pacific families described how these experiences were affected by cultural understanding and principles of engagement requiring empathy, respect, dignity and empowerment.

"Relationships are very important for Māori and Pacific. Our context is very important in understanding all the issues we face." Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

Positive experiences were described when relationships involved social workers who communicated clearly...

"The consistent communication between myself and infant's support team was fantastic." Niuean/New Zealand European Mother – South Island

"The social workers who approached my family and I were transparent in their approach. They explained everything and made it clear they were not there to take my kids off us, but to see if we could get some support for my wife and I... They were non-judgemental." Samoan/Cook Islands Māori Father – South Island

... were helpful and responsive to the needs of Pacific families...

"Any time I have contact with them, they're always very helpful and always give information that I ask for. And if I ring them or anything, they pick up straight away... They're always engaging. So, I never had a problem with them." Samoan Father – North Island

... and understood the values of Pacific families.

"Yeah, yeah it's good. Because [my social worker] is Pacific and he understands my values. I learnt to respect him, and I show him my respect. He showed me mine and we just shoot it off. You know, no hidden agenda or anything. We're just here to talk my son out. He hasn't got anything hidden against me." Samoan Father – North Island

Positive experiences were also experienced when parents changed their parenting style...

"I guess the good thing about OT is that we have reflected how we discipline our kids. So instead of snapping and smacking them the way we used to, because that's how we were brought up, you know – smacked with a broom [laugh] – we looked at it – and our relationship with our kids and how we discipline them is way better." Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

... but for some Pacific families, the burden to build good relationships fell on them.

"There were good experiences I had but that depends on us pushing for it. If I didn't establish a good relationship with the social worker, I would not understand a lot of things." Cook Islands Māori/Māori Mother – North Island

"My son-in-law would go and demand an FGC [Family Group Conference]. We shouldn't have to demand an FGC. I am tired... of them. I am really tired. We have family meetings every month, having feeds, laughing ourselves. We invited them to our family meetings, and they never turned up [twice]. They don't even send an email to say, 'no sorry we can't come' and that is what prompted me to make a complaint. We want to ensure the families grow stronger. When there is one little thing they jump in and make it a big thing. They are never there through the other times." Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

"It's quite clear to me communication is the key. I am grateful I can manage that part of things and that I can get support with OT. I am nearly 70." Samoan Grandmother – North Island

Many Pacific families described poor experiences when relationships were not nurtured by Oranga Tamariki

Many Pacific families felt their social workers had poor relationships with them. This resulted in poor and sometimes distressing experiences for those families as they received limited information and access to support. Some families felt that building a rapport was critical but found it particularly difficult to start, build or maintain a relationship with anyone from Oranga Tamariki. Good relationships were key to Pacific families' ability to engage effectively with Oranga Tamariki.

"I have had many family members go through the system and our family not being treated right. The social workers were not transparent and spoke to our family like we were dumb or something." Cook Island Māori Mother – North Island

"I give up in the end. I know I can't get through to them. I know they are not going to listen. They don't listen to other sides of the stories." Cook Islands Māori Carer – North Island

Pacific parents and grandparents experienced distress when Oranga Tamariki acted before establishing a relationship with those families

Many Pacific families described how their children or grandchildren were interviewed and talked to by Oranga Tamariki at school, without their prior knowledge or permission. Families were distraught and upset to learn that someone had reported them to Oranga Tamariki, and that social workers did not first establish a relationship with the family to discuss their situation and learn about any challenges they may have been facing as a family. Families also described their concern that their children were interviewed alone, without their parents or grandparents present to support them.

"I think the most upsetting thing was... that they had interviewed the kids [at school]... I didn't know that..." Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

"Our eldest moko had an interview and the kura and I was like 'you don't have to ring me and ask? Or anything?' I got no issues... I would like to be notified..." Cook Islands Māori Grandmother – North Island

Poor relationship-building left Pacific families emotionally struggling when their children were removed

Many families experienced limited communication from Oranga Tamariki and struggled emotionally when their children were uplifted. Some reported that they could not get a reply from anyone as to where their children were and whether they were safe. Some parents waited for weeks to hear back from a social worker about their children.

"Lack of communication from OT puts strain on families – a child was uplifted and the family was told it would be for two nights, but it ended up being for eight weeks and no one bothered to call the family. They were so upset and worried about the child." Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

"We understood that COVID makes things very difficult – but what's wrong with a letter? What's wrong with a phone call? You don't have a problem with taking my moko off me, but you can't ring me and ask how we are going? You can't ring me and tell me what is going on with my mokos?" Cook Islands Māori Grandmother – North Island

Pacific families were discouraged when their social workers changed, and key information was not passed on

Many families talked about their frustrations in having to advise every social worker they worked with about their story repeatedly. They expressed how tiring and disappointing it was to have to repeat everything to every single person they engaged with.

"We had to repeat everything to OT several times. We worry about OT's capacity to keep records. They ask the same questions every time we got a new social worker. It's discouraging good families, if OT don't keep a record of our family history and what we have told them previously." Fijian Caregiver – North Island

"They go through a lot of social workers which is not helpful." Tokelauan/Tuvaluan Mother – North Island



Recommendation 1: Relationships

Explore relationships-based practice and the implementation of Va'aifetū practice principles (dignity, diversity of thought, respect for difference, cultural humility and emotional intelligence).



Role of social workers

“O le tagata ma lona aiga, o le tagata ma lona fa’asinomaga”

Every person belongs to a family (aiga) and every family belongs to a person – Samoan Proverb

Workforce development and the use of Pacific cultural frameworks and worldviews were consistently raised across focus groups, interviews and the online survey.

Support from social workers key for Pacific families

Social worker support was identified as a key factor in many positive interactions.

Families who had children removed, and had Oranga Tamariki Pacific social workers assigned to them, had good relationships with their social workers and communicated well with them. Those families reported that they felt a Pacific social worker understood their context and background and was passionate about helping.

However, families who had children removed and did not have an Oranga Tamariki Pacific social worker assigned to them felt that this would have given them some assurance that they were listened to and understood.

For some Pacific families who were carers, social work support was invaluable in navigating what was considered a complicated and daunting system.

They noted that their social workers were transparent, explained processes clearly, and were non-judgemental and supportive.

“It’s really good to have my own social worker. My relationship with my social worker is good... It’s good that the mother has her own social workers.” Niuean Carer – North Island

*“I have found some social workers are open minded.”
Tokelauan Mother – North Island*

Social workers in Pacific community providers appreciated the complexities within which Pacific social workers in Oranga Tamariki work

Many of the participants reflected on the difficulty that Pacific social workers must have in working in a complex government system with the additional pressure of supporting Pacific families in their own communities.

"The majority of the [OT] social workers... they're doing it because they are passionate about their work." Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

"There are some beautiful, kind, compassionate social workers." Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

Poor experiences were reported when Oranga Tamariki social workers had limited knowledge and understanding of Pacific worldviews and Pacific protocols

Many families felt disrespected and often misunderstood. They described feelings of frustration and disempowerment because social workers interpreted interactions differently from how they perceived them and did not understand Pacific and Māori culture. There was a lack of cultural understanding and a personal and confirmation bias experienced by Pacific families.

"Social workers have no understanding of cultural framework." Tongan Mother – South Island

"The basics weren't followed... like take your shoes off when you come into my house!" Samoan Mother – North Island

"I know it has a bad reputation in there, culturally in there and I am praying for some of those cultural changes. I can see where the system is very... not culturally diverse enough to understand the different family settings and cultural perspectives and the family should be more involved rather than OT demanding. They need to have an honest korero about cultural competency."

Samoan Mother – North Island

Matching Pacific families with ethnic-specific social workers was suggested by some Pacific families as this could potentially remove a number of barriers many Pacific families experienced, including a lack of cultural awareness, appreciation and understanding of Pacific families' contexts and worldviews.

"They should have Samoan representatives because the only representative over there, was from Tonga... I wonder if they have the other islands as representatives? My wife has a language barrier. So, I have to be more active in the discussion. And also, the material... there should be a Samoan representative and Samoan language materials. It's good that we do understand but imagine other clients with the language barrier. There must be a Samoan." Samoan Father – South Island

Perceived discrimination and stereotypes impacted on engagement experiences

Most Pacific families felt discriminated against because of stereotypes Oranga Tamariki social workers had about abuse of children being an intrinsic part of Pacific cultures. Discrimination and racism were mentioned by many Pacific families who had their children removed. They were frustrated and angry that they were disadvantaged from the start without being able to properly explain their family dynamics and context. This led to miscommunication, confusion and distrust.

"Having a biased case worker did not help, being treated and labelled as an unworthy parent and being unsafe for the kids to be around affects you mentally and physically." Cook Islands Māori father – North Island

"If social workers were culturally trained or educated to engage with the Cook Island Māori community. I did not like how the social worker approached our Cook Island Māori community with language that did not suit us and was not very accommodating – culturally." Cook Islands Māori grandmother – North Island

"Learn about cultures, because they only go by the Pakeha way, what the Pakeha wrote down on the paper. We are mixed cultures in this country. Learn every culture." Cook Islands Māori mother – North Island

Inexperience impacts negatively on positive outcomes for Pacific families

Several social workers thought that some Oranga Tamariki social workers were inexperienced and did not understand the system, which impacted on families' experiences, wellbeing and mental health when children were removed.

"I think they don't have enough experienced social workers; they can be new graduates who are not yet experienced... OT staff are fresh out of studying and not enough road experience or they bring in someone who does not know anything or enough on the case... which results in poor outcomes." Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider - North Island



Recommendation 2: Role of social workers

Support mana-enhancing practice (Oranga Tamariki, 2021) that incorporates Pacific worldviews, models, cultural evidence and knowledge bases in line with Va'aifetū.

Strengthen cultural intelligence across the workforce and ensure practitioners can relate to Pacific families, carers and providers.

3 Partnerships with agencies & service providers

“Takanga ‘emau fohe”

Moving in unison – Tongan Proverb

All Pacific families who participated in this research, social workers in Pacific community providers and Pacific professionals within families explained that, to improve Pacific children and young people's wellbeing, it was critical to build and strengthen partnerships between Oranga Tamariki, community providers and schools.

The intention of Oranga Tamariki to collaborate with other agencies and community providers was recognised

Some social workers and Pacific professionals within families recognised that Oranga Tamariki had good intentions to partner and collaborate effectively with other agencies and providers.

“Some great [Oranga Tamariki] social workers trying to collaborate more with NGOs.” Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

“We have regular meetings regionally where Oranga Tamariki attends and updates agencies, [and] are always very informative.” Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

Disappointment that Oranga Tamariki did not trust or work more closely with Pacific community providers

Most social workers felt that there was a lack of trust which resulted in community-based services not being included in a comprehensive or holistic way. They felt that Pacific families were often more open with the Pacific community-based services and afraid of Oranga Tamariki.

“We need open communication and collaboration... There is not enough information for clients, and we need to be on the same page, so we have a clear plan moving forward. That's key for the purpose of the children. Communication and commitment to schedules with families is important.” Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

Feelings of frustration and being hampered in providing a quality service to Pacific children and families

Many social workers from Pacific community providers were frustrated by Oranga Tamariki because they felt inadequately informed or prepared to effectively engage with Pacific children and families.

“OT does not share information adequately and community providers go in blind...unprofessional.” Social worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

“As a social worker [in a Pacific community provider] – there is too much gate-keeping – referral comes with limited info, first-hand I've been involved around eight years or so. Working collaboratively with Oranga Tamariki is very hard, given the fact that the referral comes and there is very little info about family.” Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

Social workers from community providers explained that...

- undertaking joint family visits and following up were important activities

“Ideally, we are meant to talk before a referral is made to me, a social worker, we want to do conjoint visits but... it doesn't happen that way.” Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

“Them against us and against the client. They didn't share information with us, and we could have helped. They are not doing enough visits with clients. They have old reports and no follow up. Their decisions are old. They are slowly changing processes and getting better. They need to meet with us as professionals at the table. It's all just a one-way street.” Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

- Oranga Tamariki struggled to recognise other expertise and different perspectives

Many Pacific social workers explained that they thought Oranga Tamariki did not recognise therapeutic knowledge and experience. They felt undervalued, under-used and disconnected. They wanted to have open, regular communication and have their cultural knowledge and professional opinions valued.

“They have specialised knowledge, but they need to recognise Pacific specialised knowledge. They need to recognise substance in what we as providers/NGOs do.” Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island



Poor participation or planning led to inadequate support for Pacific children and young people

Some Pacific professionals who work in and with schools described how frustrated they were that Oranga Tamariki did not collaborate well or partner with schools or other professionals. This lack of proactive engagement meant there were missed opportunities to support children and keep them in school. Pacific community providers, other NGOs and education professionals were committed to working in partnership with Oranga Tamariki.

"A social worker from Oranga Tamariki was involved with a Samoan family. The mother was torn between her own family here and her family back in Samoa. She was sending money back to Samoa and sacrificing her own family – no food for the kids... The parents weren't getting on. The social worker was worried about the children's needs not being met... The social worker went on leave. I tried to contact her when she returned but she didn't reply to my phone calls or emails. I started including her in all correspondence (emails) about what I was suggesting to do with the family to try and get a plan developed and wrap some support around the family. The principal of the school was concerned about the children's behaviour at school and found out that they were sleeping in the garage with their mum. The kids stopped going to school... We needed leadership from the legislative [Oranga Tamariki social] worker... there was no action." Samoan Professional – North Island



Recommendation 3: Partnerships with agencies and service providers

Review how effective Oranga Tamariki has been in partnering with external organisations, including schools and community providers, to support Pacific families whose children are in the care of Oranga Tamariki

4 Rights & information

“Pikipiki Hama Kae Vaevae Manava”

The canoes coming together and sharing what they have in their canoes – Tongan Proverb

Information sharing, or lack thereof, was a fundamental issue raised by Pacific families throughout the research project. Many families felt that information was not readily available or shared with them. Pacific families who were carers, and those who had children removed, felt disadvantaged and dislocated from their children and young people without adequate and timely information.

Families had trouble in understanding the legal terminology and paperwork related to rights and responsibilities

Many Pacific families talked about challenges in understanding their rights and responsibilities because they could not understand the paperwork and were often left anxious and worried. They felt confused and overwhelmed by the ‘jargon’. Some families felt disempowered and distraught because they were receiving inconsistent messages and partial information. Pacific families needed to understand the resources and legal documentation they were given. Pacific families felt overwhelmingly disempowered in processes because of a lack of knowledge and information provided by Oranga Tamariki. They had a right to participate in processes but felt they were marginalised.

“We forget that a lot of the information is not easy to process for the people and families. The information is for the white people not Māori and Pasifika. If we got information that showed us steps simplified process, then it will help make sense. We need to be represented otherwise we miss a lot of things. Unless there is someone who knows something about the lawyers or where to get help.” Samoan Mother – North Island

“I want to see literacy and numeracy support for those who cannot read or understand what is written, so they can be more engaged in the process especially around legal language that impacts and affects them. Who can I invite to be an advocate? Is the case manager working for me and understanding the context I am in, for my child?” Samoan Mother – North Island

Resources in ethnic-specific languages are vital

For many Pacific families, access to translated resources or Pacific social workers who could speak a Pacific language were deemed as critical enablers to understand the Oranga Tamariki processes and systems.

“Heart-breaking. How do people manage if they don’t understand? The paperwork is so difficult.” Samoan Mother – North Island

“I tried, but [English] it’s my second language. There’s only that book, nothing for me... It’s hard for me to reply.” Samoan Grandfather – South Island



Recommendation 4: Rights and information

Prioritise the rights of Pacific people to agency and participation through being informed in ways they understand and are meaningful to them. Support Pacific families to understand their rights and Oranga Tamariki processes.

Explore opportunities to simplify resources and use technology to ensure Pacific families are meaningfully informed.

5 Financial support & resources

Lack of timely access to entitlements to pay for children's clothes and early childhood education fees

Many Pacific carers reported their frustration in accessing financial support for the children in their care. For example, Oranga Tamariki advised one young couple who were recently married and had agreed to look after a baby from their extended family that they could purchase baby items and that Oranga Tamariki would reimburse them. After purchasing items for the baby, this couple was subsequently advised that Oranga Tamariki would not reimburse them.

"You know, not every child is going to be the same. You know parents don't ask these things because they want to. They ask because they've been given a child that needs to be looked after. We're gonna need that stuff, you know. A lot of times, most of the time, my wife just went and bought stuff. And then, when we went to get reimbursed, we were asked why? And it's stuff that they told us that we were allowed to go and buy. Just keep the receipts and get reimbursed [they said]... it's just too much." Fijian Father – North Island

"They need to give money to caregivers so they can buy clothes and have resources to care for the child – quickly, not weeks later." Tongan Mother – North Island

"We have to constantly chase up payments from OT to our early childhood centre. When we ring them it's urgent and we never get them first ring. They have to keep calling the social worker and it's embarrassing for us – our mana and dignity is breached. We don't want that stigma associated with our son that he was with OT but when your early childhood centre states quite loudly in front of other parents that your invoice hasn't been paid it's really embarrassing. Payments are consistently one to two months overdue. Makes us look really silly."

Fijian Father – North Island

Counselling, rehabilitation, medical assessments, and other support services were difficult to access

Many Pacific families expressed their frustrations at not being supported to access the right kind of services for their children. They recognised the need to access counselling, rehabilitation services, medical assessments and parenting programs but many experienced barriers and challenges in knowing about the support service, arranging a referral, and the cost and geographic location of the service.

"OT did not offer any support – no counselling. OT told me first they would take the kids but never offered any help." Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

"They have a counsellor for the kids. I had to travel to Raglan. I asked them to help me for travelling. I had to get the girl out of the school early to get the boys out to their counselling appointment. I said I know he needs the counselling, but I ended up saying I am not going to take him to Raglan anymore. They gave me \$20 for petrol to drive to Raglan for counselling. It didn't cover the costs for travelling to and from counselling. I always got lost but I got there. I had to take the kids out early from school, come home, get the kids fed and a drink and then drove to counselling in Raglan and then by the time we got home it was 8pm."

Cook Islands Māori Grandmother – North Island

"...if it's the wellbeing of the child why did the parents get to say no to counselling? They shouldn't get a say... OT uplift the kids and then listen to the parents in the FGC [Family Group Conference] if they say no to counselling? Children should have counselling. Why don't they enforce counselling? Professionals are saying counselling... it should be a requirement."

Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

"We were doing it all. We were finding counsellors, not OT." Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

Access to financial support and resources was identified as critical for enabling intergenerational care


Many Pacific grandparents were caring for grandchildren while their children or their children's spouses were unable to. Some grandparents had children who were incarcerated or who were using drugs and were unable to care for their children. They expressed difficulties in engaging with Oranga Tamariki as grandparents and accessing entitlements or support.

"I was born in Samoa... I am not working as well. I stay home to look after the grandkids... Three under 18-year-olds and one over 18... There is only one income, the benefit... jobseeker right now. \$150 a week."

Samoaan Grandfather – North Island

"A lot of gangs and drugs and everything. Yeah, I was in the mob, you know, my family was all in the mob... The kids' mum went to prison for drugs and stuff like that. My mum is the guardian... She's an honest lady. She goes to Church and stuff like that... I get to see them every day... There are some parents that are still like children. Children can't look after children."

Samoaan Father – North Island

A photograph of a man in a dark hoodie holding a baby on his shoulders. The baby is wearing a grey sweatshirt with a tiger logo and the text 'ATTITUDE NYC 95 DEPARTMENT MCMXXV'. The baby has its arms raised and is smiling. The man is looking up at the baby. In the background, there are trees and a blue fence. A white volleyball is visible in the lower right corner.

Many families who had children removed found it difficult to support their children to go to school. One mother couldn't manage her teenagers and their behaviour. Many families talked about the lack of support they received in general to get 'back on their feet'. This included needing support with parenting, counselling, finding accommodation, financial assistance to pay bills, and finding employment and education opportunities.

Pacific families felt disrespected when they had inadequate access to financial support and other services.

"I didn't have the skills." Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

"For months we were offered no financial support and we were told go on the unsupported child benefit." Samoan Father – South Island



Recommendation 5: Financial support and information

Ensure adequate access to financial support and support services for Pacific children, young people, families and carers.



6 Participation in decision-making & Family Group Conferences

Family Group Conferences were positive, particularly when:

- facilitated well
- the information from Oranga Tamariki was clear
- the meeting was straight-forward
- everyone understood what was required of them
- the family plan and progress were regularly discussed
- a supportive environment was provided (helpful when an interpreter was available).

"I find these really helpful, very empowering, very straightforward for families where we are in a room where we get everyone together, and we kinda highlight what these families' strengths are, where they are lacking, and how we can support in terms of working with the families. So, I think [Family Group Conferences] are great because there are a lot of vulnerable children here."

Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

Conversely, some Pacific families who had children removed felt that Family Group Conferences were intimidating. They also felt bullied and ambushed and that the outcome for their children was predetermined.

"It needs a better name that makes sense to us. We need more notice for meetings and scheduling that they keep and honour – both ways. If people are scared, they won't show." Cook Islands Māori/Māori Mother – North Island

"No wairua in the process or plan."

Samoaan/Māori Mother – North Island

Some of the challenges identified by social workers from community providers with Family Group Conferences included the venue, opening cultural process and the need to have an interpreter to support Pacific families whose second language was English.

"The food is great... I mean, we all kind of you know, create relationships over food... but in terms of where it is, I don't think it should be at the head office... even the basic Talofa, like people don't even do that or malo e lelei they couldn't even do that... Does anyone want to do a prayer? A lot of Pacific families love to pray... There is no like easing into... it. Then the first Family Group Conferences are so long because obviously they have to talk about the medical side of things, the abuse... and that part is really, really hard as well. In terms of our Pasifika families, it's really good to always [have] an interpreter there... really good. Because we don't have like, I guess, words that can explain what mental health, depression is... psychology, like psychology of people don't know those words or how to interpret it."

Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island



Inability to participate in planning and decision-making affected youth transitioning home

Some Pacific families who had children removed and Pacific social workers from Pacific community providers reflected on the difficulty of youth transitioning home.

"You need to prepare youth properly."

Samoa Mother – North Island

"No family plan in place, it's difficult for youth exiting OT care and very hectic if they don't have a plan."

Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

These families felt that there was a lack of focus, planning and support for young people. Pacific families said that young people were ill-prepared to return home and found their youth struggled to get along with their young siblings once they were home. Other families were frustrated with inflexible processes.

"I did my part, but they weren't meeting me half-way. I am grateful for my sister. I was so grateful that my sister knew the law and she was pushing them [Oranga Tamariki]. I am a proud girl. I didn't ask for help from my Cook Island community. We like to kick our people when we are down. With OT they wanted a paper trail of incidents. We didn't go to the Police, we didn't have a paper trail, we tried to keep it in house. We didn't want anyone to know."

Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island



Recommendation 6: Participation in decision-making and Family Group Conferences

Review the extent to which Oranga Tamariki processes are designed, delivered, implemented and practised in ways that are culturally relevant and mana-enhancing for Pacific families and support their genuine participation.

Ensure there is culturally informed planning for Pacific young people transitioning home.

7 Communication

Kimi I te meitaki e te au

Search for goodness and peace – Cook Islands proverb

Some Pacific carers reflected that they felt well supported by Oranga Tamariki.

"I am grateful that I have managed and now have a connection with OT... they are very supportive..I just go to them. Thank God there is a service that will help".-

Samoan Grandmother Carer - North Island

Frequent communication with Oranga Tamariki social workers equated to confidence in the system and built trust.

"The consistent communication between myself and infant's support team was fantastic." Niuean/

New Zealand European Mother – South Island

"Having good communication with whoever the case worker was and whoever supervised us was key for us staying proactive, engaging in everything and showing them, we want our children home."

Cook Islands Māori Father – North Island

Conversely some Pacific families who had children removed:

- experienced limited or no communication with Oranga Tamariki

These families struggled emotionally and felt helpless and powerless when Oranga Tamariki did not return calls or emails.

"The social workers are not easy to find. Email a day or so and they are not available to talk." Samoan Great Aunt – North Island

"Lack of communication from OT puts strain on families – a child was uplifted, and the family was told it would be for two nights, but it ended up being for eight weeks and no one bothered to call the family. They were so upset and worried about the child." Social worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

- felt that during COVID-19 Oranga Tamariki left them

Some families expressed the need to stay connected with Oranga Tamariki by phone, email or letter. They talked about wanting to be kept up to date with how their children were.

"We understood that with COVID makes things very difficult – but what's wrong with a letter? What's wrong with a phone call? You don't have a problem with taking my moko off me, but you can't ring me and ask how we are going? You can't ring me and tell me what is going on with my mokos?" Cook Islands Māori Grandmother – North Island

- felt Oranga Tamariki did not follow up well or regularly review cases

These families thought that Oranga Tamariki held old information about them and their circumstances. One caregiver said Oranga Tamariki hadn't checked in on whether their extended family had provided respite care and they hadn't (they were struggling)

"We were the ones getting interrogated and we are picking up the pieces. I was meant to get respite from the other side of the family, but they were never there to help. Oranga Tamariki didn't follow up to check on me or my wellbeing." Cook Islands Māori Carer – North Island

"Follow up with children (we know you aren't babysitters), we understand that, but in two months' time follow up with the kids and [see] how the parents [are] going, are they doing what they are meant to be doing? Parents might not make changes so Oranga Tamariki need to follow up. Be there... see that we have done things." Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

"Follow up? Are you ok? Have things changed?" Cook Islands Māori Father – North Island

Carers were frustrated with delayed communication from Oranga Tamariki

"Can't be bothered waiting for OT and having to go back and forth. Long application to complete to get anything out of OT. Social worker was nice but not fast at getting back to us so I can't be bothered asking about help."

Samoan Carer – North Island

"Permanency care process quite painful to go through – it's quite a delay. The process was not good, communication was bad." Samoan Carer – North Island

Improving engagement with young Pacific parents requires the use of appropriate communication tools

Most of the young Pacific parents who had children removed explained that they wished Oranga Tamariki would use more appropriate communication methods and that social workers would treat them with respect.

"We are urban. We are young. We are not the older generation that learnt their culture... our context is different... when we go to a meeting [we need to know] what information do we need, so we can be prepared." Cook Islands Māori mother – North Island



Recommendation 7: Communication

Ensure communication with Pacific families is culturally sensitive, respectful and tailored.

Ensure relational practice is embedded across the organisation to improve meaningful and timely communication.

8 Pacific culture & whakapapa

Supporting children to develop family connections and understand their whakapapa was critical to improving their wellbeing

Pacific carers want help finding children's family members and building extended family connections, so children can better understand their Pacific culture, whakapapa and where they come from.

"I know it's difficult because sometimes they are not allowed this and they are not allowed that, but if a kid is hungry about their whakapapa and they can't get the answers directly from their parents, then I think the social worker should work harder, or even just ask, or find out how to complete their whakapapa."

Samoan/Cook Islands Māori Mother – North Island

"Voices of young people in care experience is critical – Pacific kids don't know who their biological family are, their whakapapa, no connection to their families."

Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

Pacific families and carers reflected on how Oranga Tamariki needs to focus on providing appropriate cultural support to Pacific children in its care

"A young child needs the ongoing support of people who can strengthen their understanding of their culture at a deeper spiritual level, than people who can provide surface level solutions only".

Tokelauan/Tuvaluan/Māori Mother – South Island



Recommendation 8: Pacific culture and whakapapa

Support Pacific children and young people to strengthen their Pacific identities and understanding of their Pacific cultures (Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands Māori, Niuean, Fijian, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan).

Strengthen family-finding practices across the organisation so children can learn their whakapapa.

Support the ongoing building and strengthening of children's relationships with their family and extended family.



9 Voice and needs of Pacific children & young people

Transactional planning that did not focus on the needs of children was highlighted in many stories

Many families felt that the voices and needs of Pacific children and young people were not being met. Experiences shared by families indicated a lack of culturally informed planning that was instead transactional.

"This perpetuates a broken system and cycle of care, and the child was the one bearing the brunt of it... A child was stood down for being physically aggressive to a teacher. When looking at the incident and the causal factors, it was clear that the child was hurting and acting out because of a complete breakdown in Oranga Tamariki processes and care. The child had been dropped off to school by the carer she was placed with and unbeknownst to her, that care arrangement changed, and she was picked up from school by completely different carers and put into a new 'home'. How does one expect a vulnerable child to react to such an appalling situation? This should not happen to our young ones. The ones who are most vulnerable are shunted around and not treated as children."

Fijian/New Zealand European – South Island

"I pleaded so many times to different people, also that my brother had told Oranga Tamariki over and over he didn't want to go home and didn't feel safe and Oranga Tamariki are aware of the violence and abuse through a number of years of history yet still forced my brother back home using the excuse of Pacific Island upbringing and lifestyle. This needs to change! This is why so many of our young ones are committing suicide because nobody is listening to their cry for help."

"Dealing with vulnerable children... where is the voice of the children? Where is it? Who is responsible?"

Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

Trauma responses were not recognised or addressed

Families, carers and social workers shared their concern about the wellbeing and behaviour of their Pacific children and young people.

"As a parent I struggle at the moment. I am with [Pacific provider]. I am connected to them and another Māori provider. I am struggling financially. I am struggling with everyday life at home. They separated the kids with different carers. They are now struggling to get to know each other at home. They [are] teenagers now... Her attitude is different, she is totally different. She was struggling to go to school until we found this alternative school. Girls are highly worried, anxious and want to stay in the house."

Tokelauan/Tuvaluan Mother – North Island

"Focus is not on the children but the incident that the children find themselves in."

Social Worker – Pacific Community Provider – North Island

Pacific families and carers shared their desire for their children's lives to be restored

Families and carers were future focused and explained that they wanted their children's lives to be restored. Many families and carers talked about the importance of school in their children's lives and returning to some normality.

"These children being restored to some normality."

Samoan Carer North Island



Recommendation 9: The voice and needs of Pacific children and young people

Ensure there is a focus on understanding and appreciating the perspectives of Pacific children and young people as part of culturally informed planning processes.

Ensure practice and resources support recognising and treating trauma in a holistic framework.





Conclusion



Pacific families who had children removed, Pacific carers and Pacific social workers from community providers shared stories of their interactions with Oranga Tamariki. Many of the participants were positive and supportive of the work being undertaken to keep children and young people safe and flourishing in their own homes.

It was clear from participants that across families and communities there is a sense of collective ownership of children and young people. There was a strong desire to support communities to nurture and support children and young people.

Many stories, however, revealed ongoing struggles and significant frustration with Oranga Tamariki systems, processes and communication methods.

For Pacific children and families to successfully navigate their way through the care and protection system, whether it is at the start when there has been a report, whether a child has been uplifted or when Pacific parents have volunteered to be guardians or carers, they want and need guidance and support.

To successfully achieve this, enhancing social work practice and strengthening cultural intelligence and awareness within the organisation is key. Furthermore, it is recommended that leadership within the organisation continue to create a culture of openness, fairness, support, engagement, accountability and responsibility.

The Va'aifetū principles of cultural humility, dignity, emotional intelligence, diversity of thought and respect for difference were consistently articulated throughout this research by Pacific families. It is recommended that these values remain the guiding principles for engaging effectively with Pacific families and communities.

The findings in this report provide Oranga Tamariki with insights, perspectives and knowledge about how the Pacific families and social workers who participated in focus groups, interviews and the online survey have engaged with the organisation in the past.



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Appendix 1

Profile of Pacific Children in Care

As of 30 June 2021, there were 905 Pacific children in the New Zealand care system. See Figure 1 for the ethnic-specific breakdown of Pacific/Pacific Maori children and young people in the care and protection system.

Figure 1. Number of Pacific children in care by Pacific ethnicity and proportion of Māori and Pacific)

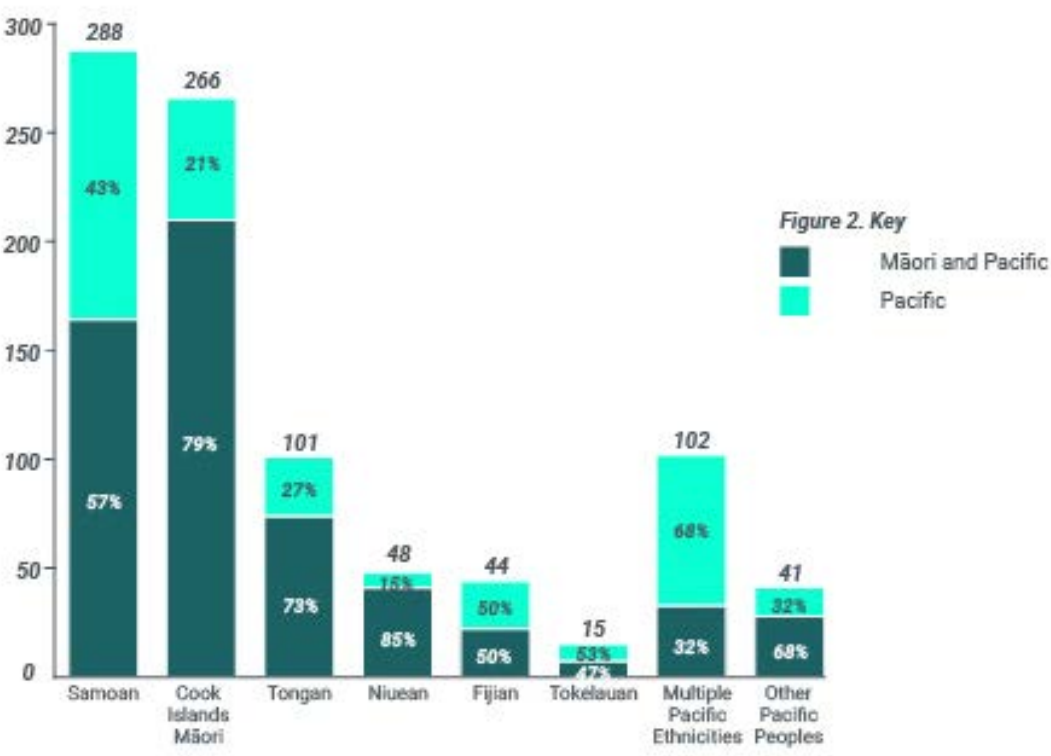


Figure1 illustrates that an almost equal proportion of children and young people in care are;

32%

Samoan ethnicity

30%

Cook Islands Māori ethnicity

62.6%

of Pacific children and young people who were in care on 30 June 2021 lived in the Auckland (North and West Auckland, Central Auckland, South Auckland) and Te Tai Tokerau regions

11%

Tongan and 'multiple Pacific ethnicities'

5%

Niuean, Fijian and 'Other Pacific peoples'

17.3%

of Pacific children and young people who were in care on 30 June 2021 lived in the Midland region (Waikato, Bay of Plenty, East Coast and Taranaki-Manawatu)

2%

Tokelauan ethnicity

10.9%

of Pacific children and young people who were in care on 30 June 2021 lived in the Wellington region

54%

Pacific children and young people in care were male

46%

Pacific children and young people in care were female

4.8%

of Pacific children and young people who were in care on 30 June 2021 lived in Canterbury.

Figure 2. Breakdown of Pacific children and young people in care by age (30 June 2021)

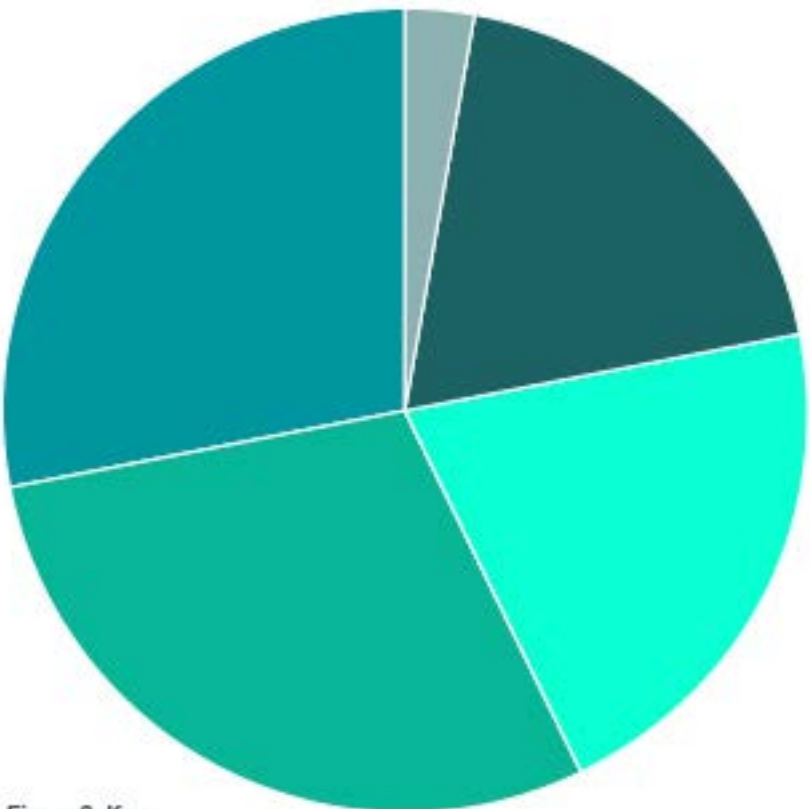


Figure 2. Key



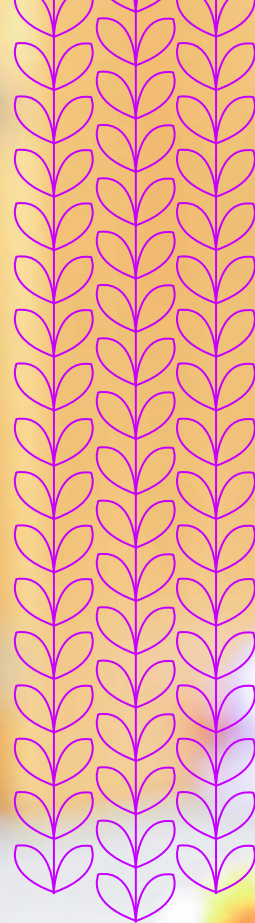
29% 10–13 years age group and

28% 14+ years age group

21% of children in the 6–9 years age group

19% of children in the 2-5 years age group

3% in the 0–1 year age group.



Appendix 2

Personas

The personas are fictional characters created to represent different types and experiences of Pacific families who might engage with Oranga Tamariki. They are based on responses from focus groups and one-on-one interviews.



Jenny

New Zealand-born Samoan/Cook Islands Māori/Māori, 32, Wellington

Jenny has one son and her husband is in Samoa. She is caring for her son and three nieces (15, 12 and 7 years of age).

Jenny's husband is trying to return to Aotearoa New Zealand because of the pandemic. She describes herself as being a busy 'mum'.

"Just work, home, no life!"

She is involved with Oranga Tamariki because of the three nieces she cares for.

"I like the fact that they direct a lot of their questions to my nieces when we are in the same room, because they are old enough to answer themselves. You know, making sure they understood what was going on and how it would affect them."

"The interactions I have had with the social workers was good compared to you know, other stories... Those social workers were really good, in caring for my three nieces."

Oranga Tamariki helped Jenny get into emergency housing, so she could look after her three nieces. An older niece (who was 16) went to one of Jenny's cousins. Jenny was anxious, nervous and scared of looking after her three nieces and wasn't sure she could cope.

No one from the rest of the extended fanau wanted the three girls and Jenny knew that if she didn't take them, they were "not going to move forward in life".

"The social workers from Oranga Tamariki... they've been with us, man, the whole way through. To this point, yeah, especially their first social worker. She made sure that we were all good through lockdown. She checked in. The kids liked both because I had two social workers for the kids, since I have been looking after them."

Jenny feels grateful that Oranga Tamariki provides resources for her nieces and states that she...

"...wouldn't be able to afford the things that Oranga Tamariki provides for the girls."

She explains that the girls need help and support, and she accesses funding to help them with school, such as tutors. Jenny talks about guidelines given to her by Oranga Tamariki and said that as long as she stays and is following the guidelines she is good.

Jenny does struggle sometimes when the girls' birth mother comes back into the girls' lives. Jenny may have said 'no' to the girls about purchasing something like a new pair of shoes. The girls talk to their birth mother on social media and their birth mother talks to Oranga Tamariki and Oranga Tamariki will purchase the shoes without talking to Jenny first.

The mother has been issued a restraining order, so the girls are not meant to see or visit with her but with social media platforms, Jenny knows that the girls are talking to her.

Jenny's priority is to look after her three nieces to the best of her ability and give them opportunities and a good education.





Saane

Tongan, 45 years, Northland

Saane is a 45-year-old mother who migrated from Tonga less than 10 years ago for better opportunities in education and employment. Saane arrived in New Zealand and stayed in an overcrowded house with three families, and five children under the age of five.

A church minister offered Saane an opportunity to work in Northland. Saane moved to Northland and fell in love with a Māori man in Kaitiaki. He was divorced and had three children. They eventually got married and had two children.

Saane's husband was affiliated with gangs and got involved in drug dealing. When times got tough, Saane would often get 'beatings' from her husband. Saane did not seek support from anyone. One day, Saane went to church with her two children, where members of the congregation saw bruising on her arms and face. The church decided to contact the Police and soon after Oranga Tamariki got involved.

"I was so scared that the police were going to find out, but also there was a sigh of relief, that I was going to finally find support and help for myself and my children."

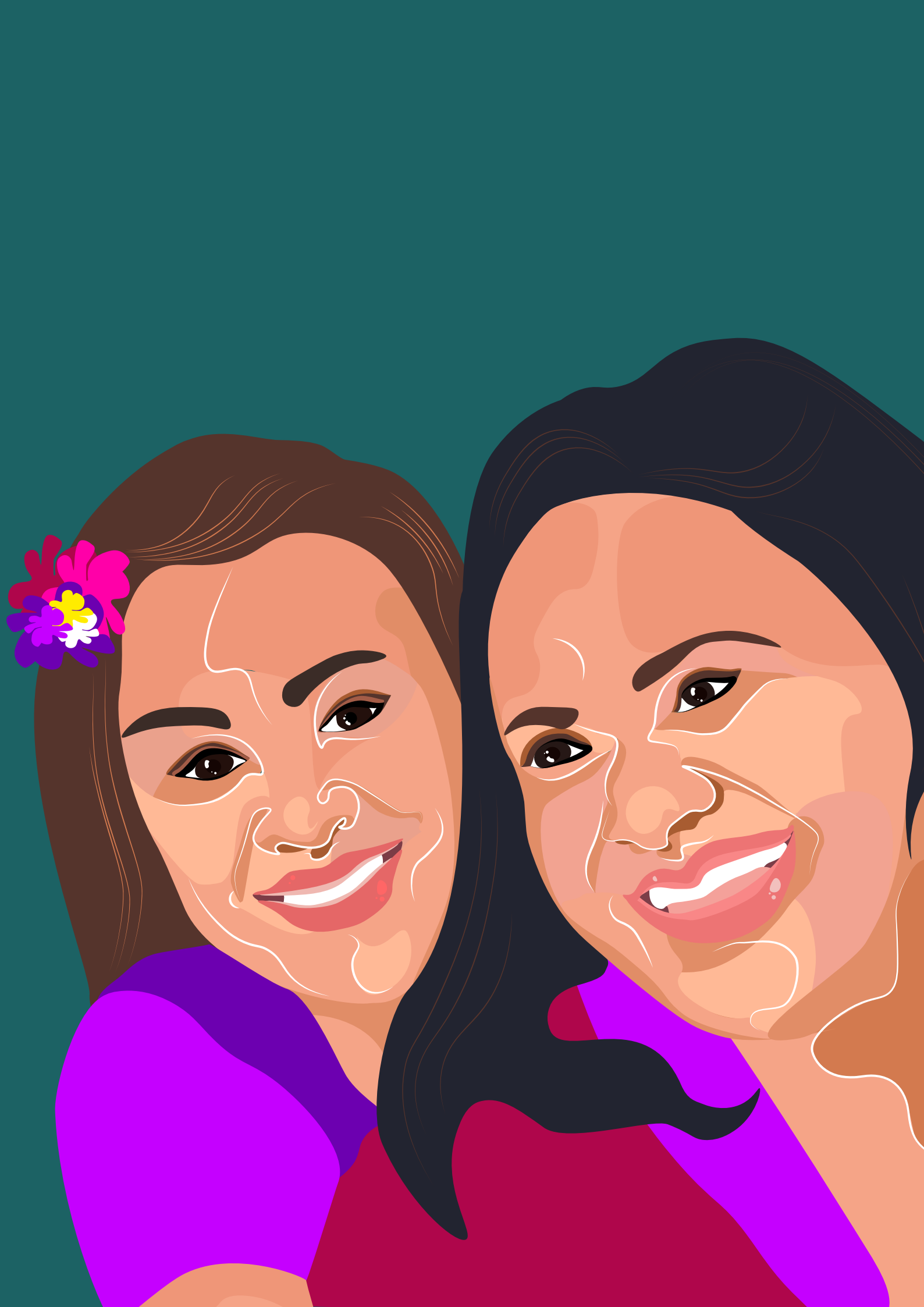
When Oranga Tamariki got involved, an interpreter was not offered and Saane found it very difficult to share her experience and concern for the safety of her children, in English.

"I was really frustrated that Oranga Tamariki couldn't get a Tongan interpreter to help me really express my experiences. I had to speak to my church minister, who had tried to translate on my behalf with the limited English he had. I was so embarrassed."

Oranga Tamariki decided to take the children and provide them a safe place with members of the church and away from her husband.

Saane's priority is getting her children back and having a safe place to live, violence free.

"I am grateful for Oranga Tamariki who gave me and my children an opportunity to still feel connected. It has been a long journey."



Jacob

Jacob is a young Fijian man married to a Māori wife.

They were asked to take care of a newborn belonging to a relative who has a history of her children being uplifted by Oranga Tamariki.

The baby was two days old when he was delivered to Jacob and his new wife.

This was the seventh child uplifted from the same family.

As a result, the newly married couple were forced to change their lives overnight. Jacob became a stay-at-home dad while his wife continued with her PhD.

"They called and asked. And then all of a sudden, the next morning Oranga Tamariki was wanting us to go in and do some paperwork and try and get everything sorted before baby was born."

Taking on a new responsibility, Jacob quickly realised the processes both he and his wife would go through were not simple or straightforward. More than anything, Jacob said there were more obstacles and barriers because of poor case management and communication by Oranga Tamariki. He explained his frustration with the records and data collection of Oranga Tamariki. He said he and his wife spent a long time completing the paperwork and Oranga Tamariki received it all yet on the day they were meant to take the baby, Oranga Tamariki said they couldn't because there was a mix up with the paperwork.

"So, we done all that [the paperwork] and took it all in. Everything they required. And throughout, I guess, the next two to three weeks, we were still doing the same paperwork, they sent us out to do. Not even knowing what our names were! Not even having our address. Knowing nothing about us. And yet, come the day, everything was meant to go through, we weren't able to take baby because they didn't have everything. Our home address was like someone else's home address. You know, like their paperwork was all mixed up. It was just like... hand on heart, wish no one ever goes through that experience."

Another challenge for Jacob and his wife was that they had to communicate with two different Oranga Tamariki offices. The baby was registered in a different office to the couple. He said it didn't make sense and made it more difficult than it had to be.

"At any given stage, the boy's mother could've literally rocked up to our house, taken baby, and we couldn't have done anything. Because they talk about all these orders they got under section blah blah blah, yet it's only an order, only a section. They don't have the paperwork to back it up, nothing. We were told by a social worker herself that if the mother was to come through at any stage and take baby, and the cops were called, she has every right. We got nothing. It's a big deal, man."

Fortunately, the couple were able to build trusting relationships with the Oranga Tamariki social workers eventually, and work through proper processes to gain full custody of the baby. However, the scars from their experiences with Oranga Tamariki will always remain.

"In a matter of a week, we became parents. Fulltime parents. You know, to a newborn. I've got nothing to say about OT. They don't offer much besides the two social workers, because they helped us. And even trying to converse with the managers and that. You won't get an answer out of them. And they'll send you one of their desk workers, you know, with the normal 'how can I help you?' Nothing ever gets done. That's why, I guess, we're happy with where we're at, right now, you know. We're happy because we don't have to deal with their rubbish, you know. Yeah, the system is rubbish."

Jacob and his wife's focus is on being good parents to their boy and providing a warm, loving, stable environment for him to grow up.





Appendix 3

Pacific fanau focus group guide and information

- Pacific Fanau Focus Group Guide
- Participant Information Sheet
- Consent Form

Pacific Fanau Focus Group Guide

Talofa Lava, Kia Orana, Malo e lelei, Ni San Bula Vinaka,
Taloha Ni, Vaka Lofa Lahi Atu, Tena Koutou Katoa.

My name is I work for Integrity Professionals (IPRO).
We have been contracted by Oranga Tamariki to
undertake some research to find out what you think of
Oranga Tamariki.

Research/Focus Group Purpose

The overall purpose of this research is to hear your
voice and thoughts about your interactions with Oranga
Tamariki.

Read through

- Information sheet
- Consent form
- Audio recording requirements

Research/Focus Group Purpose

Between 1-1.5 hours

Welcome

- Facilitator formally welcomes everyone as they
come into the room
- Offers tea/coffee/biscuits or fruit
- Encourages participants to read through information
sheet and consent form and sign.

Introduction (25 mins)

1. Facilitator leads formal welcome and introduces
themselves (ethnicity and professional background
including quals)
2. Round of brief introductions (first names only)
3. Ice breaker (something fun and uplifting – get
participants moving out of seat)

Setting the Scene – “Your thoughts” (50 mins)

4. Facilitator to explain that there are no right or wrong
answers, we just want to understand your thoughts
and hear your feedback on your interactions and
experiences with Oranga Tamariki. Explain short
period of time to get your thoughts – will help partic-
ipants focus and encourage discussion
5. Question: If you think about your last interaction or
experience with Oranga Tamariki ...
 - When was it?
 - Who was it with?
 - Where was it? At home, in Oranga Tamariki office, in
provider office, on the phone, internet?
 - What was it about? – What was your experience
 - Why were you talking/engaging with Oranga
Tamariki?
 - What happened in the end? What was the outcome?
Facilitator - check level of risk and intervention
 - What did you like about it?
 - What did you not like/dislike about it?
 - What could have been done better? How would you
have liked it to end?
 - How did they initiate the engagement?

- Did they feel part of the process, understood the
process, and what support was provided if any?
 - Was the language or resources appropriate or easy
to understand?
6. Question: What are some of your priorities or key
issues as a parent or caregiver of children or young
people? Prompt: what is important to you? What is
important to your family?
 7. Each participant will have colourful A4 pieces of
paper to write down their notes and thoughts in
response to each question.
 8. If appropriate, break participants up into smaller
groups where they can discuss their experiences/
feedback and identify any key themes. If not appro-
priate, keep participants in larger group and encour-
age some feedback about experiences. Facilitator to
write on butcher paper key themes that come up.
 - Feedback key themes

Where to from here? Next Steps (15 mins)

9. Facilitator will explain how to get in touch with IPRO
after focus group (refer to information sheet)
10. Reiterate all information is confidential and not
identifiable and nothing will be personally attributed
to anyone – everything is anonymous.
11. Thank participants for their time and valuable feed-
back.
12. Provide koha / vouchers (participants to signature
they received)
13. Bless food and drink

Food provided (lunch/dinner)

Participant Information Sheet

Title Pacific Fanau Insights
Interviewer [First Name, Last Name] Facilitator, Integrity Professionals Limited (IPRO)

Kia Orana, Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Taloha ni, Ni San Bula Vinaka, Kia Ora

Invitation to participants

Integrity Professionals has been contracted by Oranga Tamariki to undertake some research on Pacific fanau insights and feedback about OT.

You are invited to take part in a focus group which will take approximately 60 minutes. The focus group will be semi-structured (where discussion can be more flexible), and audio recorded. You will receive a koha (gift) for your time.

What is the purpose of this research?

The overall purpose of this research is to hear and collate voices, insights, and experiences from Pacific fanau who have had engagements and interactions with Oranga Tamariki. The findings and learnings will be used to gain a better understanding and to influence the future work for the Voices of Whānau and Community team.

Information collated

Please note, that you do not have to take part in this focus group or interview, if you do not feel comfortable. You can refuse to answer any question, or stop being involved at any time. If you decide to withdraw part way through the process, you do not have to give a reason, and any information you have supplied will not be used in the research.

The information you provide will be kept in a secure premise until all the information has been collated. No material that could personally identify you will be used in the research report.

Concerns

If you are worried or concerned about some of the issues raised today in the focus group, please contact Mapu Maia 0800 212 122 Email: help@mapumaia.nz or <https://www.mapumaia.nz/contact>.

Reporting Back

We will be back in contact with you mid-2021, to discuss the findings and share a summary report with you.

Contact Details

If you have any questions or wish to know more, please contact– Project Leader, Integrity Professionals Limited.

Integrity Professionals Limited
Website: www.ipro.org.nz

Consent Form

Title Pacific Fanau Research
Interviewer [First Name, Last Name] Facilitator, Integrity Professionals Limited (IPRO)

- I have read the information sheet, which gives an explanation of the Pacific Fanau Research project
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and had them answered.
- I understand that taking part in this research is my choice.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason for this.
- I understand that all information provided will be confidential. I understand that I will not be personally identified in any report or publication.
- I understand that the results of the focus group or interview will be collected and key themes will be identified for the final report.

Name:

Signature:.....

Date:.....

If you would like to receive a summary of the report findings, please provide your email address below:

Email:.....

Notes



Appendix 4



Online Survey Questions

Background – information sheet (see Appendix 4)

Consent

- I have read the information earlier in the survey which gives an explanation of the Pacific fanau research project
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and had them answered
- I understand that taking part in this research is my choice
- I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason for this
- I understand that all information provided will be confidential. I understand that I will not be personally identified in any report or publication
- I understand that the results of the online survey will be collected and key themes will be identified for the final report

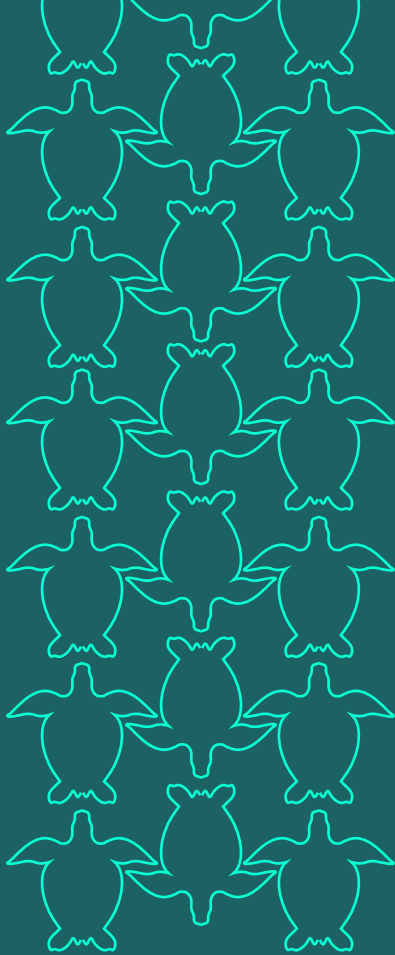
Demographic Details

- First Name
- Ethnicity
- Age
- How many children do you have?
- What city or region do you live in?
- What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
- Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?
- Are you currently engaged in study?

Your Story

- Please think about an interaction or experience you had with Oranga Tamariki and tell us about it. Where was it? Who was it with and when? Why were you talking? What happened?
- What could have been improved? What did you not like?
- What did you find positive? What did you like about it?
- Were you provided with any resources?
- If yes, what were they and were they in a specific language?
- What are your priorities as a parent/caregiver? What is important to you and your family?





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