

Disability Strategy Consultation

For Oranga Tamariki, February 2023



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

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Ko wai au Who we are:	<p>The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Oranga Tamariki Disability Strategy Consultation.</p> <p>NZCCSS has six foundation members; the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support and the Methodist and Salvation Army Churches.</p> <p>Through this membership, NZCCSS represents over 230 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. We believe in working to achieve a just and compassionate society for all, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Further details on NZCCSS can be found on our website www.nzccss.org.nz.</p>

Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

We support the kaupapa to commit to substantially better support for tamariki and taiohi with disabilities, particularly those engaged with Oranga Tamariki. We welcome the early engagement by Oranga Tamariki with the wider sector, and the clear commitment to ensuring access to this process was accessible for all.

This mahi is deeply important, and must be truly aspirational to ensure that this community's needs are met, and their potential honoured. This mahi must be more than another framework, and must come from a kaupapa of deep knowledge in relation to understanding tamariki, taiohi and those who are also disabled peoples.

Our main points of feedback are:

Point One: Focus on tamariki and taiohi

Point Two: Have high expectations

Point Three: Build trust into the system

Point Four: Ensure existing guidance, evidence and practice are utilised

Point Five: Be aware of the wider context

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

We raise the following points and recommendations for consideration:

Point One: Focus on tamariki and taiohi

Oranga Tamariki is the Ministry for Children. As such, this strategy must focus on, and privilege at all times, tamariki and taiohi. The strategy itself must be designed to address and exceed the needs of tamariki and taiohi with disabilities, before any other consideration. We observe a broad focus on tangata whaikaha within the research summaries, rather than a specific focus on the voices of tamariki and taiohi. The images used in these designs convey a similar message, minimising the potential for children to be visible and central in the strategy.

The voice of tamariki and taiohi, and their ability to contribute to the design, development and implementation of this strategy must be prioritised. Gaining that voice authentically, and across all possible age stages is crucial. This is consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Article 3) and Article 4.3 of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities which requires close consultation with, and active involvement of persons with disabilities, including children, in the development of legislation and policies designed to enact the Convention.

Recommendation Proposal 1: Ensure that tamariki and taiohi are the main focus of the work to create the strategy, and ultimately the focus of the actual strategy once developed.

Point Two: Have high expectations

Rather than 'working towards' this strategy must be unapologetically aspirational. It should commit to addressing all possible needs, *and* wants of this group. Tamariki and taiohi with disability must have every barrier to their full participation in life removed – particularly those that Oranga Tamariki hold responsibility for.

This must encompass provision for tamariki and taiohi with undiagnosed disability, recognising the challenges faced by many whanau in accessing assessment services and subsequent support services within an appropriate timeframe or at all.

Recommendation Proposal 2: We suggest an aspirational strategy that commits to full equity for tamariki and taiohi with disabilities.

Point Three: Build trust into the system

Ensure from the start, that this strategy comes from a high-trust kaupapa, while similarly requiring that those implement it are continually, and by design, seeking to build trust with tamariki and taiohi with disabilities.

Place the trust in the experience of those this work seeks to serve, and require that anyone engaging in this work has the ability to provide that trust.

Identify places where low-trust occur and remove them from the system – actively challenge this within Oranga Tamariki, and act as an ally to challenge low-trust across the public sector.

Recommendation Proposal 3: Require and foster a high-trust model

Point Four: Ensure existing guidance, evidence and practice are utilised

Review fully what already exists, and consider if there is the ability to utilise existing good practice. For instance – for those working alongside Oranga Tamariki, consider just how many strategies will apply to this work. If those current strategies do not allow for the needs of this cohort to be met – what will this strategy add?

What is already known? And how can it be made accessible and evident in this process? How has work prior to this engagement informed this mahi? How can those engaging in this process know what has already been considered?

Recommendation Proposal 4: Ensure the relevance of this work by both considering where it has come from, why the need exists and sharing that insight across the engagement.

Point Five: Be aware of the wider context

How does this work fit into the strategic direction of Oranga Tamariki? Does this work act as part of existing strategy, or outside of it? How will this work be informed by / part of the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan? And how will that Action Plan interact with Whai Kaha, Te Whatu Ora and Te Aka Whai Ora? How does this strategy fit within the New Zealand Disability Strategy and Action Plan?

In addition to clarifying how this strategy relates to others, there is a need for clarification of the role of different agencies in the delivery of this strategy and services to support children and young people with disabilities. This is well-evidenced in the research summaries.

Finally, an all of Government approach is foundational to ensuring effective delivery of this strategy. The framing of these research summaries suggests that sufficient services do exist but are not utilised due to confusion and a lack of education (e.g. which agency to go to for which service). In reality this is not merely a communication issue – greater resourcing is required to deliver adequate and timely services to tamariki and taiohi with disabilities both within and outside of the Oranga Tamariki system. The key findings of this [Oranga Tamariki literature review](#) evidence this clearly, highlighting the need for increased early-intervention support.

Recommendation Proposal 5: We suggest consideration of the impact of this work more widely – and how an all of Government approach is needed, but potentially hindered by existing strategies.