

Oranga Tamariki Disability Vision and Strategy

Our vision was developed in partnership with disabled people, their champions, tāngata whaikaha Māori and care experienced rangatahi.

How we developed our vision

Oranga Tamariki knows we need to work better with disabled people. To do this we are developing a Disability Vision and Strategy which will help us to use a social and rights-based model of disability grounded in the foundation of te Tiriti o Waitangi.

We have developed the vision and strategy in two phases. During phase one we spoke to over 250 people including disabled people, tangata whaikaha Māori, pacific disabled people, care experienced young people, caregiving whānau, sector kaimahi, Oranga Tamariki kaimahi and service providers. After we spoke to everyone, we partnered with the Oranga Tamariki Disability Advisory Group and other engagement partners and developed a vision, four shifts needed to achieve it and a draft definition of disability.

Have your say into the Oranga Tamariki Disability Strategy

We want to hear from you on how to achieve this vision. Below we have summarised actions already suggested under each Shift and now we want to hear your ideas, insights and feedback on which actions would have the biggest impact.

You can have your say by attending a workshop, talking to someone from the Strategy team, or sending a written, audio or video submission. Information on the different ways to participate are on our website or you can email disability.strategy@ot.govt.nz.

Our vision

“The mana of tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa (disabled people and their champions) is enhanced by meeting their needs, upholding their rights and supporting their hopes and dreams.”

What our vision means

Tāngata whaikaha are experts in their own lives and the best source of their own solutions. Our focus is shifting to how we best support tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa to achieve their hopes, dreams, goals, and aspirations. We will respect and uphold their priorities and aspirations, not speak on their behalf, about them, or for them, and meet their needs and rights in a collaborative and user-friendly way.

Our draft definition of disability

Disabled people are people who have long-term physical, cognitive, intellectual, neurological, or sensory impairments including neurodiverse conditions, such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.



Tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa refers to disabled people and their whānau, carers, iwi, and community – their champions. We take a collective view, recognising that although individuals have impairments, they are part of a whānau or a family, and part of an iwi or a community.

How the vision will become a reality

To achieve our vision, we have identified four shifts that need to occur.

Shift One – How we see disability

Oranga Tamariki takes a whole of life approach to disability, understanding that disability is only one component of who tāngata whaikaha (disabled people) are, and disability can be a collective experience for tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa (disabled people and their champions).

We need this shift because often, Oranga Tamariki only addresses the immediate situation and sees disability as something to diagnose and fix, rather than identifying and addressing the barriers tāngata whaikaha experience.

Ideas we've heard to achieve Shift one:

- Resource disabled tamariki (children) and rangatahi (young people), including those who use non-verbal communication) so they can express their views and ensure those views are heard so they have the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers.
- Increase understanding within Oranga Tamariki that someone's disability can be part of who they are, not just a diagnosis, and their disability is not the only thing that defines them.
- Review the Oranga Tamariki transition services to ensure they are accessible and inclusive of all rangatahi whaikaha (young disabled people). The review needs to be done in collaboration with other agencies who will be involved in the young person's life.

Shift Two – Systems work for people

Tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa (disabled people and their champions) experience connected, rights based, consistent and transparent children's and disability systems.

We need this shift because the children's and disability systems are not consistently joined up. This disconnect leads to inequitable outcomes for tāngata whaikaha (disabled people). Oranga Tamariki needs to be a children's and disability system leader and a community enabler.

Ideas we've heard to achieve shift two:

- Develop an All-of-Government agreement on inter-agency collaboration. The agreement will utilise existing strategies such as the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan and explore shared priorities, roles, definitions and options for pooled or shared funding mechanisms.
- Develop youth justice approaches for restorative justice that are disability (including neurodiversity) informed.
- Develop leadership pathways and opportunities for tāngata whaikaha.
- Design and implement targeted support to caregivers of disabled tamariki (children)



Shift Three – Disability confident and competent workforce

The Oranga Tamariki workforce have the skills and expertise, including cultural competency, to work with tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa.

We need this shift because while there is some good disability practice within Oranga Tamariki, it is inconsistent and there is not enough disability expertise across the Oranga Tamariki workforce.

Ideas we've heard to achieve shift three:

- Ensure Oranga Tamariki kaimahi have a base level of disability competency relevant to their role and establish a disability training programme that offers tertiary social worker courses and mandatory internal disability training.
- Create and support more Regional Disability Advisers and disability specialist social worker roles through training, smaller case load numbers etc.
- Integrate disability through all Oranga Tamariki operational policy and practice guidance, frameworks, processes, and tools.

Shift Four – Oranga Tamariki is safe and proactive

Tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa are listened to, ensuring Oranga Tamariki is safe and proactive.

We need this shift because currently some tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa (disabled people and their champions) experience stigma, harm and discrimination when seeking help from Oranga Tamariki.

Ideas we've heard to achieve shift four:

- Review and develop assessments so the needs of disabled tamariki are identified early and have the supports and connections in place to prevent crisis.
- Provide transparent and accessible information to tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa about all children's and disability supports, services, funding, entitlement, and rights.
- Provide respite and care options that meet the needs of tamariki (children), rangatahi (young people) whaikaha and their whānau and caregivers.
- Ensure tāngata whaikaha me o ratou toa are connected to their communities before crisis occurs. For tamariki Māori whaikaha, this means searching for and connecting to whānau, hapu and iwi early.

