

The Green Paper
**for Vulnerable
Children**

**Complete
Summary of
Submissions**



THE GREEN PAPER FOR
VULNERABLE CHILDREN

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Green Paper for Vulnerable Children – Complete summary of submissions

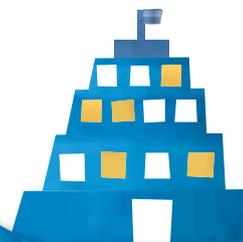
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Green Paper for Vulnerable Children – Complete summary of submissions



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Ministerial foreword



When I launched the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children in July 2011, I had no real expectations of how many submissions we would receive. I knew that protecting our vulnerable children was something many New Zealanders were concerned about, but I wasn't sure how much of that concern would translate into them putting pen to paper.

So I was almost overwhelmed to see that by the time submissions closed at the end of February, we had collected nearly 10,000 submissions from New Zealanders of all walks of life, professions, and ages.

That figure proved to me that we had done the right thing, that we were right to go out and ask the people what they thought we should all be doing better and differently to protect our vulnerable children. We wanted to learn from their experience – from your experience – what would ensure our Kiwi kids reached their full potential.

We tried very hard to reach as many people as possible, and to make it as easy as possible for them to respond. Along with the Green Paper consultation document and its 43 questions, we created a nine-priority question document that people could fill in and free-post back to us. Those nine questions and the 43 questions were also put online for people to make an even quicker, easier response. We produced single question postcards, and ads that popped up on internet news sites, driving readers to our specially created www.saysomething.org.nz website. We also held meetings up and down the length of the country, including 17 meetings from Kaitaia to Invercargill which I fronted so I could hear from New Zealanders in person.

Every submission has been thoroughly read. The team looking at the submissions carefully coded their content to build a picture of what submissions overall were saying and identify key themes and ideas. From this work the team has provided this comprehensive document. It illustrates what the people of New Zealand thought – what they wanted us as government, and them as a community, to do to help our children.

This summary document is the result of all that work. The information contained in it will inform the creation of the White Paper for Vulnerable Children, to be released on 12 October this year.

I hope you enjoy reading what New Zealanders thought – what you thought. Thank you for taking the time to submit in the first place, and then to read through this submission summary. Together we can build a better country for our children.

Hon Paula Bennett

*Minister for Social Development
Minister of Youth Affairs*



Purpose of report

The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children invited all New Zealanders to offer their ideas, opinions and experiences to find new ways to protect children better.

This report provides a full analysis of submissions received on the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children.

Structure of report

The report first provides some background to the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children and how submissions were made. It also describes the types of submissions received and the methodology used to analyse those submissions.

The report next looks at what children and young people had to say about issues that affect them. It then covers what submissions said on each of the Green Paper's four main themes:

- Share responsibility
- Show leadership
- Make child-centred policy changes
- Make child-centred practice changes.

Introduction



The Government released the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children in July 2011, to promote a national discussion about how New Zealand can improve the lives of its vulnerable children.

The Green Paper asked New Zealanders to tell the Government what could or should change to help young children at risk of or experiencing abuse and neglect, or those not reaching their full potential.

New Zealanders were actively encouraged to make submissions that would contribute to the development of the White Paper for Vulnerable Children.

To promote the Green Paper, motivate discussion and facilitate the submission process, we:

- appointed three “Champions”¹ to lead and promote public debate on the issue
- held public meetings, and met with community and business groups
- developed the www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz and www.saysomething.org.nz websites, and launched Facebook and Twitter pages
- published resources to encourage children and young people to offer their opinions
- provided information to community organisations, schools and early childhood centres, social service agencies, public libraries, churches, service clubs, mayors, businesses, large employers and media
- travelled around the country, directly engaging with people at 17 meetings from Kaitaia to Invercargill, held by the Minister for Social Development, and on the street through a Green Paper Campervan Drive.

Submissions closed on 28 February 2012, although submissions received after that date were counted and included for consideration.

In all, close to 10,000 submissions were received from a diverse range of people and organisations. Submissions came in many forms and each was read and considered, whether it was a Facebook post, an email, or a full written submission. Sometimes ideas to help children were very different, but often many voices agreed on particular courses of action.

The findings of the submission analysis will inform the development of the White Paper for Vulnerable Children, which will be released later this year.

The thoughts and ideas captured in this summary make motivating, inspiring – and sometimes sobering – reading.

¹ Three prominent New Zealanders with valuable experience in working with vulnerable children and families were appointed to encourage public debate on how New Zealand can protect its most vulnerable children. Former Barnardos chief executive Murray Edridge, former All Black Norm Hewitt, and Auckland lawyer Sandra Alofiavae facilitated discussion around the country.

Types of submissions

Where submissions included identifying information, they were categorised into the following groups:

- children and young people: submitters up to the age of 24
- general public: individual submitters who did not indicate that they worked with children or families
- community meetings: public meetings facilitated by the Minister for Social Development, the Ministry, or other groups or individuals
- frontline workers: submitters who indicated they worked with children or families
- non-government organisations (NGOs): groups or organisations working in the community, including service providers and other groups working with children and families
- other organisations: includes bodies such as District Health Boards and regional councils.

Wherever in this report we have quoted from submissions to illustrate a theme, we have included the submitter's group.

Children and young people's submissions

The report begins with the voices of children and young people.

Some submissions from children and young people were facilitated by adults. Often many of their voices were merged into a single submission. Barnardos and the Office of the Children's Commissioner were instrumental in collecting these submissions. In addition, a number of young people completed an online survey specifically designed for them (these are presented as "youth" submissions).

Other types of submissions

There were two main types of submissions: question and answer submissions and free-form submissions. To respect the way in which submitters chose to express their opinion, we report separately on these two channels.

Question and answer submissions: These submissions answered specific questions posed in the 43-question Green Paper consultation document, the nine priority questions on the free-post submission forms, the questions posed on the www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz or www.saysomething.org.nz websites, the single-question postcards, and online questionnaires, or the questions available through pop-ups on news media websites.

Individual members of the public and people who worked with children tended to respond this way, although some NGOs also submitted in this manner.

Free-form submissions: These submissions did not answer the formatted consultation questions, but covered Green Paper issues submitters wished to address. Submissions included letters to the Minister, emails through the “your response” inbox (an email account set up to receive email submissions), Facebook posts, tweets via Twitter and video recordings. Free-form submissions were coded according to the ideas they contained and were analysed separately from the question and answer submissions.

In general, free-form submissions came from NGOs, frontline workers, community meetings, other organisations and the general public.

The table below sets out the total numbers of submissions received through each of the available channels from each submitter type.

	Free-form	43 questions	Priority 9 questions	Postcards	Child & Youth Surveys
Children and young people	29	2	43	–	2,158
General public	1,145	792	2,678	605	–
Community meetings	45	–	–	–	–
Frontline workers	311	238	1,289	–	–
NGOs	488	71	22	–	–
Other organisations	60	6	3	–	–
Total	2,078	1,109	4,035	605	2,158

Methodology

How submissions were analysed

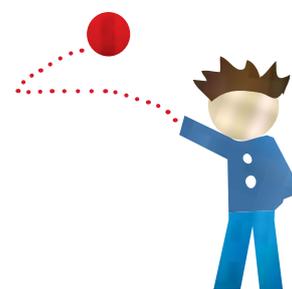
All submissions were given unique identifying numbers, and all submissions were archived. The large number of submissions received and the diversity of the responses meant we had to devise a careful recording system.

We grouped the various ideas from the submissions into common categories, and recorded the frequency with which those ideas came up. Using a sample of submissions, our team of analysts finalised a set of broad themes (or “codes”) which were structured into a coding framework. Analysts used this framework to record each submission in specifically-designed databases.

Key quotes were also selected from submissions and transcribed into the databases. Some of these quotes have been included in reports on submissions. Other personal details that were provided, such as name or location, were also recorded.

This process allowed us to describe the submissions’ common ideas and opinions and indicate how often submitters raised a particular proposition or idea. The following terms are used in this report to indicate the level of support for an idea among those who commented on an issue:

Terms	Proportion Range
almost all	above 90 per cent
a clear majority	80–89 per cent
the majority	60–79 per cent
about half	40–59 per cent
a large minority	20–39 per cent
a minority	10–19 per cent
a small minority	below 10 per cent



In reporting on responses to questions and themes, we are referring to the proportion of responses made to each particular question. “A minority” means a minority of responses to that question, not a minority of responses to the Green Paper.

Where we refer to an idea having the support of a “minority”, this does not mean that there is corresponding opposition to this idea. For example, saying about half of NGOs stated we need better co-ordination does not mean the other half of NGOs did not support this. They may have simply chosen not to comment.

Quality assurance

We commissioned an independent policy specialist to review the processes we used to code and analyse Green Paper submissions. The review found the processes were robust and fit for purpose, and expressed confidence the procedures would provide valuable and accurate data to inform the development of reports.



Overview of Submissions

After a six-month consultation process, nearly 10,000 submissions were received. What New Zealanders told us is summarised below.

Children and young people's submissions

Online questionnaire

Most youth (generally aged 13–24) submitted via an online questionnaire we designed asking for their responses to specific questions. The following is a summary of their ideas.

To grow up in a safe, happy and supported environment where you are encouraged to develop and reach for your dreams. (child/young person)

Make sure young people are supported as well as their families. This is through ensuring they receive proper income, live in a safe and loving environment, as well as having a healthy, warm and safe living environment. (child/young person)

Thrive, belong and achieve: Submissions from young people demonstrated it was very important that they feel supported and loved, and have opportunities to do their best in all areas of their lives, including education. Submissions said parents and whānau should be responsible for ensuring children and young people thrive, belong and achieve. However, some submissions recognised the role that society and young people have in making sure this happens.

Parents, family, and society: Submissions from young people said parents and family were seen to be responsible for providing support, security, love and the necessities of life. Some submissions said the role of parents and family is to teach morals. They said they want the wider community and government to step in when there are opportunities to provide support, particularly around helping parents raise their children.

Monitoring children and young people: Almost all submissions from young people supported monitoring children and young people. Some submissions noted specific conditions for any monitoring. Submissions suggested that families, schools, trusted others and government could have responsibility for monitoring children and young people. When asked who should be monitored, many submissions said children or young people at-risk. However, some submissions said all children and young people should be monitored throughout their childhoods.

Information-sharing: Many young submitters said it was “okay” for people who are working with the child to share personal information, but specified they should first ask for the child or young person’s permission. Submissions commonly argued it is acceptable to share information if it is needed to protect a child from harm, so long as that information is correct and the child’s privacy is protected as much as possible. Those they believed should share information included education and social service professionals, government agencies and, in some cases, parents and children.

Prioritisation: When asked if some children and young people should get priority over others, many submissions from young people agreed. They specified that vulnerable populations – such as children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect – should get priority.

What makes a difference: Personal connections make a difference for youth – in particular, if they have someone who believes in them, loves them, and who they can talk to. Submissions also said education, activities and having a good environment make a difference for them.

How lives could be improved: Providing support to both young people and their families was identified as a way to improve young people’s lives. Submissions also said schools had a part to play, and that providing opportunities for children and young people is important. Some submissions said consultation with young people is another way to improve lives.

Facilitated submissions

Children and young people also made submissions through facilitated discussions carried out by schools and other organisations.

For us to feel valued we need our parents and families to feel interested in what we do, to talk about our feelings and how they are feeling. (child/young person)

To keep me safe, no violence in my community, no patched members, no alcohol or drugs, be a family, no fighting. (child/young person)

The role of parents and families/whānau: Children and young people said they want their parents and whānau to be supportive, to keep them safe and secure, to meet their emotional needs, to love them and provide a sense of belonging. They also want parents and family to be involved in their activities, to see them as unique individuals and as a priority. Children and young people said they want their parents and family to meet their physical needs and to be good role models.

The role of communities: Children and young people said they want safe communities. In their communities they want services for children and community support for struggling families. They want the adults in their communities to provide them with opportunities, activities and venues.



The role of schools: From schools, children and young people said they want safe and secure environments, good teachers, to get an education and learn life skills. They want to be treated fairly, to be treated as individuals, listened to with respect and to be consulted.

The role of the professional workforce: Children and young people said they want good communication from adults who help them and for those workers to be professional and know what they are talking about. They want workers to check up on children and follow through with their promises.

The role of government: Children and young people want government to provide equal opportunities and access to services, and for government to ensure that schools are supported. They want government to help keep families together by providing services and increasing household incomes. Children and young people also want government to address inequality and to provide safe and secure environments. They saw a role for government to provide opportunities for them to have fun locally, build capacity within local organisations, and to ensure agencies and organisations are connected. Children and young people also want to have a say in developing laws and policies.

General submissions

These summaries include both question and answer and free-form submissions.

Share responsibility

Sharing responsibility is the first of four key themes structuring the Green Paper. The questions in this section were about the responsibilities of two particular groups:

- parents and caregivers
- communities.



Parents and caregivers

You can't make the child ok if the family is not ok. (other organisation)

If we want to deal effectively with the problem of child abuse we need to act on the general socioeconomic causes of stress and help the many parents who have themselves been damaged by abuse, who are a significant proportion of the population. (NGO)

Submissions broadly agreed on the types of services and supports that need to be available to families and vulnerable children.

Support for parents and caregivers: Submissions strongly endorsed parenting programmes and identified the need for better maternity services and support early in a child's life. Submissions identified a need for more specialised services, including treatment for addictions, family violence and mental health. Arguments for universal services and targeted services were both present in the submissions. Some submissions drew attention to the needs of particular groups of carers; for example, grandparents, foster parents, teen parents and carers of children with disabilities.

Improvements to Child, Youth and Family: Submissions called for improvements to Child, Youth and Family practices. Suggestions included better monitoring and screening of families, and upskilling and requiring formal qualifications from people who work with children. Submissions also argued for Child, Youth and Family to provide the resources necessary for appropriate decisions to be made on behalf of children and their families (for example, by reducing caseloads and providing more support from experts).

Balance not right: Submissions argued that government did not have the balance right between supporting families and protecting children. Submissions were most likely to argue that the needs of children should come before the needs of parents and caregivers, particularly when children were at risk. Other arguments included supporting families so children did not become vulnerable, that negative statistics prove the balance is wrong, and that better support is needed for Child, Youth and Family to make good decisions about child wellbeing.

When to step in: Submissions argued that government should step in “as early as possible”, particularly where risk was identified.

Address the wider causes of vulnerability: Submissions emphasised the need to address the wider social and economic causes of vulnerability. Submissions recognised the disproportionate burden of poverty and inequality experienced by Māori, Pasifika, and immigrant families.

Communities

Submissions endorsed the view that government should support communities and community groups – including parents’ groups – to enhance the wellbeing of their children.

The Government can support community groups such as mothers’ groups, play groups, Playcentre and schools to offer the best service possible. If these are strong, community spirit should grow and hopefully this will provide a feeling of responsibility for the children that live in that community. (general public)

Communities of place, culture, need, and faith: The strongest call was for government to build and support communities in their development. Submissions recognised diverse types of communities, including communities of place, culture, need and faith. Submissions argued that programmes and initiatives supported by government needed to work with the circumstances of people’s lives, be adequately resourced, and be located in places where people naturally gather.



Strengthen communities: Submissions argued that responsibility for vulnerable children needed to be shared more with the community, and that the community needed to have greater involvement in the lives of families. A commonly mentioned phrase was “it takes a village to raise a child”. Submissions suggested more support from local and central government.

Working with community leaders: Submissions argued for working with community leaders and encouraging information-sharing and collaboration between government and community agencies.

Strengthen families: Submissions advocated policies that would help strengthen families and encourage nurturing of children. Ideas included more support and training for parents, and that government policy should better recognise the role of parents and caregivers.

More programmes and services: Submissions argued that government should introduce or expand specific programmes and services. Arguments were made for an expansion of support to parents through education and training programmes, various services that support parents and intervene early in a child’s life (including early childhood education) and informal forms of support such as mentoring programmes.

Increase community action on child maltreatment: Submissions also expressed support for social marketing campaigns, greater consequences for those who neglect and/or abuse children and for those who do not report abuse they know is happening, and for introducing mandatory reporting² by either professionals or the public.

Reducing barriers to community responsibility: Submissions argued for removing barriers to allow communities to support vulnerable children better. Submissions suggested making reporting abuse easier, improving co-ordination between services, removing red tape (for example, amending privacy laws), improving the effectiveness of services to families and lowering the threshold for access to services.

Personal responsibility for community action: Submissions commonly responded to this question by offering specific examples of when they had taken personal responsibility to help others in the past, or initiatives they would like to take up in the future.

Show leadership

The second key theme in the Green Paper was to show leadership, in particular as it relates to:

- a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan
- legislation changes
- working with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders.

Vulnerable Children's Action Plan

The priorities for children of all ages should be that they are safe, protected from potential harm and live in a warm, caring and loving environment in which they are valued for themselves and experience the opportunities to achieve their aspirations, as is their right under law. (general public)

Support for an action plan: Almost all submissions responding to this question were in support of an action plan, although opinion differed on who should be targeted: all children or children with specific needs.

Definition: Submissions said a necessary first step in developing a plan was to define what a "vulnerable child" is. Some submissions said all children are vulnerable and any definition should reflect this. Others recognised the needs of particular groups of children, such as children with disabilities, children living in hardship, children who had been maltreated or who were in danger of being maltreated, very young children or Māori children.

² Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement to report suspected child abuse or neglect. It can apply to designated professions such as teachers, physicians, health professionals and social workers. Some countries extend mandatory reporting to all persons to report suspected abuse or neglect, regardless of profession. There may be penalties for non-compliance with the obligation.

Features of an action plan: Some submissions suggested that an action plan could allow government to set goals and targets. It also should be workable, action-focused and raise awareness about abuse. Submissions said that an action plan should be cross-sector and cross-party, owned by communities, and demonstrate commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi.

Goals and actions the Government could include in a plan: Submissions presented a range of suggestions about what could be included in an action plan. These included:

- reducing or eliminating child maltreatment and deaths
- improving health and wellbeing
- improving education
- providing free universal services
- improving parenting education
- improving access to, and take up of, services.

Priorities for vulnerable children: The priorities for vulnerable children across all age groups (early years, primary school age and adolescence) centred on health, safety and education/training. Some suggested the main priority was to reduce child poverty.

Legislation changes

Put children at the centre of every policy consideration. (frontline worker)

Compliance: A number of submissions saw value in using legislation to underpin a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan. Submissions suggested the main purpose of legislation would be to ensure compliance.

Reporting: Submissions favoured legislation requiring government social sector agencies to report on progress made against an action plan. Some submissions supported requiring NGOs, government or an independent body to report on progress. Many submissions suggested the Commissioner for Children be responsible for reporting. Submissions suggested that legislation could require reporting on outcomes for children, outcomes of services, family circumstances or expenditure on children's services.

Child-centred: Submissions proposed a range of actions or principles that could be included in legislation to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. The most common suggestion was to make legislation more child-centred through a child impact assessment.

Minister/Ministry for Children: Submissions suggested having a Minister or Ministry for Children.

Other ideas: These included greater support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) in New Zealand law, implementing requirements or sanctions for beneficiaries, and harsher consequences for maltreatment.

Working with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders

Listen, work alongside, bring the policy makers to the frontline to actually see what it's really like, trust Māori have positive solutions to help their own people – tino rangatiratanga. Improve what does work and dissolve what doesn't. (general public)



Across submissions, the issue of how government should work with Māori was less frequently addressed relative to other issues.

Diversity in responses on how government should work with Māori reflected different beliefs about whether Māori should be treated differently from Pākehā, or whether they should be treated the same as Pākehā.

Partnership: Submissions suggested different strategies of partnership, from consulting with Māori to letting Māori get on with it without government interference. The most strongly supported themes were allocating resources to culturally relevant services, consulting and working in partnership to deliver services, using the Treaty of Waitangi principles and committing to equal outcomes for Māori. Submissions also suggested strengthening Māori communities and supporting iwi, while some suggested Māori-led organisations needed to be closely monitored.

Culturally-tailored services: Submissions recognised the need for funding and support of culturally specific services, or mainstream services that could meet the needs of all their clients. Whānau Ora was strongly supported as a model for working with Māori, both in its focus on supporting the whānau system and its integration of services. Suggestions for improving services for Māori included upskilling the workforce working with Māori children (including improving cultural competency), improving Child, Youth and Family practices, using a whole-of-whānau approach and putting children first.

Connecting to services: Strategies for connecting “hard-to-reach” Māori to services were broadly relationship-based (using trusted sources, outreach services, a lead provider, and being persistent) or service-based (making services more culturally appropriate and easier to access). Other strategies included using social marketing as a way of drawing Māori into services, and engaging with whānau when the opportunity arises.

Highlighting similarity: Some submissions argued that all children are the same and culture/ethnicity is not important, and some submitters rejected the idea of services specifically for Māori.

Reducing barriers to services: Universal child rights that could be commonly understood still left room for the idea that to meet the needs of vulnerable Māori children, different pathways were necessary for these children (a belief that culture is a universal human right).

Social and economic factors: Framing vulnerability as the result of poverty and other social and economic factors, rather than as an issue of ethnicity, led to arguments for addressing the wider social and economic causes of vulnerability.

Make child-centred policy changes

The third key theme in the Green Paper was to make child-centred policy changes. This included:

- reviewing government spending to get better results for vulnerable children
- adopting a vulnerable child-first allocation policy
- watching out for vulnerable children.

Reviewing government spending to get better results for vulnerable children

Failure to support families and prevent maltreatment of children is extremely costly long term. By reprioritising spending towards prevention the Government will save large amounts of money in the future. (NGO)

Targeting vulnerable children: Submissions showed strong support for targeting tailored services to vulnerable children, including Māori and Pasifika children. Some submissions argued against targeting funding to vulnerable children. Most argued all children need to have their basic needs met by universal services, but vulnerable children should receive additional services to meet their specific needs. Some submissions said all services should be universal.

Early intervention: Submissions supported a stronger focus on early intervention. Submissions argued that the early years were critical in a child's development, and that prevention was better and cheaper than a cure. Some submissions qualified this position by arguing that this should not result in reducing support for older children.

Reallocating funding: Submissions argued that money spent on children was money saved later. These submissions argued that money directed to vulnerable children would be recouped from reduced demand for "bottom of the cliff" expenditure. Submissions suggested funds could be found by creating efficiencies in current government spending. Another common suggestion was to direct funds away from expenses that did not directly benefit children, such as sporting events. Submissions also argued for increasing tax on goods such as alcohol and cigarettes, and increasing the tax paid by higher income earners and businesses.

Evidence-based policy: Submissions showed overall support for funding programmes and services with a sound evidential base. Some suggested there was a need to evaluate existing programmes, that evidence was available from overseas, and that there should be more investment in research. Some submissions expressed concerns that a focus on evidence could stifle innovation, waste time when urgent action is needed, or that definitions of evidence are too narrow.

Adopting a vulnerable child-first allocation policy

It must become a national priority that vulnerable families are given whatever help, support and other interventions that they might need to enable them to function better and parent safely. (frontline worker)

Prioritising carers, family and whānau of vulnerable children: Submissions were generally in support of targeting services to the carers of vulnerable children. Supporters argued that those caring for vulnerable children need to be looked after in order for children to have the best possible outcomes. Many submissions argued that non-parental carers of vulnerable children, such as grandparents and foster parents, needed more support. Some said carers should always be prioritised, while some did not support prioritisation of carers of vulnerable children.

What services and when: Most submissions argued that support and prioritisation should be offered on a case-by-case basis when it was observed that carers were unable to meet children's basic needs. The most commonly suggested services to target to carers of vulnerable children were health services, addiction services, financial assistance and social housing. Another common suggestion was to provide carers of vulnerable children with improved access to early childhood education services.

Watching out for vulnerable children

We recommend every unborn child is automatically screened against a standardised set of risk versus strengths assessment tool, conducted by the lead maternity provider and fed into a national database. From there it would be important to properly assess all those infants and their parents who met the threshold for requiring additional monitoring and support.... If this screening tool separated out the level of need required for each family, and the services selected matched this need, it would likely result in a more efficient use of limited resources. (NGO)

Monitoring vulnerable children: Almost all submissions supported monitoring vulnerable children in some way. There were diverse views on how much monitoring should take place. Common ideas included having as much monitoring as possible and monitoring at a minimum level to ensure child safety, with a small number of submissions opposing any form of monitoring. Arguments for monitoring to be limited to vulnerable children were present, as well as arguments for universal monitoring. Some submissions argued that monitoring should be conducted in a positive way with an emphasis on providing support to families. Some suggested this could be achieved if monitoring were conducted by those already involved with children (for example, Plunket or Child, Youth and Family). Some submissions also discussed ways of minimising the negative consequences associated with monitoring, including the need for well-trained professionals, transparent processes and balance between monitoring and privacy rights.

Use of monitoring information: Many submissions suggested streamlined information-sharing between professionals as an effective way of tracking vulnerable children. A centralised database was the most common suggestion for achieving this goal. The need for confidentiality of information was raised as a concern.

Mandatory reporting: A small number of submissions addressed the issue of mandatory reporting, with support for mandatory reporting slightly higher than opposition. Submissions supporting mandatory reporting suggested it should be implemented with care, and that mandatory reporting would only be beneficial if agencies were adequately resourced to follow up all reports. Some submissions discussed who should be bound by mandatory reporting. Most suggested it be limited to trained professionals, while some supported mandatory reporting for everyone. Submissions opposed to mandatory reporting argued it is unfeasible, may deter help seeking and does not reduce child maltreatment. Some submissions suggested a more constructive approach would be to have highly trained, well-resourced professionals, who were able to use their own judgement to report when necessary.

How much information should be shared: The balance of opinion was for information to be shared in order to keep children safe. Most submissions that addressed this issue were in support of sharing the minimum of information to keep children safe. Support for sharing all information was low in comparison, as was total opposition to information-sharing. Many submissions discussed the need for protocols to guide information-sharing to preserve family privacy where possible.

Who should share information: Most submissions that addressed this issue were in support of information-sharing between government agencies and NGOs working with families. Submissions were in support of qualified professionals sharing information with the aid of training and professional codes of ethics. A smaller number of submissions argued that information should be shared among both the relevant professionals and the families involved in child welfare cases. Some submissions suggested a centralised database could be used to aid effective information-sharing.

When information should be shared: Submissions were in support of sharing information only when there were concerns about a particular child. A smaller but substantial group of submissions argued information should be shared as a usual part of social service provision.

Make child-centred practice changes

The fourth key theme in the Green Paper was to make child-centred practice changes. This included:

- improving the workforce for children
- better connecting of vulnerable children to services
- improving service delivery.



Improving the workforce for children

Appropriate training and retraining. Training courses should be regularly evaluated. Professionals in all the disciplines necessary to support vulnerable children and their families need to be involved in the workforce for children and should be trained together. (NGO)

Collaboration: Submissions supported joined-up services and networking, having a centralised database, removing funding and contractual barriers, having case co-ordination by a lead agency or professional, improving cross-sector and interagency co-operation, and using service hubs or centres.

Qualifications: The most commonly suggested ideas about competencies and skills were that the workforce should have formal qualifications and should receive training in child protection. Personal qualities were also said to be important. Submissions identified a broad set of skills and knowledge needed by those who work with children.

Professionals: Submissions most frequently identified health and education workers, social workers and “all who affect a child’s wellbeing” as people who should be included in the workforce for children.

Support: Suggestions to support the workforce were about improving pay and working conditions, professional development, supervision, being valued and supported by their employers and reasonable workloads. As well as professionals in services, foster carers were identified as benefiting from professional development.

Better connecting vulnerable children to services

Establishing key relationships that then identify and connect into all the services they need, rather than expecting them to have multiple relationships and there being no clear accountability for ensuring the full range of the families’ and children’s needs are met. (general public)

Reducing barriers: Submissions supported reducing barriers, such as cost, hours of operation, and transport. There were suggestions about using universal services as the entry point, outreach services, home visiting, service hubs, and the need for services to be flexible. Submissions suggested that workers needed to persevere and maintain engagement with families.

Advocate or lead provider: There was support for using an advocate or lead provider as a single point of contact for the family, to connect them to services and oversee their progress. Greater networking between professionals was also suggested.

Raising awareness: Submissions talked about better advertising of services, phone hotlines, earlier identification of problems and educating children on how to get help.

Improving service delivery

We want to see more one-stop shops and government services in close proximity to each other to provide easier access to the community and more communication and collaboration between the services. (NGO)

Service hubs: Submissions suggested co-location of services, including using schools, early childhood centres and other community facilities as hubs.

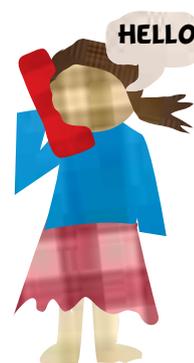
Schools: There was moderate support overall for social workers in schools, and some support for schools and childcare centres providing information about other services.

Improve Child, Youth and Family: Comments about Child, Youth and Family changes frequently referred to difficulties in getting a response to a referral, what people saw as a variable quality of social workers, and a perception that social workers are overloaded.

Better use of universal services: Submissions also suggested using universal services (such as Well Child) as the entry point to other services.

Better links: There was a clear call for government agencies and NGOs, and health services and schools, to be better connected. Submissions also suggested making improvements in contracting and funding arrangements, networking between professionals, and case co-ordination by a lead agency or professional. Some submissions suggested creating service directories for communities to refer to.

Child-centred approach to service delivery: Submissions suggested there are different possible approaches to service delivery. The service approach most frequently suggested was a child-centred approach. This meant both a holistic approach (rather than focusing on just one need or problem) and a child-first approach (rather than a family/whānau-first approach).



Submissions from children and young people

This chapter summarises the submissions we received from children and young people. Submissions were received through two main channels:

- Question and answer submissions: a phone survey carried out by Barnardos and a 14-item online questionnaire specifically designed for youth.
- Free-form submissions: these submissions represented facilitated discussions with children and young people carried out by schools and organisations.

Summary of submissions from children and young people

Parents and family: Children and young people said they want their parents and whānau to be supportive, to keep them safe and secure, to meet their emotional needs and to provide a sense of belonging. Submissions from young people said that parents and families had the main responsibility for ensuring that young people thrive, belong and achieve. They said they want their families to provide the basics, love and nurture them and provide moral guidance. Children and young people also want parents and family be involved in their activities, to see them as unique individuals and to see them as a priority. When asked how life could be made better for children and young people, young people said that providing support to both young people and their families was a way to achieve this.

Education and schools: From schools, children and young people said they want safe and secure environments, good teachers, to get an education and learn life skills. They said that they want to be treated fairly and as individuals, listened to with respect and to be consulted. Submissions from young people also said that education has made a difference for them in their lives. In addition they said schools had a part to play in making life better for all children and young people in New Zealand.

Professionals: Children and young people's submissions said they want good communication from adults who help them, and for those workers to be professional. They want these workers to check up on children and follow through with their promises. They want adults to know what they are talking about.



The community and government: In their communities, children and young people want services for children, activities and venues. They also want safe communities. Children and young people said they want government to provide equal opportunities and access to services, and for government to ensure that schools are supported. They want government to help keep families together by providing services. Submissions from young people said they want the wider community and government to step in when there are opportunities to provide support, particularly around helping parents raise their children. Young people said they want to have a voice in legislation and policies that affect them.

The importance of personal connections: Submissions from young people demonstrated that personal connections make a difference for young people – in particular, having someone believe in them and love them, and having someone they could talk to. They emphasised how important it was to them that they felt supported and loved, and were given opportunities to do their best in all areas of their lives.

Monitoring, information-sharing and prioritisation: Young people were asked specifically about monitoring, information-sharing and prioritisation. Submissions were generally supportive, although some submissions stipulated the children or young people concerned should give their permission before they were monitored or their information was shared with professionals. They also supported prioritisation of vulnerable children and children who were at risk of abuse and neglect.



Children and young people: Question and answer submissions

Barnardos

Barnardos gave children and young people (ages five to 18) the opportunity to make a submission while waiting to be connected through their children's helpline.

Almost 2,000 children's submissions were collected this way. Barnardos asked callers three specific questions:

- Do you think New Zealand needs to do more to support children, young people and families?
- Where do families get their best and most important support from?
- Do you think the Government should have a Children's Action Plan that helps make sure children are healthy, safe, loved and cared for and do well at school?

Barnardos analysed the responses of children and found that most said:

- New Zealand needs to do more to support children, young people and their families (71 per cent of responses)
- children get their best and most important support from their own family and community (61 per cent), although 20 per cent said this support came from government
- government should have a Children's Action Plan that helps make sure children are healthy, safe, loved and cared for, and do well at school (67 per cent of responses).

Children and young people were then given the opportunity to leave a recorded message sharing their ideas on how adults can help children live better lives. These views are included in the free-form section in this chapter.

Youth Questionnaire

We also received 166 submissions from young people via a 14-item questionnaire available online. Submissions were received from young people who ranged in age from 13 to 24, with almost two-thirds being 18 or younger. The questionnaire was developed using questions from the Green Paper resource developed for schools. Links for the questionnaire were distributed through youth development networks, youth sector organisations and schools.

The topics included in the questionnaire asked young people:

- What it meant for them to thrive, belong and achieve, and who they thought should be responsible for ensuring this happened.
- To respond on issues relating to monitoring, information-sharing and prioritisation.
- What makes a difference to them, and what could be done to make life better for children and young people?

As the submissions to the questionnaire were responding to a "youth questionnaire", in this section we refer to young people as "youth".

What does it mean to thrive, belong and achieve?

The majority of youth submissions responded to this question by describing how “to thrive, belong and achieve” made them feel.

Connected: The phrase evoked feelings of safety, love, happiness and connection to community in about half of the youth submitters.

To grow up in a safe, happy and supported environment where you are encouraged to develop and reach for your dreams. (child/young person)

Be the best they can be: About half of youth submissions said that to thrive, belong and achieve meant they were able to focus on their future, take advantage of opportunities and have the resources to achieve their goals. Being able to do their best was important to this group of submitters.

To have a strong identity, and believe in one's self and most of all to achieve to the best of your ability. (child/young person)

Supported: Youth submitters said that to thrive, belong and achieve meant they feel supported. A large minority of youth submitters said support from their whānau, friends and community allowed them to achieve their potential in whatever they want to do in life.

To feel as though one can do what they desire and have a support framework around them from their community. (child/young person)

Education: For a small minority of youth submissions, education was the key.

To thrive, belong and achieve means you need to go to school, learn, be involved in school activities as these often improve the school life for many. (child/young person)

Who do you think should be responsible for making sure children and young people thrive, belong and achieve?

Parents and whānau: The majority of youth who responded to this question said that parents – sometimes in conjunction with extended family – should have the primary responsibility of ensuring children and young people thrive, belong and achieve. Many of these submissions acknowledged there were other people in the community who could play a part, but that the ultimate responsibility lay with parents.

Parents, teachers and social workers can only do so much. In the end, it is absolutely the responsibility of the parents. (child/young person)

Everyone: Youth submissions recognised the role society plays in ensuring children and young people thrive, belong and achieve. A large minority of youth submissions said everyone should be responsible for this. Professionals who work with children and young people, such as teachers and social workers, were singled out by a large minority of youth submitters. Community groups and members, such as churches and youth workers, were also identified by a large minority. A large minority of submissions saw government and local government bodies having responsibility, with the Ministry of Education being seen as particularly influential in this area. A small minority of youth submissions saw their friends as having a role in ensuring young people and children thrive.

Everyone in society should help in taking [on] this role. We are all leaders for young people. (child/young person)

Ourselves: A minority of youth respondents saw themselves as being responsible for making sure children and young people thrive, belong and achieve. They said youth need to make the decision for themselves, and they had to want to thrive, belong and achieve in order for it to happen.

I think it is the child themselves.... They can choose whether they want to thrive, belong and achieve. (child/young person)

What is the role of parents and family?

To provide support and security: A clear majority of youth submissions said the role of parents and family was to provide support and security. These submissions said parents should be there to encourage and provide a foundation for their children in order for them to grow and succeed. Submissions indicated that providing protection and a safe environment was an important role for parents and family.

Provide a safe haven of support and love for a growing child. No child should go home feeling afraid or like they don't belong. (child/young person)

To love and nurture: Related to the concept of support and security, a large minority of youth submissions saw the primary role of parents and family as being to love and nurture their children.

To awhi [embrace, cuddle] and to nurture, to encourage also. To be a backbone, and to give the child a sense of identity. (child/young person)

To teach morals: A large minority of youth submissions said teaching and providing moral guidance to children and young people, particularly around what is right and wrong, as the role of parents and family. Youth submissions also saw providing discipline as a role for parents and family to fulfil.

Being the primary foundation for morals and values. (child/young person)

To provide the basics: Alongside guidance, a minority of youth submissions said the role of parents and family was to provide the necessities of life. The provision of shelter and food were commonly cited among this group of submissions.

To guide the child in the right direction, give them love, care, shelter, food and the morals and values they need to achieve. (child/young person)

When should the wider community and government step in?

When the opportunity arises: About half of youth submissions said the wider community and government should step in when opportunities arose for them to provide support. Examples ranged from providing additional help for families to raise their children, to intervening in situations where there were safety concerns for children and young people.

If parents/family are unable to adequately support their children in a positive way, the Government should help parents/family to help their children. (child/young person)

When abuse is occurring: A minority of youth submissions said the wider community and government should step in at the first signs of abuse or neglect. This is in contrast to a large minority of submissions who said the community and government should intervene when the safety of the child was at risk, before any abuse had taken place.

When a child is being physically hurt or neglected. (child/young person)

To keep families well: A minority of youth submissions said the wider community and government should always be there for children, young people and their parents, even if no abuse or risk was detected. Submissions in this group emphasised ideas around equality of opportunity, and also argued that ongoing support on a smaller scale was better than trying to provide support when things went wrong.

They should provide a constant supportive role.... I think some form of ongoing yet smaller support behind all families would better ensure that the young people are all given equal opportunities. (child/young person)

Should children and young people be monitored (checked or watched) to see how they are getting on?

Yes to monitoring: Almost all youth submissions said there should be some form of monitoring for children and young people.

With conditions: However, a large minority of submissions specified particular conditions under which monitoring should occur:

- If a child or young person's space and privacy is respected

Children need their space and so give them that, but just monitor them or check up if they are undergoing a difficult situation or need help and advice. (child/young person)
- When they ask for help

Only when they need help or when they ask for a helping hand. (child/young person)
- If their consent is given

As long as they agree to be monitored. (child/young person)
- At intervals

A short visit once every few months or so. (child/young person)
- When it does not pressure children or make them feel labelled

Monitoring to ensure children are not abused or malnourished, for example, is good, but it shouldn't lead to pressure on children or feelings of being labelled. (child/young person)
- As long as it is non-intrusive.

Checked, but not watched – and by non-intrusive means. (child/young person)

For some children or young people: Youth submitters sometimes specified the populations they believed should be monitored:

- Teenagers (in regard to their mental health)

I think so. Probably teenagers should have the most attention [paid] towards their mental state. (child/young person)

- Children in at-risk families

Yes, if they come from a family where there is a risk of abuse or neglect. (child/young person)

- If they could hurt themselves or others, or be hurt

Only if they are dangerous to others or are in danger. (child/young person)

- If they are demonstrating signs of social difficulty.

If they are showing signs of difficulty, then yes. Every child want to know that someone is there, especially if things at home aren't ideal. (child/young person).

No monitoring: A small minority said children and young people should not be monitored and gave arguments against it:

- There are other ways to ensure safety and health

No, as that would be morally wrong. There are other ways to monitor progress. (child/young person)

- Children and young people should have the freedom to become themselves

I think it is important to let young people and kids feel free to experiment and discover by themselves. (child/young person)

- Children develop differently, at different times

No. Children all develop at a different rates and monitoring their development would be a bad idea, and possibly a hindrance. (child/young person)

- They should be supported rather than monitored.

They should be helped and supported, connected to their community and provided with assistance when needed – relational, establish wellbeing resources local groups not government departments that can “check or watch” children. (child/young person)

If so, who should do this?

Family and schools: The majority of youth submissions suggested that family or teachers should be responsible for monitoring children and young people. These adults are involved in their lives on a day-to-day basis and are aware of the wider context, and what else might be happening for the child or young person. Children and young people also said they felt comfortable with them.

Parents should monitor because it's a sense of safety and security around the child.

They would feel more comfortable and would learn easier. (child/young person)

Schools were suggested as places where monitoring systems could be located.

Schools and preschools have a key role here – that is not to say teachers – but using the institutions to establish systems and change cultures. (child/young person)

Trusted others: About half of the youth submissions suggested that groups and individuals outside of the child's home and school environment should be responsible for monitoring them.

A third party that would act as a mentor, [who] is separate from the child, i.e. not their parents, friends or teachers. (child/young person)

It was important to the youth submitters that it was someone they were comfortable around and could trust.

Someone responsible, friendly, nice and intelligent. (child/young person)

Professionals, organisations and individuals that fell into this category included:

- neighbours and other community members
- youth workers
- religious leaders
- community health workers
- Plunket
- mentors
- social workers
- psychologists
- friends.

The state: A large minority of youth respondents said that the role of monitoring children and young people should fall to the state or government agencies, particularly Child, Youth and Family. Other agencies with an interest in children and young people were also mentioned, such as the Police and the Ministry of Social Development.

I think it should be a Government Ministry or organisation. (child/young person)

Under what circumstances?

When children are at risk: The majority of submitters' responses pointed to risk being the main circumstance for monitoring, saying only if there were risk, suspicion or obvious signs of abuse and neglect, or behavioural issues, should children and young people be monitored.

Those who come from abusive or broken homes/families, those where abuse has been reported in the past, those who are going through a lot and need extra support (child/young person)

All the time: A large minority of youth submissions said that monitoring should happen constantly and be available to everyone. While this would be at less intensive levels than other types of monitoring (ie for at-risk populations), some youth submissions said it was something all children and young people deserved in order to feel safe. This was framed up as more like "watching out for them" rather than something intrusive.

Every child should have someone outside their family keeping an eye on them. (child/young person)

Training: A small minority of submissions said it was important that appropriate training be given to those people who take up this monitoring role.

Staff should be educated on signs to look for. Counsellors need to know how to deal with the different situations and where their boundaries lie in terms of getting involved. (child/young person)

Is it okay to share personal information between the people who are working with a child or their family/whānau?

Yes, but with permission: Overall a clear majority of youth submissions said it was okay to share personal information with people who are working with a child or their whānau. However, about half of submissions on this question stated there should be conditions under which information is shared. One of the most common of these conditions was that the child first gave their permission.

Another common condition was that information should only be shared if the child was in danger, or that sharing the information would benefit an at-risk child.

If you have the child and/or family's permission to do so, or if there is some kind of safety risk. (child/young person)

No: A minority of submissions did not think it was okay for personal information to be shared. Some of these submissions had concerns about what the information would be used for and why it was being shared.

No, because you never know the motive of one. (child/young person)

Who should share information?

Professionals: About half of submissions said professionals and other people who worked directly with children and young people should or could share information. Teachers and social workers were the professionals most often suggested by the youth submissions.

Professionals who can use their impartial judgement to assess the situation. (child/young person)

Parents and children: A large minority said that the child and, in some cases the parents, should share information.

Ideally the child and their parents and the person working with them as a mediator (child/young person)

Government agencies: A minority said government agencies should share information with each other. Child, Youth and Family, the Ministries of Health, Justice and Social Development, and the Police were all named.

Government departments [should] share information with other government departments and officials. (child/young person)

First-hand information: A small minority of youth submissions said the people who received the information personally should be the ones who shared it.

The person directly involved in the situation. (child/young person)

What kind of information can be shared?

When safety is affected: About half of youth submissions said all information that impacted on the safety of the child should be shared.

All information that could be useful on ensuring needs are met and children are safe. (child/young person)

Background information: A large minority of youth submissions said background information about the child and family should be shared. The type of information in this category included family histories and health, and police and education records relating to the child and family.

Basic information, obviously like your name, age etc and maybe what goes on at school like your exams or your classes. (child/young person)

With permission: Among the remaining youth submissions, it was important to a small minority that permission was granted before information was shared. However once permission was given, youth submissions were okay with all information being shared.

Whatever the child is happy to share. (child/young person)

Should some children and young people get higher priority than others for services and support?

Yes, where the need is greater: The majority of youth submissions said there should be some children and young people who received higher priority than others. The situations where youth submissions said there should be prioritisation were those with a greater need for services, or where there were situations of abuse and neglect.

[Those] who are deemed most at risk of abuse and/or neglect. (child/young person)

No, treat everyone equally: A large minority of youth submissions said that there should not be prioritisation. The main argument against it was everyone should be treated equally and that the distribution of support should be fair.

I think that every child, regardless of what is usually their parent's habits/wealth/lifestyle should have equal access. (child/young person)

Youth submissions against prioritisation also argued that if everyone received support, eventually there would be no need to prioritise support because no young person would be left at risk.

A small minority of youth submissions also pointed out that young people and children sometimes see their problems as larger than adults may think they are.

No. It should all be equal. Young people and children see their problem as a huge one even if it seems small to an adult. (child/young person)

Who should get priority first and why?

When asked about who should get priority – if they agreed with prioritisation – submissions were split evenly between two distinct ideas: those with factors in their lives that mean they may be at risk, and those who are already experiencing abuse, neglect or other disadvantages.

At-risk children and youth: About half of youth submissions said that children and young people who were at risk of abuse and neglect or negative outcomes should receive priority. Some of these submissions specified the circumstances where children and young people may be at risk, such as poverty, living in a single parent family, first-time parents and teenagers.

*Poor, disadvantaged communities that score low [on] social deprivation indexes.
Those who are adversely affected by the extreme levels of inequality in New Zealand.
(child/young person)*

People who are suffering: The remaining half of youth submissions specified situations where children and young people were already being harmed or disadvantaged. These included children and young people who are being abused or neglected, and those with an illness or disability that means they need extra assistance. Children and young people with learning disabilities or mental health problems were mentioned by a number of submissions.

*Those who need it the most because they are the ones who are suffering.
(child/young person)*

From your own experience, what makes a difference?

Echoing responses to the question, "What does it mean to thrive, belong and achieve?" a clear majority of submissions spoke of the benefits of having a personal connection with someone. Those benefits included love, nurturing, advice and other such supports.

Someone who believes in me: About half of the youth submissions said support was most often given by people who had close contact with them. Parents, friends, teachers and mentors were commonly cited. Youth submissions said having someone believe in them and care about their wellbeing had made a difference. Sometimes just knowing that these people were there if needed was enough.

When I was struggling, I found it very comforting to know there was somebody I could turn to for help. (child/young person)

Someone who loves me: Nurturing and love had also made a difference in a minority of youth submissions. Family played a big role here, but sometimes youth found love and nurturing in parental substitutes. They said being noticed, encouraged, inspired and appreciated made a difference to them.

*The child understanding that they are important and they deserve to be cherished.
(child/young person)*

Someone to talk to: Having someone to talk to and give them advice had an impact for a minority of youth submissions. Hearing that others had gone through similar situations helped them gain perspective on their problems. The advice could come from someone outside the young person's day-to-day life, and sometimes it was preferred if they were independent.

*Talking to someone and experiencing the change they had said would happen.
(child/young person)*

Education: A minority of youth submissions said the opportunities provided to them by being involved in education made a difference. They said they saw schools as places where they were valued.

*A good school, with good teachers who make you feel like you have value.
(child/young person)*

Activities: Community activities made a difference for a small minority of youth submitters because they could do something “fun”. Being around others in their community also meant they could gain a different perspective on their lives.

Giving the vulnerable kids something to do the whole year through, like computer club or other leisure activities for free. (child/young person)

Good environment: A small minority of youth submissions pointed to interventions they had received that ensured they were being brought up in a good environment, away from negative influences. This ranged from support for their parents, to help ensuring they stayed healthy, to help accessing services when they needed them.

Getting children most vulnerable away from the negative environment and with friends/peers that are of a positive influence in a good environment. (child/young person)

What are the best ways we can make life better for children and young people in New Zealand?

Support young people and their families: A large minority of youth submissions said the way to make life better for children and young people was to support them and their families. Generally, support for youth was seen as giving help and letting them know where to get help. Submissions also said improving self-belief was an important way to make life better. Some youth submissions said life could be made better for children and young people if they felt loved.

By being helping hands to those who do struggle and walking beside those who just need a little push to reach what they want to become. (child/young person)

Specific ideas around support for families included parenting programmes and assistance to raise children in the form of income support. For some youth submissions, raising living standards was important, particularly by improving access to services and reducing child poverty.

Make sure young people are supported, as well as their families. This is through ensuring they receive proper income, live in a safe and loving environment, as well as having a healthy, warm and safe living environment. (child/young person)

Through schools: A large minority of youth submissions specifically saw schools with a role in making life better for children and young people. Youth submissions suggested that schools could provide more support to their students, and that they should have a particular focus on making sure young people succeed.

Improve the relationship between teachers and students. (child/young person)

Provide opportunities: A large minority of youth submissions said providing more opportunities was the best way to make life better for children and young people. The type of opportunities they want included education, jobs, to make friends, to try new things and to reach their full potential.

Ensure good, meaningful opportunities for children and young people. (child/young person)

Listen to us: A minority of youth submissions said that consulting with youth and listening to their opinions was an important component to bettering their lives. Consultation around issues that affected them was particularly important.

*Ask them what they need, rather than dictate to them what they must have.
(child/young person)*

Other ideas from youth submissions on how life could be made better for children and young people included:

- the development of communities

Encourage the development of community groups. This makes it a lot easier access-wise, and it is easier for those group members to keep an eye on things. (child/young person)

- monitoring children and young people

Monitor them more...surveillance of violent families. (child/young person)

- harsher consequences for child abuse

Impose harsh punishments around abuse of children and murder. Make it clear that if you do assault or murder children you will be made to pay for it. (child/young person)

- alcohol reform

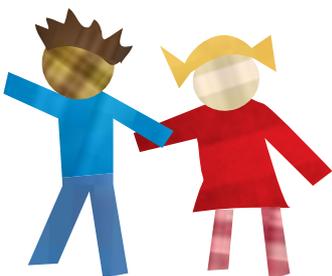
Alcohol is one of the main factors in abuse. We need strong leadership from the Government to change the pathetic and destructive drinking culture that my generation is growing up with and are becoming a part of. (child/young person)

- letting kids be kids

Allow them room to grow and help them when needed – praise them when they succeed and when they fail, it's all a learning curve. (child/young person)

- giving young people their independence.

Teaching them as early as possible to be independent. (child/young person)



Children and young people: Free-form submissions

Free-form submissions from children and young people were largely facilitated by adults through focus groups or schools, with each submission typically representing more than one child or young person. We received particularly large submissions on behalf of children and young people from Barnardos and the Office of the Children's Commissioner. Given that many of these submissions were facilitated and, in some cases analysed before we received them, we have reflected the full range of ideas presented but did not apply our methodology to indicate the frequency of these ideas.

We supplied schools and other organisations with resources about the Green Paper so they could:

- run a discussion with children and young people on some of the issues in the Green Paper
- help children and young people to simply and easily record their own ideas and send them in as part of the Green Paper submission process
- make links with Te Whāriki and the New Zealand Curriculum.

The following section provides the key themes organised under what children and young people said they want from:

- a good childhood
- parents and families/whānau
- communities
- the professional workforce
- government.

Finally, we present what children and young people said about how they want to be treated.

A good childhood

Children and young people said that having a good childhood meant:

- having their physical needs met, including food, warmth and shelter
- living with their families, and their families being well and able to support them
- having their emotional needs met, including being loved, shown affection and having a sense of belonging and security, of being encouraged and comforted
- being seen as unique individuals, including being respected, listened to, treated equally with their peers (not discriminated against), treated with honesty and truthfulness, and as responsible people in their own right
- having fun with their families and friends
- having access to activities and services, with ideas here including having enough for everyone in the community (free school, health and food)
- getting an education, which included school learning and developing skills that would allow them to have a bright future.

[A good childhood means] good education, good health, good family, having a nice family. [Children need] people who care about them, and who never give up [on them]. We should be allowed to take risks. Trust us. Have confidence in us. Look at our bright side and make a good future. (child/young person)

Parents and families/whānau

In the free-form submissions children and young people said they want their parents and family/whānau to support them and meet their needs as they grow and develop.

Be supportive: This theme captured ideas such as parents and family being encouraging, assisting them in the development of their own opinions and personal growth, being there to talk to, being close and helping build confidence, and taking children seriously. This theme was illustrated particularly well through the lyrics to a rap we received.

*To get to where we need to go you've gotta help us out, Bro.
After all I'm just a kid who's trying to figure out how to live.
Give me a chance to do my best. Don't treat me like a little pest.
Listen to what I've got to say. Encourage and love me along the way.
Pick me up when I feel down. I always need my whānau around.
In times of need we need to turn to adults, caregivers and teachers to learn.
A happy child will always go far. Help us reach that shooting star.
(child/young person)*

Keep them safe and secure: This meant children living in an environment free of threats such as fighting, drugs and alcohol, hitting, yelling/shouting, physical or sexual abuse and abusive language. Children and young people suggested parents take parenting courses if they were violent. Other suggestions here were making sure children knew how to keep safe; for example, teaching them self-defence. Children and young people want their families to be together, to be well and to be functional.

*I'd just like to say that adults should not do child abuse, or anything else and stuff,
and parents should stop fighting and should stop saying [hurtful] things...cause that
stuff hurts us. Really, really, really naughty of them.... (child/young person)*

Meet their emotional needs and provide a sense of belonging: This theme included parents and families giving love (unconditional love), trust, respect and care so that children and young people know they are good people. As above, some submissions suggested parents go to classes to learn to look after children well.

*Show us you care by cuddles, hugs and texting "I love you sweetie, have a good day
at school." (child/young person)*

Kids should feel like we belong. (child/young person)

Be involved in their activities: Children and young people want their parents and whānau to be involved in their activities. This included taking an active interest in their children's learning, helping with homework, attending school and sporting events, and spending time eating and having fun with them.

Play with us. (child/young person)

Meet their physical needs: Adults should provide warmth, food and shelter.

They need basic needs such as food warmth, shelter, regular exercise, money, friends and family. (child/young person)

A healthy home – physically dry and warm and mentally healthy. (child/young person)

See them as unique individuals: In this context it meant children and young people having freedom of choice, being treated fairly, not being told what to do, being respected and accepted as they are and being listened to.

I think parents should stop telling kids what to do, kids have been brought into the world to do one thing – live their life, not live their parents' life, not how their parents want to live. (child/young person)

To be a priority for their parents and family/whānau: Children and young people want parents and families who would be advocates for them, choose to spend time with them and choose to meet their needs.

Buying food first and smokes, drugs and alcohol last. (child/young person)

Be good role models: This meant teaching values such as right from wrong, providing guidance and inspiration, establishing proper boundaries, being responsible, teaching respect for others and providing leadership.

Parents should help their kids, and they should teach kids of where to go and not to go, and they should have boundaries, and they shouldn't abuse their children, and they shouldn't do drugs and alcohol around their children. (child/young person)

Communities

Children and young people want to live in communities that are safe, and that provide them and their families with services they need. They want places to hang out and things to do. Children and young people want adults in their communities to listen to them and take them seriously and to provide opportunities for them to make a good future.

Safe communities: Children and young people want safe and secure communities. In the context of community this meant no vandalism, no gangs, no overcrowding, no violence, no segregation, and providing a place of honour and altruism. They want mothers stopped from drinking and taking drugs and bullies stopped from bullying children. They want adults to protect children and young people. They want foster parents chosen carefully and adults in the community to be good role models.

No violence in my community, no patched members, no alcohol or drugs, be a family, no fighting. (child/young person)

Services for children: Children and young people want some services, such as medical care and transport, to be free for children and young people. Services children and young people want include more health nurses, mental and sexual health experts in schools, youth one-stop shops, mentors and youth counsellors. They also asked for safe houses for children and young people to hang out in, and support for children and young people if their families were struggling.

Counselling for relationships, drugs and alcohol, violence. (child/young person)

Transport. Safe transport – not dangerous places near transport stops. Youth transport, safe street, youth activities. (child/young person)

Community support: Children and young people also talked about community support for families who were struggling. Examples included providing housing, food (more food to food banks for poorer families), blankets and more Salvation Army shops.

I do think that most adults try their best but [it would help] if childcare was more affordable and they had more support from the local government or community – it could help them out a bit. (child/young person)

Activities and venues: Children and young people want to be able to have fun and have friends. Children and young people talked about having access to general community sites, such as churches, playgrounds and museums, parks and libraries, pools and sports clubs. They also talked about venues and activities especially for children and young people; for example, gigs, interactive walks, youth groups, alcohol-free community events and things to do after school.

...more SPORT!! More teams, creative, physical outlets for young people. We need to be more community orientated. There's a huge gap! (child/young person)

I think there should be a little kids club for ages five–14 that happens every day but maybe not weekends, maybe from 4–7pm or 3–7pm on school days, or maybe on weekend from 10–4pm. They should have spot prizes and a study group, and you can order books from the library, and do quizzes when people have finished the book, and then you get dressed up or something. I'm saying that 'cause it's my dream club... (child/young person)

Adults to provide opportunities: Children and young people said the role of adults was to provide opportunities for children and young people and to create a great future for them.

I think people need to...get money and earn money, and I don't know how they can do that. They should start with an easy job, and then get a big strong job, like they could clean toilets, and then tractors, and then people, and then they can go out to do anything they want. I think they need to do farming, that's the best job my dad has ever had, that is just fantastic! (child/young person)

Be good role models so kids have someone to look up to, i.e. someone who has good morals and values, who is successful. (child/young person)

Schools

Children and young people want to be safe at school, and to be treated fairly by teachers who care about them. Children and young people want to get an education and learn life skills at school. Set out below is what children and young people said they want at school.



Safe and secure environments: One of the main concerns was bullying, though there were also suggestions for access to services through schools, such as health and counselling services.

Give children ways of helping them through rough patches like bullying by an outsider, how to look after ourselves while by ourselves. (child/young person)

Dealing with depression etc and sexual health better, more availability of health nurses both mental and sexual health experts. (child/young person)

To be treated fairly, listened to with respect and treated as an individual: Children and young people want to be treated fairly, with one set of rules. They also want schools to be aware of children and young people's individuality and strengths, to listen to them and to respect what they say.

It's not fair that naughty kids get expelled and never get a chance to re-enter school. There should be somewhere these kids can go, when they are ready, as an alternative to school so they can still learn/do something even if they can't go to school. (child/young person)

Acknowledge students as individuals and adapt their education to suit them. (child/young person)

To be consulted: If problems arose for children and young people, they want to be asked about their opinion, before any action is taken.

Firstly, talk to that young person! It is a common mistake that teachers and principals make. The majority of the time, there is actually nothing wrong. Talk to the young person in a comfortable situation and attempt to find out what exactly is going wrong. (child/young person)

Talk to the student before they ring the parents because the problem might have something to do with the parents. (child/young person)

Good teachers: Children and young people talked about valuing teachers who showed they cared about them; for example, noticing where they were up to. Children and young people also appreciated teachers who practised what they preached, were fair and had a sense of humour.

Someone who is encouraging. Someone who doesn't teach at a certain level, who adapts to each student's level and helps everyone in class whether they need it or not. Someone who includes everyone and communicates around school, not just in class. (child/young person)

To get an education and learn life skills: As well as getting an education, children and young people want to learn life skills, and some talked about schools being a place to learn values – although other children and young people said values learning should happen elsewhere.

Skills are taught such as discipline, time management and communication skills which develop young people to become inspired and motivated when able to use these skills in the world.... (child/young person)

Providing extra-curricular activities and encouraging everyone to get involved – helps to develop good communication, people skills. (child/young person)

Professional workforce

Children and young people talked about how they want the adults who helped them in a professional capacity to treat them. They also talked about how they want adults to communicate with them, to follow up on their promises and to act in a professional manner.

Communication: Children and young people want adults to see them as unique individuals and to listen to them. This meant not judging children and young people and recognising diversity among them, including cultural and sexual diversity, and treating children and young people with kindness. Children and young people argued for adults to try to see the world from their point of view. Children and young people want adults to talk to them in a way that they understood but that did not belittle them.

Sit them down and talk to them about why they are worried and what their suggestion is to help improve the matter. (child/young person)

Talk to us in a way that we understand you. (child/young person)

If you can't live at home, send you to someone you know and make sure you can still see your parents. (child/young person)

That you need to be open minded, patient. (child/young person)

[They should understand] how much it hurts to be away from whānau, not being able to see them, and let us spend time with friends. (child/young person)

Check up on children and follow through: Children and young people want adults to make good on their promises and to check in with them to see how they are doing.

Don't make promises you can't keep. (child/young person)

Adults need to follow through on promises, or not say they will do something if they can't do it. (child/young person)

Check in with me. If I say don't worry, check back in a couple of days. (child/young person)

Being professional and knowing what you're talking about: Children and young people suggested adult helpers should be professional in their work; for example, keeping confidences, abiding by ethical frameworks and being trustworthy. Adults should be role models for children and young people, giving an example of how to live well.

Need to trust professionals – positive working relationship. (child/young person)

Keep it confidential from other kids and other people, but if it's serious you have to tell. (child/young person)

Being our friends but also maintaining a work relationship. Finding the boundary. (child/young person)

Don't teach naughty habits. (child/young person)

Government

Children and young people saw the primary role of government being to provide them with access to services. To a lesser extent, children and young people saw government as responsible for providing things for children and young people to do. Children and young people also talked about government creating an environment for families to be well, for children and young people to be safe, and for children and young people to feel represented.

Provide equal opportunities and access to services: Children and young people want free education, transport and healthcare. Healthcare included mental health support, sexual health, disability, and teen pregnancy programmes. They want employment opportunities and ways to get into employment; for example, work experience for young people, apprenticeships, and giving incentives for businesses to hire young people. They want access to services not to be based on income, suggesting there should be transparency and fairness in distribution of resources by government. Some suggested means-testing (to target those needing help).

Don't expect all families to have computers – you can't afford internet or the newspaper so have a free internet café that you can use. Not everyone can afford an iPad or a computer, so if it's important, we should get them and they should update them. The Government needs to make sure that all kids get a fair chance. They should have the same opportunities to learn, like rich kids get scholarships, not all the poor kids. We need to make sure that everyone gets an equal chance. If you are on a benefit, the price of university should be lowered. There should be equal opportunities for education. (child/young person)

The Government should help special-needs kids so they can be treated in New Zealand. Thank you. (child/young person)

Ensure schools are supported: Children and young people had a lot to say about schools. They suggested reducing class sizes, equipping teachers to teach the right stuff, providing more teacher aides in schools and valuing them appropriately, more truancy officers in schools, more counsellors in schools and running parenting sessions at school.

Come and support our school, make better programmes and courses for kids. Give schools the resources to do really good things, like more challenging courses and get outside more. (child/young person)

Value teacher aides, train them and pay them properly. (child/young person)

Keep families together by providing services: Children and young people suggested ideas such as providing services to keep families well (counselling and health services) and to help families parent properly; for example, by providing Plunket and parent education. Children and young people want parents to take responsibility for their children. Some submissions also talked about valuing parents more.

I reckon the Government should make a place so that children can go there and families that are struggling can go there, because some families have five kids in their family and they can't afford to feed them and the Government is cutting back people's benefits. (child/young person)

Lower taxes, increase income: Related to access to services, children and young people had some suggestions for increasing household income. These included providing employment, increasing benefits, lowering taxes, removing GST on food, raising the pension and raising the minimum wage.



Night shift means I can't see my mum, and Dad gets home late. [We need] reliable trains. [This] means less time with family. Higher minimum wage – \$17 – and help parents find jobs that they have experience for, and then make sure that income keeps up with experience or time. (child/young person)

Address inequality: Children and young people were keen to see some fairness in the way resources were distributed in society. Children and young people recognised inequality existed not only for children in New Zealand, but also for children who lived overseas.

Māori treated the same as English. (child/young person)

I think that the Government should give the kids overseas who are starving... should give them some food cause they are suffering and dying. And the homeless people, [the Government] should give [them] some money to buy some food and education and get them off the road, and stop annoying people. (child/young person)

Provide safe and secure environments: Children and young people saw government as responsible for providing environments free of abuse. Children and young people talked about removing gangs, sending parents to jail if they are caught beating their children, suing all bad parents and providing a safe place for children to go to get away from their families. They suggested making drinking and cannabis illegal, and sending adults with drug problems to rehabilitation. They want government to stop bullying at school, to do something about family violence, and to have more media campaigns about caring for children and speaking up when bad things happened to children.

They need to come to us, they need to give us stuff to make us feel safe and happy – like people who understand us, people we can talk to, safe places we can go where scary adults won't find us. We need to be able to talk freely, we need to be able to talk to someone without it going to the Police or CYF. (child/young person)

Give children a voice and representation: Children and young people want more opportunities to have a say around laws being made. They want to be well represented and considered in law making; for example, through a specific Minister for Children, with the provision of child-focused policies right across the board. They also called for a key co-ordinator for each child in care.

Government needs to tell young people how our government works – democratic processes – and provide more opportunities to have a say around laws being made. [We] need to know how to make submissions. (child/young person)

They need to listen to kids or get more people to listen to kids. They should have an opinion post or suggestion box at schools so they know what kids think. They need to have better lines of communication. They need to come to us. (child/young person)

Provide opportunities to have fun locally: As in other contexts, children want access to sports and arts and local opportunities to have fun.

Heaps of opportunities to do art, sports, sport clubs especially in the 'hoods. (child/young person)

The Government should spend more money on good stuff in the community, more fun stuff. (child/young person)

Funding for community events to bring people together. (child/young person)

Build capacity within local organisations: Ideas captured here included investing in community organisations, focusing on what is already there, and using church leaders to involve their people.

Leaders across the community from within community. (child/young person)

Working with iwi, hapū and whānau to develop programmes that are appropriate for Māori, and with community leaders to create programmes appropriate for other cultures. Continued support of the Whānau Ora kaupapa so that whānau that are in higher need are able to access the most appropriate service to help them. (child/young person)

Ensure agencies and organisations connect: Ideas captured here include ideas for information-sharing, looking to international models for inspiration and being solution-focused.

We believe there should be a greater link between schools and Child, Youth and Family (CYF) to connect students with these services. (child/young person)

Agencies and organisations connecting, sharing information. (child/young person)

How children and young people want to be treated

Whether in the context of families, schools, communities or government, children and young people expressed common ideas about how they want to be treated. Children and young people's voices are quoted to illustrate each of these themes.

Show us you care

For us to feel valued we need our parents and families to feel interested in what we do, to talk about our feelings and how they are feeling. (child/young person)

Someone who is supportive and wants to get the best out of their students. Is willing to put in extra effort to do lunchtime tutorials. (child/young person)

Keep us safe and secure

Make sure we know how to keep safe. (child/young person)

Address bullying by teaching acceptance of everyone despite their differences. (child/young person)

Listen to us

I reckon adults should communicate more with their kids, and communicate more at home, so they can take care of themselves and do well at school and stuff like that. (child/young person)

Pay attention to what we say. (child/young person)

Talk to the young person FIRST, they may actually be ok. (child/young person)

See us as unique individuals

Be open-minded to cultures, values, religions. (child/young person)

I think they need to view each young person as an individual not as a stereotype, to listen to young people because they really do have something to say, and to stop treating them as a problem. They may need to bring in experts where needed. (child/young person)

Guide us

Teach your kids to do the right thing in the future. (child/young person)

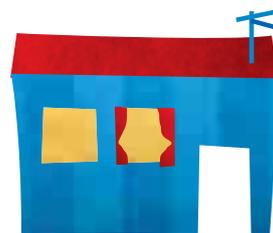
Be an inspiration, not an instructor. (child/young person)

Share responsibility

The wellbeing of children depends on the support they receive from their parents, caregivers, family, whānau, community and government.

The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children asked New Zealanders what they thought could be changed and improved to create a shared responsibility between these groups to protect children better. On this subject, the Green Paper first asked questions about parents and caregivers, and then about communities.

This chapter is split between what submitters said about sharing responsibility in relation to those two groups (parents and caregivers, then communities). We begin with a summary of submitters' views, and then detail their responses further, starting with answers to specific questions, followed by responses about shared responsibility in the free-form submissions.



Parents and caregivers

The Green Paper asked three questions about encouraging communities to take responsibility for vulnerable children.

- What services and programmes could government agencies consider in a review of support for parents and caregivers?
- Have government agencies got the balance right in supporting parents, caregivers, family and whānau to meet their responsibilities, while also protecting the needs of vulnerable children?
- When should government agencies step in and intervene with families and whānau?

Summary

Submissions broadly agreed on the types of services and supports that need to be available to families and vulnerable children.

Support for parents and caregivers: Submissions argued for support for parenting programmes, maternity and other health services (including health visitor support), financial assistance, life skills programmes, parents' groups and other support services early on in a child's life. Submissions recognised a need for more specialised services such as early childhood education, including treatment for addictions, family violence and mental health. Arguments both for universal services and targeted services were present in the submissions. Some submissions recognised the needs of particular groups of carers; for example, foster parents, grandparents, teen parents and carers of children with special needs.

Improvements to Child, Youth and Family: Submissions called for improvements to Child, Youth and Family practices. Improvements suggested included better monitoring and screening of families, and upskilling and registering social workers. Submissions also argued for Child, Youth and Family to provide the resources necessary for appropriate decisions to be made on behalf of children and their families (for example, reducing caseloads and increasing support from experts).

Balance not right: Submissions argued that the Government did not have the balance right between supporting families and protecting children. Arguments supporting this opinion were most likely to say the needs of children should come before the needs of parents and caregivers, particularly when children were at risk. They also said that welfare benefits encourage poor parenting, and that more support should be provided to agencies and communities looking after families and children. Other arguments included supporting families so children did not become vulnerable, that negative statistics prove the balance is wrong, and better support was needed for Child, Youth and Family to make good decisions about child wellbeing.

When to step in: Submissions argued the Government should step in as early as possible, particularly where risk was identified – such as through notifications of abuse to Child, Youth and Family – or when families ask for help, when family violence is present, when communities are unable to help or if families miss regular appointments. Some submissions said there should be reduced government involvement and criticised the current statutory response.

Address the wider causes of vulnerability: Submissions emphasised the need to address wider social and economic causes of vulnerability, such as poverty, housing, family violence, addiction, mental health, and income and cultural inequality. This view was particularly common in submissions from community meetings and other organisations, and to a lesser extent from NGOs and frontline workers. Submissions identified the disproportionate burden of poverty and inequality that affects Māori, Pasifika and immigrant families.



Parents and caregivers: Question and answer submissions

What services and programmes could government agencies consider in a review of support for parents and caregivers?

This question elicited a range of responses. In general, submissions called for better access to, and funding for, services that support families.

Parenting: About half of submissions argued for better support for programmes and initiatives that helped people in their parenting role. Submissions endorsed specific programmes, for example Parents Inc, Family Start, Incredible Years, Parents As First Teachers (PAFT), and extensions to Plunket and Parentline. Submissions also referred to programmes that support particular parenting challenges; for example, parenting children with behaviour disorders. Submissions argued both for universal parenting support and more support for particular groups of carers (such as foster carers).

Parents Inc, more Plunket talks, even resources like the Grapevine magazine. Antenatal classes and "welcome to parenting, this is how much hard work it is" type classes should be compulsory for all new parents. Services and programmes should be very frank and open about what it involves being a parent, they should not try to make it all rosy etc as people need to hear about reality and have realistic expectations of themselves, partners, babies/children. (general public)

Making it compulsory for parents that lack the necessary parenting skills to complete parenting courses within their communities and for the Government to provide financial assistance with these courses. (NGO)

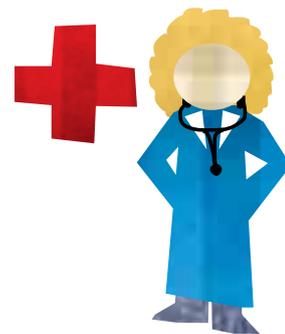
Parenting support: A small minority of submissions argued for better support for particular groups of caregivers, including grandparents, teen parents, parents of teenagers, non-kin parents and parents of children with disabilities.

Supports for children with disabilities and their families. It's clear from the work we do that children with disabilities are most at risk because invariably they [have] little access or knowledge of access to supports. It's also clear that families with disabled children are immediately disadvantaged since one or both parents has to give up their job to care for the child. (frontline worker)

Provide allowances or incentives to people who foster or care for children allowing them to leave a troubled home or area. (general public)

Health: A large minority of submissions responding to the question argued for support for health services, including Well Child services, family planning, antenatal and post-natal care. A small minority of submissions also sought better support for mental health services and services for drug and alcohol treatment.

Increased funding for Plunket. Early intervention and support is vital. Increased services for counselling for post-natal depression, drug and alcohol counselling. Reinstate places like Plunket Family Services. (general public)



Refraining from sending new mothers home too early from maternity hospitals would be a good place to start. Development of the parent/child attachment bond deserves government's support because it is a great predictor of positive outcomes for the child. (NGO)

Supporting mothers/parents during the antenatal period. Evidence shows it is possible to prevent abuse and neglect. Health professionals, government agencies and NGOs have a wonderful opportunity to work effectively with socially at-risk mothers/parents/whānau during the antenatal period. Pregnancy and the first year are a critical stage in child development, providing the essential foundations for all future learning, behaviour and health. (frontline worker)

Education: A minority of submissions argued for more support for early childhood services and schools, including community-led initiatives such as Playcentre, playgroups and kindergartens. Submissions suggested schools could be used as settings to teach empathy, provide material resources to children (food, clothing) and other support, such as social workers. Some submissions called for better funding for special education (Ongoing Resourcing Scheme, Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour) and better assessment of children who might be having difficulty at school, or be disengaging from school.

Playcentre is perfect as it is community based and supports families, not just parents and caregivers. It isn't just about ECE, but also strengthening the parent-child relationship. (general public)

Resource schools better to be able to educate vulnerable children and prevent future generational vulnerability. (general public)

Child, Youth and Family: A minority of submissions suggested Child, Youth and Family should be reviewed. Submissions suggested upskilling and professionalising social workers, more monitoring of – and support for – foster carers, and better integration of services for families involved with Child, Youth and Family. A minority of submissions also called for a review of the existing care system. Suggestions ranged from clearly defining vulnerable children and improving assessment, to better integration among existing services (including information-sharing) and plugging service gaps.

The Government needs to consider how to get CYF social workers into homes and out of meetings. (frontline worker)

More support for families who have had children taken off them. My experience as a foster parent is that parents make mistakes (but are not bad parents) but get worse when their children are taken off them and they seem to have very little support to draw on. (general public)

Financial assistance: A minority of submissions argued for more financial assistance for families. Submissions suggested financial assistance by way of tax cuts for low income earners and family benefit payments. Submissions also called for a review of the Working for Families policy to allow children whose parents do not work to also benefit. Some also argued for financial support for parents to stay at home longer with children (parental leave). Some submissions argued for making financial assistance contingent on the adequate care of children. Others argued families need better access to life skills programmes, such as budgeting advice, home-making and relationship services.

There must be better financial support (eg extend paid parental leave) when babies are very young (and the father or other parent should be entitled to far more paid leave – that bonding time is absolutely essential). Stress on parents has to be one of the biggest factors leading to child abuse/neglect and it is simply not ok to expect both parents to work to support the family from when baby is only 14 weeks old. (frontline workers)

Working for families is great as in many low paid jobs the income is less than even the benefit. It also encourages people to stay in their jobs. (general public)

Review existing mechanisms: A minority of submissions called for a review of the existing service system. Ideas here included better integrating existing services, moving to services that are evidence-based, and providing a policy and service climate that makes sure all the needs of families are met in order to stop children from becoming vulnerable. Suggestions here included improving housing, providing respite care for stressed out families and recognising the role of faith-based communities in supporting families.

A whole of Government review is required in order to understand how families and whānau living in poverty or with other social challenges are impacted positively or negatively by the combination of those services. (general public)

Existing programmes, better integrated with greater data sharing/resource sharing. Better tracking of children as they move through the various services. (general public)

Life skills: A minority of submissions suggested more support for programmes that helped people cope with life more generally. Examples here included budgeting advice, relationship counselling and home-making.

Providing free budgeting advice, relationship counselling and one on one parent support to everyone with children. (child/young person)

All services as required, including parenting skills, budgeting services, homemaking basics (cooking, gardening, housework etc). (frontline worker)

Other ideas: A small minority of submissions discussed Whānau Ora and teen parents.

Further develop and use the Whānau Ora model effectively. (general public)

Compulsory parenting programmes for teenage parents. (general public)

Have government agencies got the balance right in supporting parents, caregivers and family and whānau to meet their responsibilities, while also protecting the needs of vulnerable children?

Balance not right: A clear majority of submissions did not think the Government had the balance right between supporting parents and families/whānau and protecting children.

Children's wellbeing needs to come first. I recognise that these two things are almost inseparably intertwined, however, children must be put first, as an example CYF should not return children (who are removed) to families that are still poorly functioning.... (general public)

No. A huge slug of money cares for older people through our pensions and related schemes. The amount set aside for babies, new parents and at-risk parents is a joke in comparison. (general public)

No. We constantly seem to be needing to intervene in the same families with little long-term prospects of them ever being fully functional. Our tolerance for lack of a nurturing environment needs to be more limited. (general public)

Some submissions explained why the balance was wrong. These submissions drew on the following arguments, beginning with the most common:

Children should come first: A small minority of submissions said the needs of children should be prioritised above those of parents and families. These submissions argued there should be better screening of the ability of families to parent children. Some submissions argued that, in more extreme cases, neglectful or abusive parents should not be allowed to keep or have further children. Ideas captured here also included making child-centred policy and practice changes.

I think there is too much emphasis on keeping children within families when the living situation is causing harm. There is a delicate balance here, however if the living situation is not going to be able to be considerably improved then alternative care should be considered for the child/children. Some parents may be supported by government agencies, but too many are not and do not have adequate parenting or child care skills. (general public)

A child's wellbeing and development should take priority over parental needs and organisational needs. (general public)

Make sure the children are safe, make sure they feel safe and secure, make sure they know they can get help and how they can do this, they need to feel confident and good about themselves. (general public)

Negative statistics: A small minority of submissions argued negative child outcomes and the high frequency of child abuse incidents suggest the Government does not have the balance right.

If they had it right we would not have such alarming rates of child abuse, child hunger, and deaths and hospitalisations of children for third world preventable diseases. (frontline worker)

Clearly something is wrong because of our current statistics but I don't believe that it is the individual's (parent's) fault for enabling poverty to exist within their family. I believe it is a systems failure and it is a matter of identifying that fault. (general public)

Families should be supported: A small minority of submissions argued government should work with families more to ensure children have good outcomes and are prevented from becoming vulnerable. Suggestions from submissions included support for:

- universal services, such as parenting programmes
- more targeted specialist services; for example, treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, help with mental health issues and respite for families under stress
- government fostering a social and economic environment in which families can access the basic necessities of life.

Children are obviously the number one priority but parents also need help to make positive choices for themselves as well as their families. Help needs to be offered on a whole-family basis when deemed necessary. (general public)

Benefits encourage poor parenting: A small minority of submissions argued the benefit system encourages and enables people who cannot parent properly to have children.

I think the DPB is vital for NZ but there comes a point where mothers who keep producing children but have no capacity to care for them should be cut off. It may even be a good idea only to support the first two children. (general public)

There should be fewer children born to parents that are not managing the ones they have – they should be encouraged strongly to use contraception and not be rewarded by getting more money from government. (frontline worker)

Child, Youth and Family: A small minority of submissions argued Child, Youth and Family practices need to place the child first and processes need to be improved to make sure children and families are treated appropriately. Submissions suggested Child, Youth and Family needs better support and funding to do its job, and staff need to be better trained and supported to make good decisions.

When people call CYFS or raise concerns about a child this should be addressed swiftly, proactively and appropriately. Many people believe CYFS will do nothing but remove children from their parents' care instead of giving families the support they need to change. (frontline worker)

The community is responsible for children: A small minority of submissions argued that everyone is responsible for vulnerable children. These submissions suggested support could be given through community institutions such as schools.

Need to foster community engagement in child protection – not just the paid workforce. (NGO)

Touching base with communities would be a lot more beneficial to the government as these are the ones that have firsthand experiences with our families. (frontline worker)

Tweaking required: Submissions that indicated the balance was about right suggested the system could use some “tweaking” in terms of the amount of resources provided to families, carers or support agencies.

More resourcing of community NGOs would be beneficial. (general public)

Other ideas: A small minority of submissions suggested that:

- families should come first
- families need better access to the services that can help them
- more family-friendly policy settings are needed; for example, to enable parents to stay at home longer with their children, and for there to be more support for family-based early childhood education.

Some submissions raised the idea that vulnerable families need better support (such as parenting education and skills) to be able to parent well, whereas other submissions said all parents need support as targeted assistance can end up discriminating against people.

When should government agencies step in and intervene with families and whānau?

This question elicited a range of responses, in part determined by whether government “stepping in” was seen as a supportive, preventive measure or as a protective measure once the vulnerability of a child had been established.

The Government needs to find ways to intervene before situations reach the point of children being abused in any way whatsoever. (general public)

Submissions suggested government should intervene at several points:

As early as possible: About half of submissions suggested government should intervene as early as possible in the life of a child. For the most part, submissions argued this should happen when there was some risk identified in a family, such as a history of abuse in the family, mental health issues, being on a benefit or when a new partner joins the family. While some submissions did not offer an explanation about what “as early as possible” might mean, submissions proposed intervening:

- as soon as a problem is noticed by agencies in contact with children
- antenatally
- from birth
- with parents before problems occur.

Right at the beginning, before anything goes wrong. Prevention is better than cure. All parents and whānau should be encouraged to enrol in PAFT [Parents As First Teachers] for their babies.... Anything that keeps them under the eye of someone else who will be able to tell if they are at risk or not. (general public)

The earlier the better, whether it be minimal support to aid those stressed by family life or major support to those unable to cope or neglecting/hurting their children. Government/society need to accept that not all parents are cut out to be parents in order for the children to suffer less. (general public)

Right from the outset. Why don't you consider supporting the local services within their communities that already support parents and young children with limited resources. (NGO)



When a child is notified or abuse is noticed: A large minority of submissions suggested government should intervene when a child is notified to Child, Youth and Family or comes to the attention of the police. This idea suggests intervention when a serious issue is raised.

Government agencies should step in immediately whenever someone has raised concern for a child/children or family. (general public)

When anyone reports to CYF that they suspect abuse/neglect is happening, no matter how small the problem seems. (general public)

When a child presents at a hospital more than twice in a six month period, when a notification is made and when a child is absent from school for a period of time. (frontline worker)

To prevent vulnerability from arising: A minority of submissions argued agencies and institutions should support children and their families to be well, for example, the fruit in schools programme. Some submissions took exception to the word "intervene" due to its implication that something was being done to families. These submissions preferred the term "support". Some submissions also suggested support services should be available universally so "stigmatisation" does not occur.

Even the term "step in and intervene" implies doing something "to" a family rather than "with" by supporting and providing services. Should be at the same time as NGOs (interventions should be a community response) when there are concerns about the safety and wellbeing of anyone in the family. (NGO)

Supporting parents and caregivers is crucial to any successful interaction designed to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. What we believe works well is working with those children and caregivers together from the very beginning. Poor attachment can lead to significant development problems and have long term detrimental effects on caregivers, children and the wider family/whānau. (NGO)

When families ask for help: A small minority of submissions suggested services should be available to families when they ask for them; for example, respite for parents of disabled children.

When parents request help and when children, parents/caregivers or whānau have or are suspected to be facing violence, abuse or neglect. (NGO)

When community agencies are unable to help: A small minority of submissions suggested government should intervene when families do not respond to community supports or where all avenues have been exhausted.

Only after satisfactory evidence suggests that there is no other option. (general public)

When family violence is present: A small minority of submissions argued government needed to protect children where violence is present in a family.

If parents/new parents have a past of violence or a child is reported to have suspicious bruising or is acting out of character then government needs to take a step in to assess the situation and then actively stay in the situation. (general public)

Missed appointments: A small minority of submissions suggested government should step in if families miss regular appointments with service providers, with examples being missing immunisations or Well Child visits.

When it is first indicated that there may be something amiss within the whānau, e.g. not turning up for appointments, visits to emergency departments for suspicious falls etc. (general public)

Concerns about government intervention: Other ideas put forward in response to this question criticised the statutory response to child abuse, suggesting children were not appropriately placed, more expertise was needed to be brought in to make decisions about child welfare, and more resources need to be given to Child, Youth and Family to do an adequate job.

Government to reduce involvement: A small minority of submissions argued there was too much government intervention. These submissions suggested government did too much for families and should just let families get on with it.

Parents and caregivers: Free-form submissions

In this section we report on what free-form submissions had to say about the role of government in supporting parents and caregivers to look after their children. Themes are discussed under the following broad headings:

- Addressing the causes of vulnerability
- The balance between supporting families and protecting children
- Providing services and supports that help families in their parenting role.

Addressing the causes of vulnerability

The strongest call from free-form submissions was for government to improve the broader living conditions of families to reduce child vulnerability.

We are cognisant that it is the wider social determinants of equitable housing, education, employment, physical environment and social connectivity that impacts most significantly on health. (NGO)

Submissions noted families might be living with multiple disadvantages. We report on each of the living conditions specifically mentioned by submissions.

Poverty and income inequality: A large minority of submissions commented on the role of poverty and income inequality in poor child outcomes. These ideas were raised in a clear majority of community meetings and submissions from other organisations, followed by NGOs, frontline workers, and to a lesser extent, the general public. Submissions suggested raising the minimum wage, increasing benefits and allowances, removing GST from food and supporting people into work. Submissions linked poverty with children having to go without the basic necessities of life. Submissions made the point that income inequality meant families with low incomes were not able to offer children the same opportunities as families with higher incomes, which was seen as unjust. Poverty was also linked to increasing stress in the lives of families and reducing their ability to parent well.

The gap between rich and poor is too big. The rich should pay more tax and the lowest wage should be lifted so there is less pressure on lower income families to survive. Working brings dignity. Benefits breed dependency. More job sharing to give more opportunity to parents to work and to also look after their children. (general public)

Poverty impacts on the ability to provide healthy food for tamariki, which goes on to affect their brain development and education. (NGO)

Vulnerability is often the result of poverty and therefore it is vital appropriate pathways are in place to ensure vulnerable children and families have access to services and that service capacity exists to meet need. (general public)

Cultural inequality: Submissions commenting on this theme noted Māori, Pasifika and recent immigrants were disproportionately burdened with poverty and reduced access to social and health services.

The damage to the culture of Māori by colonisation and an education and justice system which has been dominated by Pākehā culture has had a devastating effect and has often led to a breakdown in the whānau, hapū, iwi community. Māori need to be given the opportunity to repair this breakdown in the ways they deem appropriate and not be continually blocked by cries of special advantage. To address inequalities requires extra costs. (NGO)

The Government could improve how services are delivered so that they are more accessible, acceptable and culturally appropriate to vulnerable children and their families and whānau. (NGO)

Submissions suggested government and other service providers need to take into account the role of culture in helping families and provide culturally relevant services. Cultural inequality was highlighted by a small minority of submissions overall. A large minority of submissions from other organisations raised cultural inequality as an issue, followed in frequency by community meetings, NGOs and to a lesser extent, frontline workers and the general public.

Due to poverty, Pacific Island families and their children face additional vulnerability.... Often removed from traditional ways of life and with ongoing commitments to family back home, Pacific Island children are at risk of supervisory, financial and emotional neglect. (other organisation)

Cultural adjustment: Submissions also suggested the norms and values of families, especially immigrant families, might need to change to reduce child vulnerability.

Many migrants are affected by language barriers and have limited understanding of expectations of our society. Others simply prefer to continue living as they were and not be challenged by NZ standards. The physical and emotional wellbeing of children raised in these communities are frequently at risk. (NGO)

Addiction, including drug and alcohol addiction and gambling: Maternal alcohol and drug addiction were linked to poor child health outcomes. Alcohol and drug abuse were also seen as contributing to unsafe environments for children, and to poor decision-making by people in parenting roles. Submissions from other organisations and community meetings (a large minority) were most likely to raise these issues, followed by NGOs and frontline workers (a minority). A small minority of submissions from the general public raised this issue. Submissions supported:

- increasing the availability of treatment services
- limiting the availability of alcohol.

The lack of community and residential drug and alcohol counselling/treatment services is a well documented nationwide problem, and attempting to implement any initiative on child abuse without addressing the problem of alcohol and drug abuse is a totally fruitless exercise and waste of resources. (frontline worker)

The application of evidence based interventions to decrease the accessibility of alcohol within communities with children at high risk of violence, neglect and injury. Improved support for communities wanting to address local situations that exacerbate alcohol and drug use. (frontline worker)

Housing: Submissions argued for improvements in housing quality, housing affordability and reduced overcrowding. A large minority of submissions from other organisations and community meetings raised these issues, with a minority of NGOs and frontline workers following suit, while the general public were less likely to mention housing.



I would like to see government policy directed at housing development and developers to ensure that a significant proportion of any development has to include affordable housing for those on low incomes. I would also like to see the Government itself providing more affordable housing in high-risk areas. Stable housing encourages stable communities and long-term connections with schools, thus enhancing education and a sense of belonging. It also enables families to access local medical, social and spiritual support and build up competence and confidence with providers of government services and parent networks. (frontline worker)

Continue with campaigns which address unhealthy housing, eg insulation initiatives and minimum standards for rental homes. (NGO)

Family violence: Submissions called for more support for children living in families where family violence is present. Community meetings and submissions from other organisations were most likely to comment on this issue (a large minority). A minority of NGOs, and a small minority of frontline worker and general public submissions supported this idea.

Suggestions included:

- better support for those who experience family violence
- closer monitoring of families where violence is present.

There needs to be more resourcing for family violence support services and refuges to support men, women and children seeking to leave violent situations. (frontline workers)

It is essential that there is adequate funding to provide immediate professional support to children who have been abused or have witnessed abuse. (NGO)

Mental health: A small minority of submissions argued for better access to clinical services for parents and caregivers suffering with mental ill-health. Few differences were found between submitter types.

Support parents who have mental health/intellectual disability issues to be able to have [a] positive parenting role and/or engagement. (NGO)

The balance

The Green Paper asked whether the Government had the right balance in terms of supporting children and supporting families. A relatively small number of free-form submissions raised ideas related to this question. Themes relating to the balance are discussed below.

Support families: A minority of submissions suggested the Government needed to do more to support families in order to keep children safe and well. These submissions were not necessarily about putting the family above the child, but recognising that for children to be well, families needed to be well. NGOs and community meetings were most likely to raise this point.

You can't make the child OK if the family is not OK. (other organisation)

Our experience confirms the central role of parents and caregivers in children thriving. Accordingly we do support genuine respect for the role of parenting. (NGO)

Protect children: Submissions said the balance needed to move towards child protection. These submissions argued, for example, not to return children to situations where they may still be at risk. A minority of submissions said too much emphasis was given to the family or parents at the expense of the child.

The new Act should make it clear that child protection takes precedence over confidentiality or an individual's privacy. (NGO)

More support for agencies looking after families: A small minority of submissions argued that agencies working with families needed to be better resourced or particular programmes needed to be available to more families.

More support to communities to look after children: A small minority of submissions overall suggested more support needed to go to communities to ensure the wellbeing of children. The idea was sometimes linked to recognising the wider determinants of child and family outcomes. This argument was raised in a large minority of community meetings, followed by NGOs and other submitter types.

We oppose a punitive attitude towards parents and other adult figures around children in discussion around this Green Paper. We call for a deeper exploration of the causes of marginalisation on the one hand, and an affirmation of cultural gifts that might form one basis for a new way forward for vulnerable children. (NGO)

Providing services and support that help families in their parenting role

Submissions also argued for specific services to help families in their parenting role. Each cluster of services is discussed below.

Parenting programmes: Submissions endorsed the provision of parenting programmes. Submitters argued parenting programmes could be a critical preventive measure that would mitigate the need for government to intervene in families. Submitters argued both for universal parenting programmes as well as parenting programmes for groups of parents experiencing particular challenges; for example, teen parents, refugees, parents in prisons, fathers and foster parents. Submissions from other organisations and community meetings were most likely to suggest this strategy (about half in all), with NGOs, frontline workers and the general public less likely to comment on parenting programmes.

The provision of more parenting courses can help strengthen the family where there is a vulnerable child. We suggest the adoption of programmes which build resilience and coping skills and that are facilitated by trained professionals who network with support organisations. Attendance at such a course could even be linked to the domestic purposes benefit – an extra payment could be made for attending a course. (NGO)

Better maternity services: Submissions called for better maternity services. Submitters argued for longer hospital stays for new mothers and a more joined up approach between antenatal and post-natal services, including enrolment with GPs. Submitters recognised new parents are most likely to be receptive to support and this was a good time to hook them into the system. Submissions from other organisations and community meetings were the most likely to raise maternity services (about half), followed by frontline workers, NGOs and the general public.



All aspects – from the length of hospital stay after birth, lactation advice, midwife and medical support, Plunket in-home support, parenting advice and guidance, paid parental leave and the ability to return to work flexibly, warm and dry housing, nutritional care – will all impact on the quality of a child's care and therefore development. We believe we need to better focus and direct our country's resources towards these issues to improve the care of our children. (NGO)

More family support programmes: Submissions argued for giving families the basic skills they need to function well. These include budgeting skills and relationship skills, as well as wrap-around services such as broadly focused home visitation programmes. A large minority of community meeting submissions raised this issue, followed by submissions from other organisations and NGOs. A minority of submissions from frontline workers and the general public commented on family support programmes.

Make parental support and parenting education universally available, but provided in a manner that meets the different needs of different families. (NGO)

More health visitor support: Submissions argued for more health visitor support, including Plunket, public health nurses and midwives. Frontline workers and community meetings were most likely to raise this as an issue (a minority), followed by the general public, NGOs and submissions from other organisations.

I would love to see a strengthening of our Plunket nurse system and midwife system so the basic education necessary for good childcare goes to where it is needed early so the parents, or parent, develops good skills in the home. (general public)

Support for non-parental carers: A small minority of submissions called for support specifically for non-parental carers, including grandparents, foster parents and kin carers. Submissions argued for more financial assistance, and better support and guidance for these carers.

Carers are struggling in their attempt to provide the care our vulnerable children need. Caregiving families need more training, more support, better funding and more respect. (NGO)

Support parents' groups: A small minority of submissions called for support for community-led initiatives that connect families with young children. Particular groups of parents suggested included fathers, Māori and Pasifika families and stay-at-home carers. These submissions recognised the need for social support in the parenting role. A large minority of community meetings raised the issue of support for parents' groups, while other submitter types were much less likely to raise it.



Ensure that caregivers at home are not isolated – support further development of groups of young parents/mothers. Some exist now, but they are obviously not known about by many young parents. They need to be adapted to the communities in need. (NGO)

Communities

The Green Paper asked three questions about encouraging communities to take responsibility for vulnerable children.

- How can the Government encourage communities to take more responsibility for the wellbeing of their children?
- What barriers need to be removed to allow communities to take responsibility for the wellbeing of their vulnerable children?
- What can you do in your community to support or initiate community-led actions to support vulnerable children and their families and whānau?

We discuss responses to each of these specific questions first, followed by what free-form submissions said about the role of the community in supporting vulnerable children.

Summary

Submissions endorsed the view that government should support communities to enhance the wellbeing of their children.

Communities of place, culture, need and faith: The strongest call was for government to support projects and programmes that are relevant to communities. Submissions recognised diverse types of communities, including communities of place, culture, need and faith. Submissions argued programmes and initiatives supported by government needed to work with the circumstances of people's lives, be adequately resourced and located in places where people naturally gather.



Strengthen communities: Submissions argued that responsibility for vulnerable children needed to be shared more with the community and that the community needed to have greater involvement in the lives of families. A commonly mentioned phrase was "it takes a village to raise a child". Submissions also argued for government support for "community-building" activities and programmes that develop social networks, promote trust and co-operation, share knowledge and ideas, and distribute "ownership" of family problems.

Working with community leaders: Submissions argued for working with community leaders and encouraging information-sharing and collaboration between government and community agencies.

Strengthen families: Submissions advocated policies that would help strengthen families and encourage nurturing of children. These policies included ideas such as greater support for – and training of – parents, government policy should better recognise the role of parents and caregivers, and that it should recognise the wellbeing of children and families is linked to poverty and other social determinants.

More programmes and services: Submissions argued that government should introduce or expand specific programmes and services. Arguments were made for: an expansion of support to parents through education and training programmes; various services that support parents and intervene early in a child's life, including early childhood education; informal forms of support such as mentoring programmes; making parenting programmes and support services compulsory; and using support services as a way of monitoring vulnerable families.

Increase community action on child maltreatment: Submissions also expressed support for social marketing campaigns, greater consequences for those who neglect and/or abuse children and for those who do not report abuse they know is happening, and for mandatory reporting by either professionals or the public.

Strengthening communities by supporting families: Submissions suggested government could support communities by supporting families in their parenting roles. Suggestions included providing community-based parenting programmes, parents' groups and mentoring for families. Other submissions argued for strengthening the economic and resource base of families. Submissions argued for measures to better identify and control child maltreatment. These measures included mandatory reporting, harsher consequences for perpetrators of child abuse and removing barriers to reporting maltreatment.

Reducing barriers to community responsibility: Submissions argued for removing barriers to allow communities to support vulnerable children better. These arguments fell into three broad categories:

- **Improving services to communities:** Such as changes to make reporting of abuse easier, better co-ordination between services, removing red tape (for example, amending privacy laws), improving the effectiveness of services to families, improving agencies and upskilling staff, and lowering the threshold for access to services.
- **Improving the living standards of families:** Submissions argued this would allow families to support their children adequately and contribute to the community. A less common argument was that economic and cultural inequality needed to be addressed to allow communities to come together.
- **Changing social norms and attitudes:** Submissions suggested social norms needed to change for communities to support vulnerable children better. The norms to address included de-stigmatising seeking help, promoting the value of children and encouraging people to intervene where they see inappropriate behaviour.

Personal responsibility for community action: Submissions commonly responded to this question by offering specific examples of when they had taken personal responsibility to intervene to help others in the past. Actions included looking after children, providing material support to neighbours (food, sleepovers), promoting a sense of neighbourliness, supporting local initiatives and NGOs (for example, Plunket and women's refuge), raising awareness of child-related issues and taking it upon themselves to intervene when they saw inappropriate behaviour.

Other themes involved initiating and hosting community events and projects, examples of how frontline workers had contributed to community, ideas for new community groups (for example, support groups for children, or better support or use of existing community-based initiatives and institutions, such as schools) and providing more funding for initiatives and groups.



Communities: Question and answer submissions

How can the Government encourage communities to take more responsibility for the wellbeing of their children?

Strengthen communities: About half of submissions argued responsibility for vulnerable children needed to be shared more with the community, and the community needed to have a greater involvement in the lives of families – the phrase “it takes a village to raise a child” was referred to in a number of responses.

Within this category of submissions were those that argued for government support for “community-building” activities and programmes that develop social networks, promote trust and co-operation, share knowledge and ideas and distribute “ownership” of family problems. Such initiatives were seen as not only providing support, but also as building an awareness of where children were being abused or families were struggling. Specific proposals within the submissions included:

- a range of general “community-building” programmes (community vegetable gardens, neighbourhood groups, family activities)

A monthly “get to know your neighbours day” with community groups running activities in local parks or schools. (general public)

- community-based assistance to families, including parenting programmes, local mentor groups, childcare, community centres and volunteer programmes.

Encourage more state-based early education centres, such as kindergartens that are run by an association and a parent-based committee. Community-run organisations create more responsibility for all children and it encourages parents to get more involved with their children and others’ children. Profit-based ECEs have different drivers. (frontline worker)

The government can support community groups such as mothers’ groups, play groups, Playcentre and schools to offer the best service possible. If these are strong, community spirit should grow and hopefully this will provide a feeling of responsibility for the children that live in that community. (general public)

Some submissions argued for changing structural features of communities in order to strengthen them. Examples were reducing inequality (getting rid of private schools) and reducing the availability of alcohol.

Discouraging independent schools – they lead the wealthy parents to absolve themselves to the rest of the community. (general public)

Working with community leaders: Submissions also argued for working with community leaders and encouraging information-sharing and collaboration between government and community agencies.

To work closely with communities to have agencies talk, share information, e.g. social workers with DHBs etc across services for a common goal like joining the dots. (general public)

Not allowing alcohol to be readily and cheaply on sale in supermarkets and everywhere. (general public)

Strengthen families: A large minority of submissions advocated policies that would help strengthen families and encourage the nurturing of children.

[If] we focus on nurturing and supporting the family by empowering and encouraging them to care for themselves with respect to improved health care, education, employment and housing, then this would contribute to building stronger families and communities. (general public)

These submissions included arguments that:

- there should be greater support for – and training of – parents
- government policy should better recognise the role of parents and caregivers, and support parents who wished to stay at home and care for young children
- the wellbeing of children and families was linked to poverty and other social determinants, such as healthcare, education, employment and housing.



Having stable, affordable, long term housing is CRITICAL for children and their families, as it's what will enable communities to do a better job (frontline worker)

Iwi could play a role in supporting whānau who are not so well off.

Speaking from a Māori perspective, those iwi that continually wheel out how much money they have should be diverting that money towards sorting out those whānau that come under that iwi. (frontline worker)

More programmes and services: A large minority of submissions argued government should introduce or expand specific programmes and services – primarily services for families. Such submissions included those that argued for:

- an expansion of support to parents, particularly through education and training programmes on practical skills and “positive parenting”

Support for parenting programmes so that parents who don't know a better way can learn other ways of parenting. (general public)

- various services that support parents and intervene early in a child's life, including early childhood education, Plunket, help for parents facing stress and post-natal depression, “drop-in” centres and childcare

Fund kindies and schools to run parenting courses and family days on a regular basis. Give Plunket better support. (general public)

- more informal forms of support, such as mentoring programmes between experienced and less confident parents, and more involvement of senior citizens in childcare

Perhaps set up mentoring schemes – where parents (including those with children who have grown up or who are older) are buddied up with other parents who might need assistance/support. (general public)

- making parenting programmes and support services compulsory, particularly for at-risk families

Compulsory parenting courses for mentally ill, drug and alcohol dependent beneficiaries and all teenage parents. (general public)

- using support programmes as a way of monitoring vulnerable families, and linking services to mechanisms for reporting and intervention.

There should be graduated monitoring based on a perceived risk. With information-sharing and mandatory reporting, this risk can be better analysed. (general public)

More social marketing – raising awareness and changing norms: A large minority of submissions expressed support for social marketing campaigns. These included campaigns that raise awareness and encourage a shift in attitudes and behaviour, such as:

- encouraging parents to value children
- educating people on what constitutes abuse
- encouraging people to report or help others
- providing advice on good parenting
- explaining the responsibilities involved in raising a child
- encouraging people to report abuse and act within their communities.

Community focused ads by the Government that promote positive behaviours such as spending time with the kids playing or doing family things together that show loving parent to role model. (general public)

More ads should be on TV regarding appropriate/inappropriate behaviours toward children as well as what is normal behaviour for children. (frontline worker)

Some sort of publicity campaign making it okay/acceptable from a moral and ethical point of view that children are the responsibility of the whole community – [it] takes a village to raise a child. (general public)



Greater consequences: A minority of submissions promoted stronger repercussions for those who neglect and/or abuse children. This category of submissions also included those that recommended consequences for bystanders where abuse occurs, including parents who remain in violent relationships and professionals who have knowledge of a child's circumstances (teachers, social workers).

Making mothers just as accountable as fathers for injuries sustained while the mother is living in the same house as the perpetrator. (general public)

Some submissions specified the possible nature of those consequences, such as:

- fines
- criminal convictions
- prison sentences
- the removal of children from families
- cutting or suspending benefits
- making benefit payments conditional on attending parenting programmes
- being subject to a greater degree of scrutiny.



Cutting benefits from those families which are continuing to present their children at risk or neglect. It actually has to be that ruthless as personal accountability has gone by the wayside and this has to be brought back in so these families realise how serious the problem is. (frontline worker)

Encourage reporting and remove barriers to services: A minority of submissions argued the Government should improve access to existing services. Another minority theme was to make it easier for people to notify concerns and “speak out”, particularly where low-level concerns existed. Some of these submissions expressed concerns about the ability to notify safely and confidentially, without being labelled a “nark”. Some submissions argued for a phone line for advice or low-level concerns.

Make it safe for people to speak up about situations that aren't right – even if you only suspect something. (frontline worker)

Mandatory reporting: A small minority of submissions argued the best way to encourage communities to take more responsibility for the wellbeing of their children was through mandatory reporting by either professionals or the public.

It is awesome that mandatory reporting of abuse is to be introduced. This will hopefully make neighbours and communities more accountable for the safety of children. (frontline worker)

What barriers need to be removed to allow communities to take responsibility for the wellbeing of their vulnerable children?

Responses to this question were similar to those asking how the community can be encouraged to take more responsibility for vulnerable children. We report responses under three main headings:

- Improving services
- Supporting families
- Changing social norms and attitudes.

Improving services

Make reporting easier: A large minority of submissions responding to this question suggested making it easier for people to report suspected cases of child maltreatment.

More awareness of the importance of reporting child abuse. Easier reporting mechanisms for concerned people. (NGO)

Better co-ordination between services: A minority of submissions argued for better co-ordination of community services to enable children to get the help they need. Ideas included information-sharing between agencies, having social workers in schools and delivering services from hubs, such as schools.

Data sharing of children at risk between schools, health professionals, police and community professionals. (frontline worker)

Lower the threshold for access to services: A small minority of submissions argued families currently need to be at crisis point before services become available to them. Lowering the threshold for entry to services would mean families would be able to access the help they need earlier before reaching crisis point.

Teachers see these children every day and often don't know who to speak to about these children. They often identify children whose families [may] need help but are not necessarily in crisis yet. (frontline worker)

Improving agencies and upskilling staff: A small minority of submissions suggested a focus on capability-building among agencies. These submissions argued better integration and access to existing services will not help if services are not effective. They argued organisations needed staff who were well-equipped to:

- assess children for vulnerability and address their needs
- respect the culture of the people they work with
- adhere to common professional standards.

The Government needs to ensure their government agencies have frontline staff who are reliable, well trained, accountable and well-resourced to assess the vulnerability of a child and meet their needs. (NGO)

Provide well-resourced training for community-based professionals on identifying neglect and abuse. (general public)

Removing red tape: A small minority of submissions suggested bureaucracy and restrictions around privacy and information-sharing acted as barriers to communities taking responsibility for vulnerable children. They suggested relaxing privacy laws where child wellbeing is involved to allow community agencies to work together to support families.



Privacy laws are a huge barrier to knowing what is happening with vulnerable children. Give people practical tools of how to be involved. (frontline worker)

Supporting families

Money and resources: A large minority of submissions argued families need to have adequate financial resources and/or access to services in their communities to support the wellbeing of their children. Arguments for achieving this included free healthcare and getting people into work. A large minority of submissions supported this theme.

Pressure on families to have both parents working. Housing costs (rent and mortgage payments), overcrowding, high costs of education, transport costs for medical and education requirements. Alcohol and drug access. Waiting lists for special needs children. (frontline worker)

Inequality: Some submissions argued inequality within communities needs to be eliminated to allow communities to come together. Submissions spoke of racism and income inequality. This theme was taken up by a minority of submissions.

Income disparity and the growing gap between rich and poor. This reduces community integration and creates greater us/them division. (general public)

Changing social norms/attitudes

Remove the stigma of help-seeking: A minority of submissions suggested people will ask for help if it is not shameful to do so. This idea relates to some of the suggestions for social marketing. These submissions argued agencies, institutions and social norms need to facilitate families seeking support when they need it.

Establish places for families that are less threatening, more loving and supportive. Remove any stigma that it is wrong to ask for help. (frontline worker)

Changing morals: A small minority of submissions also suggested “morals” needed to change. Submissions argued that communities needed to generate more respect for other people and for agencies. Other submissions argued ordinary people need to feel they can and should intervene if they see children being hurt. Submissions spoke of valuing children. For some submissions, education was mentioned as the key to bring about these changes, whereas others offered no remedy. Others suggested it was all down to a lack of willingness to speak up.

There aren't any barriers. We can all ring 111. I think you should face the fact that communities in NZ don't intervene. (general public)

What can you do in your community to support or initiate community-led actions to support vulnerable children and their families and whānau?

I would love to set up a children's refuge and a parent crisis line. I would also like to see families living together in homes rather than children being removed and the parents having the opportunity to learn safe parenting from positive role-models. I would like to mentor families who are struggling and offer them 24 hr support so that if they are at breaking point they have someone to reach out to. (general public)

Lead by example: About half of submissions answered this question by giving examples of when they had taken personal responsibility for helping or initiating community-led action for vulnerable children. In some sense, these people were leading by example. The following actions were mentioned as steps the submitters were already taking or wanted to take:

- looking after children in their own families; for example, when parents were not coping
- providing material support to neighbours, such as food or a place for children to stay
- keeping an eye on neighbours and promoting a sense of community in their neighbourhoods
- making a point of intervening when they saw inappropriate behaviour from adults or children
- raising awareness about issues; for example, family violence and the importance of early childhood education in their communities
- advocating for policy changes; for example, changes to paid parental leave
- supporting community agencies such as women's refuge.

Our whānau supports a number of neighbours in our area with food, taking kids in for sleepovers at times, helping elderly people with cleaning, cooking, shopping. If more people were prepared to take it forward then we could see the "real" community spirit return. (general public)

Watch children and report anything I am uncomfortable with. Correct children and make it known that certain behaviour is not ok in our community. Do not let them think they can say and do what they like. Provide moral boundaries. (frontline worker)

Set up the likes of a "sponsor a family" type programme where families can donate to other families in need of such things as clothes, shoes, toys, furniture, consumables. The donating family could go online and register a pick up or they could deliver the items themselves if the receiving family would welcome help. Have a cup of tea. Offer some home help, assistance with new baby, take a hot meal around or a bag of nappies or a tin of formula. The list is endless what we could do to help. I would be willing to give half a day a week to help a family. (general public)

Barriers to taking action: A small minority of submissions identified barriers to taking action, including cost, agency rules and not knowing what support was available for families who needed help.

We could do a lot more if we had the funding. (NGO)

I can take troubled children in, however the cost of food would be a problem and extra demand for power and water. (general public)

Pick up the phone and call someone, but we need to know who to call. (general public)

I would be interested to assist but there doesn't seem to be very much publicity around any local programmes to assist. (general public)

Support projects and events: A large majority of submissions answering this question also identified specific events and projects they worked on or thought would be good to initiate. There was a variety of suggestions, including community gardens, sports events, parenting programmes and setting up networks of support around particular groups or issues.

Setting up an information meeting with those with concerns and invite along members of the police, medical professionals and other agencies to discuss the impact and the peoples options and legal rights. (general public)

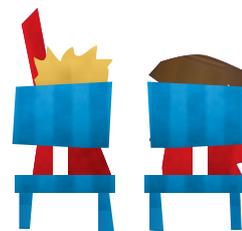
Through paid employment: A minority of submissions gave examples of how they contributed to supporting vulnerable children in their communities through their paid employment. Submissions talked about their work through NGOs; for example, working with victims of family violence, childcare organisations such as PORSE, and schools. Some submissions spoke of difficulties in working in the best interests of children in their jobs.

I have worked with other organisations in our community and opened a Creative Family Resource hub for families to drop-in and connect. Being in a highly visible area, I have been able to connect many visitors or new families to the island to services and resources they did not know we had. I give them a safe place to relax, share, and positively engage with their kids. I do this all for koha and only for two days, for three hours. I have had great feedback yet being a mum with small aged children, I need more financial support to expand the hours and find a permanent location. (frontline worker)

What NGOs and government could do: A minority of submissions suggested what NGOs and government could do to better support vulnerable children in their community. Submissions indicated how the system could be improved to support vulnerable children by:

- better using existing community institutions (for example, all schools having social workers to collaborate better with other helping agencies, staff spending more time at the frontline instead of in offices)

Encourage community within the primary school setting. Provide parenting courses to all parents but especially during the preschool years. Tap into church resources to tackle financial advice, cooking skills, homework club.... (frontline worker)



- providing more funding for initiatives and groups.

Would like more government funded activities for disabled children like mine. (general public)

Paid and voluntary services: A small minority of submissions suggested setting up services to support vulnerable children. Suggestions included children's support groups and "Nans" who could visit struggling families.

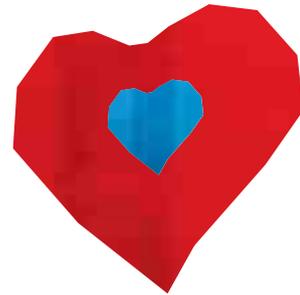
I think support groups for the children would be a great idea, even regular one-on-one meetings (by a professional) with the children would be great. (general public)

Set up volunteer services that offer home visitor/informal support persons becoming someone's "adopted" Nan. (frontline worker)

Communities: Free-form submissions

Many ideas about the role of community emerged from free-form submissions. We have grouped these ideas under the following broad headings:

- Defining communities: providing relevant support
- Taking responsibility for vulnerable children
- When things go wrong.



Defining communities: providing relevant support

Support programmes and projects that are relevant to communities: A small minority of submissions argued for government support for programmes and initiatives that meet the needs of people in the community (without necessarily insisting on a community development approach). Communities of interest varied and included communities defined by:

- place (neighbourhoods, towns)
- faith
- culture
- particular challenges, such as unemployment, low income, parents in prisons, parenting while young, or parenting a child with a disability.

Submissions argued for more support for local community-led action; for example, initiatives to create a sense of social capital or connectedness within neighbourhoods. Submissions talked about existing initiatives, as well as a need for new initiatives and services to meet the needs of their constituents. This theme was raised in a large minority of submissions from other organisations and community meetings, as well as in a minority of NGO submissions. It was least likely to come up in submissions from frontline workers and the general public.

Community-led development and social capital therefore needs to be resourced and the capability of local leaders built in order to develop local solutions to local problems. Developing community capability is therefore key to effective child-centred community development. (NGO)

Working with Māori: We discuss working with Māori more fully in the Show Leadership section. Here we note submissions recognised the importance of culture in determining appropriate services and supports for vulnerable children and their families.

Appoint Māori Community Leaders as Māori Community Brokers responsible for bringing together local government, school principals, government agencies, Te Kōhanga Reo, Tribal Leaders, community organisations and whānau to address problems of vulnerable children in their community. Must be appointed by the community and be recognised leaders. Develop their own children's community action plan. (NGO)

Working with Pasifika: As already noted, some submissions recognised Pasifika children and their families bear a disproportionate burden of disadvantage. Submissions called for government to specifically work with, and support, Pasifika communities. Some suggested resources should be allocated in accordance with the needs of these communities.

This theme was raised by a large minority of community meetings, a minority of NGOs and other organisations, and to a lesser extent by frontline workers and the general public.

It is essential to work in partnership with Pacific community groups, as there is a wealth of knowledge and expertise that the government can build upon. Culturally appropriate services will be more likely to be delivered in a partnership model. (NGO)

Working with other communities: Some submissions argued for working with other cultural communities who were not Māori or Pasifika; for example, refugees and immigrants. Again, these submissions recognised the importance of shared values or worldviews as a basis for engaging and supporting families. This theme was raised by a small minority of submissions across all submitter types.

Culture has a significant impact on human development and aspirations. Pasifika populations and many of our new immigrant cultures are collective rather than individual, recognise future and past generations and spirituality is central. Working with these populations requires a bio-psycho-social-spiritual worldview, the priority of the collective over the individual, culturally appropriate evaluations and understanding there are other ways of knowing apart from research published in "esteemed publications" and conducted in ways deemed legitimate by the publication. (NGO)

Communities defined by common needs: Submissions argued for services and supports to address the needs of specific groups of families. These groups included teen parents, parenting a child with a disability, parenting while in prison, parenting while suffering physical or mental ill-health, or parenting in poverty. These submissions commonly argued services and supports need to be tailored to the particular concerns of families.

Hard-to-reach communities (gangs) have within them a disproportionate number of children who are vulnerable. Our experience proves that only viewing these groups through a criminal justice lens only entrenches the vulnerability for their children. We have found that it is possible to have positive partnerships with members of these groups who support pro-social goals and that these partnerships are effective in helping foster positive changes in their attitudes and behaviours. This could not be achieved by an "outside" professional from any organisation. (NGO)

Blaming communities: A small minority of submissions suggested the problem of vulnerable children lay with particular sorts of people or communities. These submissions argued the culture of that group is the problem rather than the solution. Groups who featured in these kinds of arguments were Māori, DPB recipients, beneficiaries in general and absent fathers. A related theme was the argument that vulnerability has arisen from a breakdown in family values, such as marriage, within communities.

Use community sites to support families: Submissions suggested using venues where people already meet and feel comfortable to deliver support. Suggested locations included schools, marae and community centres. These submissions often argued for one-off initiatives; for example, delivering a parenting programme from a school. Other submissions argued for ongoing services that are integral to the venue; for example, fruit in schools or free school lunches. Submissions also suggested using venues as "hubs" or "one-stop shops". This theme was supported by about half of community meetings and a large minority of submissions from other organisations and NGOs. The general public were least likely to make this suggestion.

Early childhood environments and schools could be utilised as sites for delivery of a wider range of services. With their primary focus in childhood and young people's development, child care centres, kōhanga reo, kura and schools are places where children's voices are listened to. (NGO)

Communities need to have centres of "influence and belonging". Examples of this include marae, churches, clubs and libraries. Diverse examples perhaps but people have a sense of belonging that THEY can contribute. Government can encourage and support these centres of influence and belonging in cooperation with community agencies and local government. (NGO)

Taking responsibility for vulnerable children

The community has responsibility for vulnerable children: Submissions argued that communities were best placed to look out for vulnerable children. In stronger terms, some submissions called for communities to step up and take responsibility for vulnerable children. This set of ideas included the saying "it takes a village to raise a child", which was raised by a large minority of community meetings and submissions from other organisations, and to a lesser extent by NGOs (a minority), frontline workers and the general public (a small minority).

New Zealanders need to find a way to re-establish the concept that we (the community) are all responsible for our children, who are the future. (frontline worker)

...there is a lot more room for smaller locally based organisations working within the community, to have a role developing vulnerable families and children. In this sense, without really understanding how the various government ministries and departments work, we feel that they are very large, tend to be bureaucratic, have a compliance focus and are, we suspect, expensive to run. An alternative model would be to outsource the work done directly with families and children to a range of smaller, more agile organisations (including profit based and not-for-profit businesses). The role of government would be to develop and manage a strategy, be clear about outcomes and manage service delivery organisations, rather than deliver services itself. (NGO)

Develop partnerships: A small minority of submissions discussed the importance of developing partnerships within communities and how partnership between government and the community could work. The partnership principle involves parties listening to each other, defining problems and jointly coming up with solutions that are acceptable to all parties.

Evidence-based decisions still need to be based on principles and values that are strongly articulated and broadly shared, and to succeed must be developed with the people on whom they will have the most impact – in this case both young people and their families and the people who work with them. (NGO)

A large minority of NGOs and submissions from community meetings supported working in partnership. These submissions argued communities are best placed to intervene with families in their day-to-day lives. Communities and community groups have existing relationships with vulnerable families and children.

Support strong leaders in the communities, encourage collaboration, leadership consistency – as in government policies. (community meeting)

Other submissions echoed the idea of partnerships with different sorts of communities, such as Māori and Pasifika communities.

Emulate initiatives such as the “Kia Tutahi Standing Together” Relationship Accord, which sets expectations about how government agencies and communities will work together. (frontline worker)

Submissions also argued for bringing in or extending existing initiatives that work on a partnership basis within communities, such as Inspiring Communities and Strong Communities (based in South Carolina).

Support community development: A minority of submissions argued for communities taking the lead to identify, plan for and resolve their own issues. In some cases, submissions argued government needed to be active in building the capacity of communities to come up with their own solutions. This theme was raised by a large minority of community meetings, submissions from other organisations and NGOs, and to a lesser extent by a minority of frontline workers and a small minority of general public submissions.

Submissions gave examples of successful community development initiatives.

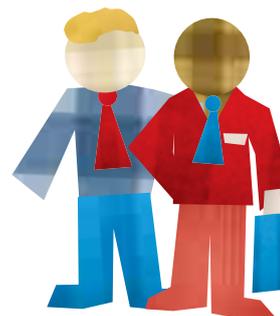
There are, in New Zealand a number of early childhood centres that have developed a range of services to support their communities. We need to be looking closely at the impact of these centres and building on their strengths and successes – Te Aroha Noa in Palmerston North, Taitoko Kindergarten in Levin, Wanganui Baptist Childcare Centre, Awhi Whānau in Manakau, the Mangere Family Centre and Merivale Community Centre in Tauranga are some examples of successful collaboration. (NGO)

Others cautioned about supporting effective community development.

The Government must commit to community development programmes that are well founded (evidence based), ongoing, and that can be assessed to determine their effectiveness. (frontline worker)

Local government take more responsibility: A small minority of submissions argued local government has an important role in designing, planning for and implementing policies to meet the needs of vulnerable children and their families. This was especially for:

- providing a safe physical environment for children and families
- ensuring amenities are available to all sections of the community
- regulating the availability of alcohol, convenience food and gambling outlets.



A large minority of submissions from other organisations and community meetings raised this theme, as did a small minority of NGOs, the general public and frontline workers.

Children need to be included as part of the vulnerable groups needing to be prioritised in local government planning processes with an emphasis on the establishment of child advocates in larger local authorities. (other organisation)

Effective funding from government: A minority of submissions argued for re-examining the distribution and amount of funding available to support vulnerable children.

Submissions argued for this review regardless of the type of governance and leadership arrangements presently in place. Submissions called for increased funding to existing successful initiatives and NGOs (for example, early childhood centres, Plunket, Whānau Ora, Rape Crisis, Teen Parent Units, counselling services) as well as for new initiatives to support vulnerable children and their families. There were also calls to bring back services that have had funding cut (for example, child advocates), as well as support for champions and leaders in communities who could bring about change.

A review of government spending is paramount to increasing better outcomes for vulnerable children and preventing others from becoming vulnerable. The Government must ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to this critical issue. (NGO)

Improved funding arrangements: Some submissions suggested longer-term funding (coupled with strong accountability arrangements) should be granted to NGOs. They argued this would allow continuity and the development of services. Submissions recognised that funding dictated the availability, extent and quality of service. Submissions argued for a greater investment in children as a proportion of overall government spending. Some noted the investment was small compared proportionally to other OECD countries, while others noted areas from where funding could be taken.

Funding of community initiatives needs to be long term and secure across electoral boundaries. (NGO)

New Zealand government spending on children is considerably less than the OECD average. The biggest shortfall is for spending on young children, where New Zealand spends less than half the OECD average. (other organisation)

Themes about funding were raised in a large minority of community meetings, followed by submissions from other organisations and NGOs. Frontline workers and the general public were least likely to raise funding as an issue.

We agree with their view that “just throwing money around” will not resolve the complex issues of neglect, abuse, failure to thrive and poverty facing many of our children. However we do believe that many of our key relevant child support services are currently under resourced, staff overworked and highly stressed with a focus on solely managing the “crisis”. (NGO)

Champions and leaders within communities need to be resourced to bring people together to effect change. Cash [should be] available in communities to resource the leadership, networking, consultation and implementation of community processes. (general public)

Family has primary responsibility for vulnerable children: A small minority of submissions argued that families have primary responsibility for vulnerable children. This argument did not necessarily oppose the view that communities have a role to play, rather they emphasised the importance of family as the main source of care and support for children. This argument was most likely to be made by submissions from other organisations and community meetings, with less support from other submitter types.

We believe that the primary responsibility for ensuring a child is raised in a home environment which is conducive to the child thriving, belonging and achieving, still resides with the parents and caregivers, with support from the community and the state. (NGO)

Abdicating responsibility: A small minority of submissions were sceptical of arguments that communities or families should share responsibility with government.

We do not support community involvement or the privatisation of care for vulnerable children as reasons for the Government to abdicate its responsibility for ensuring the care and welfare of children. (NGO)



When things go wrong

Making it easier to get help when children are vulnerable: A small minority of submitters of all types raised concerns about difficulties in making notifications to Child, Youth and Family, and many worried about suffering reprisals for doing so. Submissions suggested that notifiers' anonymity needed to be maintained throughout the Child, Youth and Family intervention process, including at family group conferences. Submissions suggested there could be other places to take concerns where children and families could be checked out, before the Police or Child, Youth and Family were involved.

Permanent anonymity needs to be available for referrals, once the referral has been confirmed to be valid. It is unfair to expect community members to speak up, and then face repercussions for their concern. If the national database was in place, then social welfare would not be overwhelmed by an influx of referrals, because the burden of responsibility would be shared. (frontline worker)

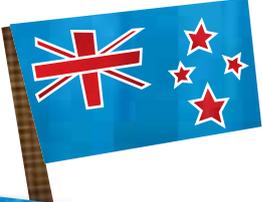
There should be someone available 24/7 as a circuit breaker and to follow up with other support after the crisis is dealt with. (community meeting)

Similarly, some submissions said there was limited knowledge in the community about what to do if abuse were suspected. This was a concern where there might be some uncertainty about whether abuse is actually occurring or not. Suggestions included:

- a "family friendly agency" that did a preliminary assessment before Child, Youth and Family were called in, and a dedicated 0800 number for youth
- a police caravan that went around the country where people could report abuse
- providing more information about what happens, or what to expect, when a notification is made.

Another concern was being unsure about what action, if any, Child, Youth and Family would take. This issue seemed to be about whether notifiers would be kept informed about any action that might be taken on the basis of their notification. This was a concern raised in a small minority of submissions across all submitter types.

Early childhood centres frequently identify children as vulnerable. Two major issues then arise. First there is a fear of contacting CYF. Secondly there is frustration and concern about the lack of action or lack of information about actions taken. Centres complain that they report a child and they hear nothing or are told nothing is done. They feel disempowered daily sending a child home to a situation and feeling terrible about it but unable to act. (NGO)



Show leadership

An important element in achieving positive outcomes for children is strong leadership within government and the wider community. The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children asked New Zealanders what they thought about government showing leadership, and working with Māori.

The Green Paper asked questions on the following three actions:

- a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan
- legislation changes
- working with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders.

For each topic, we first provide a summary of responses, then report on answers to the specific questions posed in the Green Paper. This is followed by a summary of what free-form submissions said about issues of showing leadership.

A Vulnerable Children's Action Plan

The Green Paper asked questions about creating a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan that could include common goals, targets and clear accountability.

- Should there be an action plan for vulnerable children that focuses the activities of government and non-government agencies?
- How can an action plan help improve outcomes for vulnerable children?
- What goals and actions could the Government include in a plan?
- What could be the priorities for vulnerable children for the early years, for primary school-aged children and adolescents?

Summary

Support for a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan: Submissions generally supported an action plan for vulnerable children, although opinion differed on who should be targeted: all children or children with specific needs.

Defining vulnerability: Submissions noted that defining "vulnerable" is a necessary first step in developing a plan. Some submissions said all children are vulnerable and a definition should reflect this. Others recognised the needs of particular groups of children, for example, children with disabilities, children living in hardship, and children who had been maltreated or who were in danger of being maltreated.

Features of an action plan: Some submissions suggested an action plan could allow government to set goals and targets. It should also be workable, action-focused and raise awareness about abuse. Submissions reflected that an action plan should be formed with input from across sectors and political parties. Submissions also said an action plan should be owned by communities, and be underpinned by legislation and the Treaty of Waitangi principles.

Goals and actions government could include in a plan: Submissions suggested an action plan could encompass goals and actions to reduce or eliminate child maltreatment and deaths, improve child health and wellbeing, improve education and improve parenting education.

Priorities for an action plan: Priorities for vulnerable children across all age groups centred on health, safety and education. Some submissions said that reducing child poverty should be the main priority.



A Vulnerable Children's Action Plan: Question and answer submissions

Should there be an action plan for vulnerable children that focuses the activities of government and non-government agencies?

Yes: Almost all submissions showed support for an action plan for vulnerable children.

There should definitely be an action plan that is more focused on children rather than tiptoeing around being politically correct. (general public)

Yes there should be, our reputation is shameful – not just the abusers but the way we deal with [them] and the outcomes in court, they don't fit. (general public)

Yes. Vision and a well-articulated direction would empower agencies and workers within those agencies to work towards those goals. (frontline worker)

Unless we have such a plan, I can't see how we can improve these outcomes. (general public)

No: A small minority of submissions said there should not be an action plan. Submissions said there had been enough talk, not enough action, and that this was an "ambulance at the bottom of the cliff" approach.

I suspect this approach is a waste of time and effort. This sounds like spending a lot of resources on processes within agencies and lots of ticking of boxes. These things make the problem worse. (general public)

Don't know: A small minority of submissions were either unsure or did not know whether there should be an action plan.

Submissions on this question often went on to discuss what they believed what should be in the plan, and how it should be developed.

Cross-sector plan: A small minority of submissions said an action plan should reflect that a variety of factors can combine to cause vulnerability, and take a cross-sector approach to addressing vulnerability. Submissions suggested collaboration between government, non-government agencies and communities to formulate and implement the plan, as each group could bring their own specialty and knowledge to the table.

An action plan should have the same outcomes so both government and non-government are on the same page, focusing on the same goals. (frontline worker)

Community-owned: A small minority of submissions said that an action plan should be owned by communities.

There is an old saying that it takes a village to raise a child. It still does. These days the village is separated and young parents are isolated. (general public)

Treaty-based: A small minority of submissions said that an action plan should be based on the Treaty of Waitangi.

Cross-party: A small minority of submissions expressed support for an action plan being cross-party. An action plan could be developed in conjunction with a range of political parties, to ensure it is not subject to the electoral cycle.

There should be cross-party talks. The wellbeing of our vulnerable children should be an issue across the parties and they should all have to work together. (frontline worker)

Actions included in a plan: In response to this question, a small minority of submissions suggested the following actions could be included in a plan:

- reducing child maltreatment
- reducing child poverty
- reducing social inequality
- promoting child friendly environments.

A small minority of submissions suggested other actions that could be included:

- reducing gaps in service provision
- increasing family spending power
- increasing support to teen parents
- reducing youth unemployment.

How can an action plan help improve outcomes for vulnerable children?

Submissions proposed various ideas about how an action plan could help improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

Set goals and targets: A large minority of submissions said an action plan would allow government to set goals and targets.

Gives goals to work towards. Common standard. Everyone working towards the same outcomes. Equity across country and institutions. If you aim at nothing you're bound to reach it. (frontline worker)

An action plan only works if there is commitment to carry it out which is [a] factor often missing from social policy. It needs to not be vague ideals and wishes – it needs to be quantifiable actions that can be clearly worked towards. SMART actions – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. (frontline worker)

Workable and action-focused: A large minority of submissions said to be effective an action plan should be both workable and action-focused, that it should be practical and feasible in terms of delivery, and funded properly.

Make it real, non-political and action based, where communities have responsibility and measurable outcomes to achieve. (frontline worker)

Less word and bureaucracy and more positive and practical action. (frontline worker)

Raise awareness: A minority said an action plan would help raise awareness about abuse and how to help, as well as letting the public know what was going on in the area. This theme was most popular among general public submissions.

When to intervene and who can help you, who to tell about a suspect case, what the consequences of telling will be. (general public)

As with the previous question, a small minority of submissions took the opportunity to say they considered an action plan could help improve outcomes for vulnerable children by:

- being cross-sector
- being owned by communities
- being cross-party
- listening to children
- being based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)
- being based on the Treaty of Waitangi.

Other: A minority of submissions suggested other ways in which an action plan could help improve outcomes for vulnerable children. These included focusing resources on children who are vulnerable rather than those that are thriving, and showing that the Government is leading by example through prioritising children and their safety.

An action plan will not help: A small minority of submissions did not think an action plan would help improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

If you need us to tell you that, you should not be putting this paper out in the first place. You have action plans galore, you need good people with commonsense to work them. (general public)

Uncertainty about the value an action plan: A small minority of submissions expressed uncertainty as to whether an action plan would help improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

It helps but it isn't the sole answer. Actions "speak louder than words". These things can't be just ticked off by a government so that they can say they have been achieved. (general public)

What goals and actions could the Government include in a plan?

The Green Paper asked people to suggest what goals and what actions government could include in a plan. Submissions made the following suggestions.

Goals: A large minority of submissions said an important goal of the plan could be to reduce or eliminate child maltreatment and deaths. This included having fewer substantiations of abuse and improving statistics on abuse. Some submissions said there should be zero tolerance for abuse and/or neglect.

Ultimately the goal is for no children in NZ to die or be injured as a result of family violence. (general public)

A minority of submissions suggested that reducing child poverty should be a goal included in the plan.

To increase investment in combating child poverty to a level equivalent or better than our OECD peers. It is disgraceful that NZ invests only 50% of the level of its peers and puts us in the same bracket as a third world country. (frontline worker)

Actions: A large minority of submissions suggested the following ideas could be areas of action for the action plan:

- Providing free universal services

Children should be fed at school – one or two healthy meals per day paid by the Government. (general public)

- Improving parenting education, including parenting programmes, life skills, budgeting and nutrition advice

Providing education and training for all parents who are identified as high risk vulnerable families.... Providing community social support networks which reach out to families, particularly those who do not have family or friends who support them or share the load. (general public)

- Improving the health and wellbeing of children

Eliminate rheumatic fever – this is a third world disease and we should be able to beat it. Improve immunisation rates to >95% to achieve herd immunity and eliminate many of vaccinated diseases. (frontline worker)

- Improving health services

Improve and adequately resource mental and general health services, providing monitoring where required. (frontline worker)

- Improving access to services

Many vulnerable families do not seem to know what existing services are easily available. Providing information via school enrolments, free local newspapers, doctors' surgeries, community radio advertisements could be utilised in the same way SKIP has been rolled out. (NGO)

- Improving education.

Fund alternative education programmes (within the present school grounds) for children that do not fit into today's schools. (frontline worker)

A small minority of submissions also suggested:

- reducing child poverty
- improving early identification and assessment
- increasing service use
- reducing social inequality
- improving housing
- increasing family spending power
- introducing a lead worker for families
- improving youth employment and positive youth outcomes
- raising early childhood education participation
- improving support for teen parents
- make cities and services more child-friendly
- implementing Māori initiatives
- reducing youth involvement in the justice system.

A large minority of submissions suggested a range of other goals and actions, such as changing attitudes and behaviours towards children and parenting, ensuring enough resources were available to deal with each case on its merits, and addressing the needs of particular vulnerable populations.

Addressing disparities for Māori and Pacific children in very low-income families, children of beneficiaries and children of prisoners. (NGO)

What could be the priorities for vulnerable children for the early years, for primary school-aged children and adolescents?

Submissions suggested various priorities for vulnerable children in different age groups, namely the early years, primary school-aged children and adolescents.

The priorities for children of all ages should be that they are safe, protected from potential harm and live in a warm, caring and loving environment in which they are valued for themselves and experience the opportunities to achieve their aspirations, as is their right under law. (general public)

The primary focal points for the three age groups were health, safety and education.

Early years: For the early years, a large minority of submissions suggested health was the greatest priority. This was closely followed by safety and education, which were also supported by a large minority of submissions.

Compulsory immunisation of the traditional infectious diseases, financial incentives to be given if necessary. (general public)

*Zero tolerance for abuse! Start with the early years – this does need more.
(frontline worker)*

Compulsory ECE from age 2.5. (general public)

A minority of submissions suggested other priorities for the early years, including:

- developing positive attachment to a primary caregiver
- helping people understand the importance of early interaction
- providing a stable home environment.

Primary school-age: For primary school-age children, submissions said health, safety and education were all of similar priority. Each priority was supported by a large minority of submissions.

School visits at least once per week from a nurse and/or GP with vulnerable children identified by teachers and given first priority for these visits. (general public)

*...teaching them that it is NOT ok for anyone to ever abuse them and how to seek help.
(general public)*

Providing environments where they can learn and become passionate about learning so that good habits are initiated early. (frontline worker)

A minority of submissions suggested other priorities for school-age children, including providing mentoring and counselling services.

Adolescence: At the adolescent level, a large minority of submissions said that education and employment should be the priority. A minority of submissions said health and safety should be the priority for adolescents.

Adolescents to be supported in every way to become well trained or highly educated young adults. Don't let them not study or work, but also provide the necessary financial/ etc support if they are better off living away from risky families. (general public)

Mental health supports for adolescents. (frontline worker)

Ensuring they are removed from an abusing environment and placed in care, remembering that foster care within the family is not always the best option regardless of how fitting family members are. (general public)

A minority of submissions suggested other priorities for adolescents, including support for transitions, encouraging a sense of belonging and self-esteem, and addressing New Zealand's high teenage pregnancy rate.

Reduce poverty: A minority of submissions suggested the main priority across the different age groups should be to reduce child poverty.

Priorities are that children of all ages have enough food in their stomachs so that their brains are able to function at school, ensuring their success not only in the short, but also the long-term. All children need to have access to warm, healthy homes so that their bodies and minds are healthy, strong. (frontline worker)

A Vulnerable Children's Action Plan: Free-form submissions

In this section, we discuss what free-form submissions had to say about a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan. The themes are discussed under the following broad headings:

- Features of a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan
- A definition of vulnerability
- Goals and actions for a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan
- Priorities within a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan.

Features of a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan

Support: A minority of free-form submissions expressed support for an action plan. An action plan was most strongly supported by other organisation and NGO submissions.

Our children suffer through a historic systemic culture of under-supporting families and making political decisions in lieu of developing and funding a long-term strategy across political party lines. (NGO)

Cross-sector: A minority of submissions suggested the action plan should be cross-sector. About half of submissions from other organisations and a large minority of NGO submissions supported a cross-sector plan. A large minority of community meeting submissions supported the action plan being cross-sector.

An integrated cross-sector action plan for children, with common goals and policy that supports co-ordinated service delivery, makes good sense in helping avoid gaps and silo operations. It should also have buy-in from the community sector, Māori and ethnic communities, and all political parties. (NGO)

Cross-party: A minority of submissions expressed support for an action plan being cross-party. A large minority of other organisation, NGO and community meeting submissions said an action plan should be cross-party.

Leadership – all political parties should have some clear consensus and agreement to improve and maintain initiatives that are successful for children. This is an area where changes in political majority in government should not affect what is in place for children. (NGO)

Multicultural approach: A small minority of submissions proposed a multicultural approach to developing solutions.

The Green Paper does not explicitly discuss strategies for supporting Pacific children and their families and communities. Strategies that address the specific needs of Pacific children will need to be mandated under the Children's Act and Action Plan. (NGO)

Using legislation: A small minority of submissions said using legislation to underpin a Children's Action Plan would help ensure commitment to the plan. This idea was most strongly supported by other organisations.

Other features: A small minority of submissions considered an action plan should be based on the Treaty of Waitangi, and should be owned by communities.

A definition of vulnerability

Definition of vulnerability required: Submissions noted that currently there is no agreed and comprehensive definition of vulnerability. Different agencies had different ways of defining vulnerability, and submissions said there needed to be a consistent and common approach across services. A minority of submissions expressed that “vulnerable” needs to be defined and some submissions suggested their own definitions, for example:

A vulnerable child is any child deprived of his/her basic needs and rights, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, disability, and social deprivation level. (NGO)

Other submissions suggested it was risky to “cherry-pick” certain aspects of vulnerability, as it created the potential to:

...miss the broader need to create an environment wherein all children can reach their potential, and from within which to identify children’s multiple vulnerabilities. (NGO)

All children are vulnerable: A small minority of submissions said all children are vulnerable. Any policy should be applicable to all children, not just those identified as at risk. This view was more popular among other organisation and NGO submissions: a large minority of other organisation, community meetings and a minority of NGO submissions said this. A small minority of frontline worker and general public submissions agreed.

The Green Paper ignores the fact that ALL children are vulnerable unless they have a supportive environment. (frontline worker)

Specific vulnerable populations: A small minority of submissions suggested Pasifika and Māori children, and children of refugees and immigrants may be especially vulnerable.

Some Pasifika children, refugees and new migrants can be particularly vulnerable because they are in transition to a new environment, culture and legal system. Such parents may be on low incomes, children face education difficulties, English as the second language issues and suffer poor health. (NGO)

A small minority of submissions suggested other factors that could be included in a definition, such as:

- children with disabilities
- children in hardship
- children who have been maltreated or exposed to domestic violence
- children at risk of maltreatment
- very young children
- siblings of vulnerable children
- lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth.

Children can move in and out of vulnerability: A small minority of submissions suggested that vulnerability can be transient, which could mean children may move in and out of vulnerability as their circumstances change.

Goals and actions for a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan

Improving education: This was the most popular item for inclusion in an action plan in the submissions, supported by a minority of submissions. A minority of general public and a large minority of community meetings, other organisations and frontline workers' submissions suggested that improving education should be an action for the plan. Some submissions made specific suggestions, such as improving school attendance, strengthening life skills education in schools, improving access to early childhood education and improving processes around standing down and excluding students from school.

Invest in all levels of education.... In terms of broad education and preparing students for life and work and the ability to go on learning throughout life. Extra support and resources needs to be provided to prevent young people from leaving early and taking time off school. (NGO)

Improving health: A minority of submissions said improving health was a goal for an action plan. Suggestions included improving access to health services, greater provision of contraception, and a public health approach, which focuses on prevention.

I think the reactionary health system that we currently have would be put to better use and would cost less if we had more focus on prevention with housing, healthcare and child poverty. (general public)

Reducing child maltreatment: A goal for an action plan endorsed by a minority of submissions was to reduce child maltreatment and deaths.

Protecting vulnerable children...should be the top priority of our country. (NGO)

Other: A small minority of submissions recommended other actions that could be included in a Children's Action Plan:

- **Providing universal or free services:** This covered a wide range of suggestions, including providing free lunches in schools, free early childhood education and free health services for children.
- **Reducing social inequality:** Some submissions addressed the unequal division of resources between different communities. Specific themes included improving wages, reducing unemployment and reducing access to services for poorer populations.
- **Improving housing:** Submissions referred to improving the quality and availability of housing.
- **Reducing gaps in service provision:** Some submissions said some children were "falling through the gaps" between existing services, and steps should be taken to stop this from happening.
- **Support teen parents:** Submissions said teen parents and their children required extra help and support.
- **Promote child friendly environments:** Submissions suggested providing more safe environments and facilities for children, and improving access for families.
- **Reduce youth offending:** Some submissions said that targeting antisocial behaviour and reducing youth involvement in the justice system should be an action.

- **Reduce youth unemployment:** Submissions suggested there should be more vocational programmes and jobs made available for youth.
- **Increasing family spending power:** Submissions suggested measures that would improve the financial position of families, such as implementing a universal family allowance, and raising the minimum wage.

Child poverty: A small minority of submissions suggested that a key priority for an action plan should be to reduce child poverty.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the deleterious effects of poverty on outcomes for children. They are incontrovertible. (NGO)

Priorities within a Vulnerable Children’s Action Plan

Some submissions discussed what the priorities of a Children’s Action Plan should be across the early years, school age, and adolescence.

Early years

Education: Education was the most popular priority for the youngest New Zealanders, as expressed by a small minority of submissions. Submissions discussed this in terms of the need for more free preschool facilities, and suggested early childhood education be made compulsory for a defined age group and for a certain number of hours per week.

All children who participate in high-quality early childhood education are more likely to succeed at school, earn higher incomes and are healthier and happier as adults. The effect for children at risk is even greater than for others. (NGO)

Establish a child’s legal right to access ECE as is the case for primary and secondary education, including the right to access 20 hours free early childhood education. (NGO)

Health and safety: A small minority of submissions suggested health, health services and safety should be priorities for the early years. Fully funded, universal health services (including mental health services) for all children up to the age of five was deemed necessary as it would ensure some form of early intervention/check was undertaken.

All preschool children need a health assessment, including for early diagnosis and intervention for ADHD, autism-spectrum, Aspergers, psychopathic impulsive disorders, conduct disorders, etc. Referrals (eg by GP, preschool teacher) and early treatment are needed for all vulnerable children. (frontline worker)

Urgent intervention is required when parents cannot care for their children and their safety is compromised due to mental health concerns, alcoholism, other addictions and violence. (frontline worker)



Other: A small minority of submissions also suggested other priorities, including developing secure attachment relationships, establishing measures to identify needs among children, and implementing a life course approach for all children from birth.

First three years of life are crucial. What wires the brain in the first three years of life? Primarily a secure attachment relationship to one or two adults – with consistent love, attention and stimulating interaction. Other things can wait. (general public)

School age

Education: A small minority of submissions said the most important priority for school age children was education.

Primary school professionals need to connect with early years professionals and families in order to support an effective transition to school.... The way in which transitions are experienced not only makes a difference to children in the early months of a new situation, but may also have a much longer-term impact, because the extent to which they feel successful in the first transition is likely to influence subsequent experiences. (frontline worker)

Health and safety: A small minority of submissions suggested health and safety were priorities for school age children.

The need continues for early diagnosis and intervention programmes for vulnerable children. I suggest a (free) health and wellbeing check and record for all school entrants, and follow-up. (frontline worker)

Other: A small number of submissions suggested other priorities, including anger management education and mentoring for school-age children.

Adolescence

Education/training: This was the most popular priority for adolescents, supported by a small minority of submitters. This covered ideas such as providing better job training for teenagers, and life skills education in schools. It was noted that many teenagers are unaware of the difficulty of parenting, and many do not have the basic skills required to care for themselves and others.

I think that it should be compulsory within our school system, at all levels, for children to be taught the basic skills of caring for themselves and others in their family. Skills such as budgeting, basic cooking, basic hygiene, how to deal with stress, how to keep themselves safe etc. We ignore the fact that children in all social classes and upbringings may not have these skills, yet will go on to have their own families without being taught these skills by anyone. (general public)

Health: A small minority of submissions said health should be a priority for adolescents. One particular area mentioned by submissions was mental health.

There is a real need for increased mental health services available to teenagers and young people. (general public)

Safety: A small minority of submissions suggested safety should be a priority for adolescents.

Teach young people how to recognise manipulative/abusive behaviours (narcissism, psychopathic). (community meeting)

Other: A small minority of submissions suggested other priorities for adolescence. These included support for youth one-stop shops and peer support services, and supports when an adolescent is moving out of home.

Legislation changes

The Green Paper asked four questions about changes the Government could make to legislation to achieve better results for vulnerable children.

- What do you see as the value of using legislation to underpin a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan?
- Who could legislation require to report on national progress against an Action Plan?
- What things could be included in such a report?
- What other actions or principles would you like to see included in legislation?

Summary

Compliance: A number of submissions saw value in using legislation to underpin a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan. Submissions suggested the main purpose of legislation would be to ensure compliance.

Reporting: Submissions favoured legislation requiring government social sector agencies to report on progress made against an action plan. Some submissions supported requiring an independent body to report on progress, and many submissions suggested the Commissioner for Children be responsible for reporting. Submissions suggested legislation could require reporting on outcomes for children, such as health and wellbeing, education and poverty statistics.

Child-centred: Submissions proposed a range of actions or principles that could be included in legislation to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. The most common suggestion was to make legislation more child-centred. Other ideas included greater support for UNCROC in New Zealand law, and implementing requirements or sanctions for beneficiaries.



Legislation changes: Question and answer submissions

What do you see as the value of using legislation to underpin a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan?

Compliance: The majority of submissions said the primary value of using legislation to underpin a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan was to ensure compliance. Legislation could oblige government, agencies and individuals to comply with the Action Plan.

[There is] immense value in having child wellbeing set in law. Gives the relevant agencies the "teeth" to do their jobs. (frontline worker)

Commitment: A large minority of submissions noted using legislation would demonstrate the Government's commitment to children.

Awareness and admittance that we have a real problem and are attempting to address it from the top right down to those at the root cause. (frontline worker)

No value: A minority of submissions said there was no value in using legislation to underpin an action plan.

[I] see little value in it. I think that the majority of our legislation supports and promotes the results we desire – the problem is that legislation does not always translate into effective services and safe homes. (frontline worker)

Other: A small minority of submissions suggested other reasons for the value of using legislation. These included themes such as providing a strategy for addressing child vulnerability, using legislation to change social attitudes and ensuring any action plan was a long-term strategy.

It is harder for consecutive governments to overturn. (general public)

Who could legislation require to report on national progress against an Action Plan?

Government: About half of submissions said government social sector agencies should be required to report on progress.

Ministries of Health, Justice, Education and Social Development and allied services that support vulnerable children. (frontline worker)

Independent body: A large minority of submissions suggested the responsibility of reporting could lie with an independent body. Many submissions suggested the Commissioner for Children could be responsible for reporting.

An independent, non-party body set up to monitor and police the implementation of the action plan. A body with clear measures that can hold the government, organisations and individuals to account. (frontline worker)

NGOs: A large minority of submissions also said community groups or NGOs should be responsible for reporting on progress.

Government ministers: A small minority of submissions said government ministers should be required to report on progress.

Other: A minority of submissions proposed other bodies that could be required to report on progress. Suggestions included local council appointees or all government departments and publicly funded services.

No legislation: A small minority of submitters did not support legislation to require a person or body to report on national progress against an action plan.

What things could be included in such a report?

Outcomes of services: The majority of submissions suggested a report could cover outcomes of services. This could include information on how services are performing, such as their specific results, evaluations and cost-benefit analyses.

*Successful trials (with proof) and their successful expansion to the country in general.
Money spent in this area compared to measured reduction in harm, measurement method to be baselined and stuck to for the duration. (general public)*

Family circumstances: A large minority of submissions said the report should include information about family circumstances, including statistics about family income and structure.

The number of children living with parents without jobs, rates of children living in households where family violence occurs, number of "at-risk" families accessing support services, proportion of children from disadvantaged families who are in quality early education at age three, proportion of parents with mental illness who are accessing mental health services.... (NGO)

Other: A large minority of submissions suggested other areas that could be included in such a report. These covered ideas such as:

- health statistics
- numbers of non-accidental injuries to children
- numbers of children present at incidents of domestic violence
- notifications made to Child, Youth and Family
- statistics on children in care, and youth justice figures
- educational outcomes
- housing statistics
- community statistics, including resources and services available and feedback from local communities.

Expenditure: A minority of submissions supported reporting on expenditure on children's services.

What other actions or principles would you like to see included in legislation?

Some submissions said legislation needed to change to improve services and outcomes for vulnerable children.

Child-centred: A large minority of submissions said that there should be more “child-centred” policy and legislation. This idea was most popular among frontline workers. Submissions included ideas such as implementing a child impact assessment for any relevant legislation before it reaches Cabinet, establishing a Children’s Act and establishing a Minister for Children.

Put children at the centre of every policy consideration. (frontline worker)

Controlling income/spending of beneficiaries: A minority of submissions expressed support for controlling the income or spending of beneficiaries. This theme was most frequent among submissions from the general public. Some submissions supported direct payments from the welfare agency to providers for essential services, such as housing and power. Other submissions suggested making a benefit contingent on fulfilling certain requirements, such as undertaking mandatory parenting programmes and Well Child checks. A strong theme in submissions was reducing the incentive to have additional children while receiving a benefit. Some submissions expressed concern that, for some, this was a “lifestyle choice”.

Receiving the benefit [should be] dependent on certain criteria being met: not missing Plunket appointments, the home situation checked by a Barnardos supervisor weekly, food purchased with food vouchers...and the rent paid from WINZ directly with the benefit cut accordingly... (general public)

Harsher consequences: A minority of submissions said there should be harsher consequences for child maltreatment. As well as making penalties more severe, there were calls to remove name suppression and reverse the burden of proof in cases of child abuse. A minority of submissions also proposed limiting reproductive rights for certain groups of individuals. This idea was most popular among submissions from the general public. Suggestions included compulsory birth control or sterilisation for child abusers or parents who have had children removed from their care. Other suggestions included encouraging adoption.

NZ must send the message that harming or neglecting children is unacceptable and will not be tolerated, and that anyone failing in this regard shall be dealt with appropriately under the law, without exception. (NGO)

Support for families: A small minority of submissions said there should be more income and resource support for families. This addressed matters such as welfare reform, benefits for those on low incomes, and income-splitting for tax purposes.

Tax relief for those doing the right things that benefit the family. Often the pressure is on the low earner. (frontline worker)

A small minority of submissions supported the following changes to legislation:

- legislating for mandatory reporting of child abuse
- decreasing alcohol and drug availability
- reviewing the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act
- increasing legislative support for UNCROC

- reviewing parental leave and support
- repealing or retaining the anti-smacking legislation
- changes to censorship laws
- reviewing adoption laws
- raising the age of medical consent.

Other: A large minority of submissions proposed alternative changes to legislation. These covered a wide range of ideas, including:

- increasing advocacy for vulnerable children
- reviewing the Privacy Act
- reviewing child support provisions
- a greater legislative focus on prevention
- outlining parental responsibility
- improvements to the justice system, including Family Court proceedings.

Legislation changes: Free-form submissions

Free-form submissions offered many ideas about changes that could be made to legislation. These are discussed under the following broad headings:

- Legislation requiring reporting on progress on the Vulnerable Children’s Action Plan, including who would report, and what should be in the report
- Changes to legislation to improve services for vulnerable children.

Legislation requiring reporting on progress on the Vulnerable Children’s Action Plan

Who should be responsible for reporting?

Independent body: The most popular response, suggested by a small minority of submissions, was that the responsibility of reporting could lie with an independent body. NGOs were most strongly in support of an independent body undertaking reporting. Many submissions suggested the Commissioner for Children could take on responsibility for reporting.

The role of the Office of the Commissioner for Children could be extended, for instance as the agency monitoring the Children’s Action Plan and the workings of the proposed Children’s Act itself. (NGO)

Government ministers: A small minority of submissions suggested government ministers or ministries could be responsible for reporting.

Other: A small minority of submissions proposed other parties that could be required to report on progress. Suggestions included a select committee, requiring local Members of Parliament to report on progress in their communities, or requiring all government departments and publicly funded services to report on progress.

What could a report contain?

Outcomes for children: A small minority of submissions proposed legislation require reporting on outcomes for children. Specific suggestions included educational outcomes, child health and wellbeing measures, child poverty figures and the success of interventions.

Data of academic achievement, domestic abuse, juvenile crime, availability of medical, education and psychological support, progress in facilitating community networking and mutual awareness and frequency of individual use of helplines and child welfare orgs eg CYF. (NGO)

A small minority of submissions suggested other matters a report could contain, including reporting on timelines of the work streams associated with the Children's Action Plan, and government progress towards meeting obligations to children in relation to UNCROC.

A small minority of submissions said such a report could report on expenditure on services. This could include an obligation on services to account for their funding.

Changes to legislation to improve services for vulnerable children

Child-centred: The most popular change to legislation proposed was taking a more "child-centred" approach to policy and legislation. A minority of submissions supported implementing a child impact assessment for any relevant legislation before it reaches Cabinet. This theme was most strongly supported by NGO and community meeting submissions.



Government must ensure that all legislation, all amendments, all government policies prioritise the best interests of children over "value for money". (NGO)

Child-focused legislation that incorporates cultural practices and traditional practices. (NGO)

Child (and Youth) Impact Assessments should be introduced as a mechanism for prospectively assessing legislation and policy change to ensure that decision makers (and the general public) are conscious of the intended and unintended consequences of their actions on children and young people. (NGO)

UNCROC: A minority of submissions expressed support for UNCROC. This included a range of responses, such as incorporating the principles of UNCROC into New Zealand law more fully, greater protection for children in child protection and youth justice settings and using UNCROC as a framework for the Action Plan. A large minority of other organisation and NGO submissions supported UNCROC.

We note that a stronger government commitment to UNCROC would provide a moral base for this plan. As a signatory to UNCROC there should be an interpretive assumption that UNCROC will be considered in all issues raised in the Green Paper and that the best interests of the child should be paramount. (NGO)

The [Green] Paper glosses over the fact that the Convention places a positive obligation on governments to provide for the material wellbeing of children in a manner that does not discriminate against any one group. (NGO)

Sanctions for beneficiaries: A minority of submissions expressed support for sanctions or penalties for beneficiaries. This included a range of suggestions, such as measures to control the spending of beneficiaries, and imposing obligations on receiving a benefit. The idea of sanctions was most common among general public submissions, and least common among other organisation and NGO submissions.

Government help to families could be in the form of vouchers or coupons for food items only. (general public)

Beneficiaries must be held accountable for the money they receive to ensure they are spending appropriately on the children. Attendance at an ECE centre could be made compulsory for children three years old, with the fee paid directly from WINZ. (frontline worker)

Minister for Children and/or Ministry for Children: A small minority of submissions expressed support for establishing a Minister or Ministry for Children. This theme was supported by a large minority of other organisation and community meeting submissions, and a minority of NGO submissions.

Establishing a Minister for Children who has cross-cutting ministerial responsibility for improving the outcomes for children would also ensure issues affecting New Zealand children are at the forefront of political discourse. (NGO)

Other: Submissions proposed other changes that could be made to legislation. Proposals that each attracted support from a small minority of submissions were:

- harsher consequences for child maltreatment
- introducing alcohol law reform
- imposing requirements on parents receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB)
- introducing a Children's Act
- giving children a greater voice on matters that affect them
- reviewing parental leave/support
- reviewing the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act
- mandating Well Child enrolment
- using the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act more effectively
- reviewing adoption laws
- repealing or retaining the anti-smacking legislation
- reviewing the justice system, including Family Court processes
- implementing statutory multidisciplinary decision-making in child protection matters
- reviewing the rights of the unborn child

- reviewing child support provisions
- increasing financial support to parents
- outlining parental responsibility in legislation
- increasing restrictions on gambling
- establishing an independent Child, Youth and Family complaints body
- reviewing legislation governing the care of abused people.

...the one thing that is missing is real punishment. Far too often the thugs who perpetrate crimes of child abuse get off far too lightly with a few hours of home detention or community service, which is totally insufficient. (general public)

I see the reform of alcohol laws in NZ as being of primary importance and am extremely disappointed that the Government did not enact more of the recommendations proposed by the Law Commission's enquiry. (frontline worker)



Working with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders

This section discusses ideas from the submissions for working with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders to address child vulnerability. The Green Paper asked four questions about working with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders. These were:

- How can the Government work in partnership with iwi, Māori organisations and their leaders to deliver services for vulnerable tamariki and their whānau?
- What services or programmes are working well to achieve tamariki ora?
- What could be improved to ensure that services generate tamariki ora?
- How can we get services to hard-to-reach Māori whānau?

We first provide a summary of responses to this section, which pulls together ideas across all submissions. Next, we discuss the question and answer submissions, and then ideas raised in free-form submissions.

Summary

The issue of how government should work with Māori was less frequently addressed in submissions relative to a number of other issues.

Diversity in responses on how government should work with Māori reflected different beliefs about whether Māori should be treated differently to Pākehā or whether they should be treated equally.

Partnership: Submissions suggested various strategies of partnership, from consulting with Māori to letting Māori get on with it without government interference. The most strongly supported themes were allocating resources to culturally relevant services, consulting and working in partnership to deliver services, using the Treaty of Waitangi principles and committing to equal outcomes for Māori.

Strengthening communities: Submissions also suggested strengthening communities and the cultural competency in organisations. Submissions recognised the community as first supporters of families, and suggested delivering services from commonly used community bases (for example, early childhood centres).

Culturally tailored services: Submissions recognised the need for funding and support of culturally specific services, or mainstream services that could meet the needs of all their clients. Whānau Ora was strongly supported as a model for working with Māori.

Improving services: Suggestions for improving services included addressing access to services, improving contractual processes, upskilling the workforce working with Māori children including improving cultural competency and using a whole-of-whānau approach, and putting children first.

Connecting to services: Strategies for connecting “hard-to-reach” Māori to services were broadly relationship-based or service-based. Relationship-based strategies included working through kaumatua and kuia or other trusted sources and using a lead provider model to draw

families in. Service-based strategies included reducing barriers to services, incentivising service use or threatening the withdrawal of services for non-compliance.

Reducing barriers to services: Universal child rights that could be commonly understood still left room for the idea that to meet the needs of vulnerable Māori children, different pathways were necessary for Māori.

Highlighting similarity: All children are the same and culture/ethnicity is not important. Some rejected the idea of services specifically for Māori.

Social and economic factors: Framing vulnerability as the result of poverty and other social and economic determinants – not an issue of ethnicity as such – led to arguments for addressing the wider social and economic causes of vulnerability.





Working with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders: Question and answer submissions

How can the Government work in partnership with iwi, Māori organisations and their leaders to deliver services for vulnerable tamariki and their whānau?

Partnership

About half of submissions supported some type of partnership between Māori and agencies/ the Crown to deliver services to vulnerable children and their whānau. The type of partnership suggested depended on whether the submitter saw responsibility for vulnerable children resting with government or Māori. Types of partnership suggested included consulting, working together or giving responsibility to Māori institutions to work out solutions. Submissions suggested working both with traditional and non-traditional leadership (for example, urban authorities).

Listen, work alongside, bring the policy makers to the frontline to actually see what it's really like, trust Māori have positive solutions to help their own people – tino rangatiratanga. Improve what does work and dissolve what doesn't. (general public)

Consulting

Some submissions suggested authorities need to talk to and consult with people across the community.

Keep on consulting particularly with the kaumatua of communities. (general public)

Ask Māori – especially women – in LOTS OF DIFFERENT SETTINGS – for god's sake do not just go to the marae! Women cannot speak in many places, as you know, or will be dominated by men. Meet women and young women as well in their homes and schools and anywhere they can meet with you to discuss the best way to work with the Govt. (frontline worker)

Working together

Mechanisms suggested included having a contact person within an organisation for Māori to go to, and an independent organisation working with Māori to go between providers and families to see what the needs are.

Ensure that each government agency has a liaison person who can work with iwi, and/or Māori organisations. (NGO)

There needs to be an independent agency (that is independently monitored) to ensure the resources are being utilised in the most effective and efficient way at all times. Iwi need to be reassured that the people involved in partnership with them are neutral and that they will always be there for the tamariki. (general public)

Giving responsibility to Māori institutions

A minority of submissions suggested Māori could find their own solutions for supporting vulnerable children.

*Vulnerable Māori children need to be the responsibility of hapū and iwi to support....
When Māori children go into care they should become a ward of their iwi, not the state. (NGO)*

Some argued, however, it is possible to meet the needs of Māori families within the context of a “mainstream organisation”.

We can honour the Treaty but I don't think Māori are the only ones who can work with Māori. In our service more than 60% of clients are Māori. They are looking for transformation and change. We can give them that and verify the work and outcomes achieved. (frontline worker)

Resourcing

A minority of submissions suggested better resourcing of iwi or Māori service providers. Whānau Ora was sometimes mentioned as a successful initiative, although ideas for other services were offered; for example, anger management in prisons and kaupapa Māori-based services for sexual violence prevention. Resource reallocation specifically to vulnerable children from other areas was also suggested.

Use funding and resources currently provided for treaty and other Māori specific initiatives for support of work with vulnerable children. Much better use of those dollars especially for future generations as the stats will show. (general public)

Strengthen communities

A large minority of submissions suggested strengthening Māori communities and supporting iwi. Suggestions here included supporting Māori to achieve greater participation in the workforce, working with leaders and encouraging responsibility for Māori children by iwi.

Intensive and accelerated education and employment of Māori and Pacific people. Give them support to become well trained and educated so that they are dealing with vulnerable families from the same culture. More staff in CYPFS and more education and support for those staff. (general public)

Through the Whānau Ora model and by developing and strengthening relationships within the Māori community, developing solutions with them. (general public)

Improving cultural competency

A minority of submissions supported improving cultural competency in government agencies and NGO providers. These submissions supported working with whānau in culturally appropriate ways, acknowledging and affirming Māori worldviews.

Evidence shows that culturally relevant approaches work in changing social attitudes (smoke free) and encouraging engagement for services and change (Whānau Ora report). (NGO)

Employ people from these communities to run workshops and offer in house support. (general public)

Cultural competency improvements in both the statutory and the non-government sectors. (NGO)

Service location

A small minority of submissions argued services should be offered in locations where people naturally gather and have some level of comfort with, such as in marae or schools.

Education

A small minority of submissions suggested government can work with Māori to support Māori children by offering education to communities, such as ante-natal classes.

However, other submitters argued against what they saw as “a parallel system” of service provision for Māori children.

One system for all: These submissions argued that having two systems would mean Māori children would fall through the cracks. Other submissions suggested all children should have access to the same services. NGOs were notably absent from this style of argument.

In the same way as with any other organisations, with neither favour nor prejudice for any race or creed. Remember, separate development is what apartheid means; we don't need that in New Zealand. (frontline worker)

Accountability/performance management

A small minority of submissions suggested Māori-led organisations or organisations for Māori needed to be closely monitored or have the same sorts of processes and accountability in place as other organisations.

By holding the standards up to the same level as non iwi services. (frontline worker)

What services or programmes are working well to achieve tamariki ora?

A large minority of submissions identified Plunket as a service that is working well for tamariki ora. A minority of submissions identified Kōhanga Reo and Whānau Ora.

Support and encourage Whānau Ora. The potential has not yet been reached. (general public)

Well Child services for all. (frontline worker)

A minority of submissions suggested no services were working well for Māori.

As I see it now, none. Children are still being killed. (frontline worker)

A similar number suggested services that integrate health and social services and have whānau at the centre. Other suggestions included:

- some national services, Playcentre, Barnardos and Early Years, Family Start
- marae-based events that support family to look after their children
- locally run programmes and services, such as Tipu Ora, kapa haka groups, Tu Tama Wahine o Taranaki.

Incredible Years, SWIS, Say Ah, social work and counselling services, Tamariki Programme at Women's Refuge for children witnessing violence. (frontline worker)

What could be improved to ensure that services generate tamariki ora?

Improve access to services: This theme, endorsed by a large minority of submissions, captured suggestions for making access to frontline services easier for whānau; for example, health services, services accessed through Child, Youth and Family and special education.

Teachers usually are very aware of community needs. Work with the schools and local organisations already in the community. Education facilities have the infrastructure in place; use them for healthcare checks, parent education facilities, family counselling etc. (general public)

Education and support should be readily available to all parents and caregivers. The sources and types of help available should be publicised and information made easily accessible to all on a dedicated website, which is maintained and up to date. (NGO)



Submissions noted a choice of service provider could be important.

Let Māori families work with mainstream services if they have family ties to Māori services. (NGO)

Improve contractual processes: A minority of submissions argued for improvements in contractual processes. These included the tendering process, helping organisations with contractual requirements, through to contracting with the right people.

That local services get assistance with accounting and record keeping to ensure that money is spent wisely and can be accounted for. (general public)

Contractual processes, flexibility. Remove bureaucracy, allow for people to intervene if they need to. (general public)

Similarly to the services that are working well, a minority of submissions endorsed upskilling the Māori workforce and using a whole-of-family approach for service delivery.

Mostly they are abused by people with little to no parenting skills (had no good role models themselves) and often times it is someone who isn't a blood relation. So I do believe they need to be aware of these kids in our community and support the struggling parents and support the children. (general public)

A smaller group of submissions suggested funding services with their roots in Te Ao Māori.

Be on the ground, be accessible, be interested, look for opportunities to engage local support and uptake. Mentor and encourage. Inspire the vision. Speak to their values, beliefs and culture. Respect. (general public)

Education and Training. Agencies have failed to deliver. Māori worldviews would help stem the tide. (general public)

Arguments about expecting the same standards from everyone working with children and making services child-centred were also present in a small minority of submissions.

A tamariki focus rather than whānau ora, when tamariki ora is in question. (NGO)

Improve Child, Youth and Family practices: A small minority suggested improvements to Child, Youth and Family practice in response to this question.

Remove the children from the parents. DO NOT place the child with other whānau members as they were often brought up in the same circumstances & often do the same things. Have ONLY supervised visitation with the whānau if it's deemed emotionally & physically healthy for the child or children involved. DO NOT have whānau making the decisions on what happens with the child. CYFS need to make the decisions. (general public)

How can we get services to hard-to-reach Māori whānau?

Suggestions for how to get services to hard-to-reach Māori whānau can be roughly split into strategies that use or build relationships with whānau, and those that make services easier to access.

Relationship-based suggestions

Using trusted sources: About half of submissions suggested using trusted sources to access hard-to-reach Māori whānau. Trusted sources included traditional leadership or elders such as kuia, or other whānau members, or members of the community.

Get some kuia involved – people who are respected in their own communities and who have a good track record with their parenting styles. Get the gangs involved, approach the gang leaders and get them out there advocating for the children. If these tough guys can show a soft side then anyone can. Don't just dismiss this approach, it can be done if you find the right person with the right relationships with the right gang leader – it's all [about] relationships. (general public)

Using a lead provider: Submissions said whānau working with one agency – and ideally one person within an agency – can help whānau access all the services they need.

A child advocate assigned to every mother from birth to 18. (general public)

Persistence: Submissions said providers have to keep engaging in order to allow the whānau to get ready to engage, and to be available when they are ready. This is relevant even though some whānau do not want to engage.

Continue to make the effort. Look at using natural resources which will include families, whānau, iwi, hapū. Keep visiting and listening and talking and being available for that one time when a family chooses to make that connection. (frontline worker)

Has thought been given to the fact that hard-to-reach families (including Māori whānau) are hard to reach because they don't want to be reached? (NGO)

Making services easier to access

Using outreach services: A large minority of submissions suggested using outreach services to access hard-to-reach Māori whānau. Examples included using mobile clinics, mobile services, visiting whānau at their homes and setting up services close to where whānau live.

Set up house in the worse affected areas, literally rent a house in a street & approach the neighbours, knock on doors offering help & WATCH & listen to what is going on. How the children are dressed, how their composure is, are they looking physically healthy?

Are the children aggressive (there's a sign) get to know the families. The offending will continue but it's a lot harder to get away with while they are being watched by agencies with the sole purpose of protecting the children. Take ACTION when needed, get past the red tape. (general public)

Communities and local groups should be encouraged to participate in helping vulnerable children in their area. The services need to go to the people not the people to the service, particularly in the isolated rural communities. (general public)

More outreach workers, getting the women on board. (general public)

Culturally appropriate services: A minority of submissions suggested services might have better uptake if they were tailored better to the culture of the people they serve. A related idea is working with Māori to ensure services are what they want.

Spend money on infrastructure, invest in Māori initiatives that engage whānau.

Determine initiatives tailored to Māori culture and beliefs. (frontline worker)

Support Whānau Ora, higher funding than currently available, fund antenatal programmes that are kaupapa Māori, fund wahine programmes around abuse violence. Be involved in the kōhanga reo. I believe that Māori can do this if provided with funding and templates and can design their own programmes. (frontline worker)

By Māori for Māori services can be helpful in getting services to hard-to-reach Māori whānau. (NGO)

Reducing barriers to services: A small minority of submissions suggested connection to services might be improved by removing barriers such as cost, distance from services, and hours of service. Also included here is the idea that discrimination is a barrier to services.

Accessibility – invite them to participate, respect their opinion, treat their children fairly. DON'T allow racism to be ignored. (general public)

Through universal services. (NGO)

Engaging with whānau where the opportunity arises: Other ways of reaching whānau include engaging whānau where they come in contact with services such as Work and Income, health visits and school environments. The harder side of this sort of argument is making the support whānau receive contingent on whānau compliance:

Requiring attendance at meetings etc in relation to benefits or the Working for Families package. (frontline worker)

Using social media, drawing whānau in, incentives: A small number of submissions suggested whānau could be drawn in, or learn about the services, if the appropriate media were employed to send the message, or if incentives were used:

By channelling the media content through the media channels they listen to. (general public)

Providing carrots (ie vouchers etc) to engage through Māori providers. (frontline worker)

Working with whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders: Free-form submissions

Free-form submissions talked about the basis for a working relationship between government and Māori to support vulnerable children, and connecting Māori to services. Themes from these submissions are discussed under the following broad headings:

- Building a working relationship between government and whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders
- Connecting Māori to services.



Building a working relationship between government and whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders

Treaty of Waitangi: A minority of submissions supported using the Treaty as a basis for working with whānau, hapū and iwi. Strongest support for using the Treaty as a basis came from NGOs and other organisations, with lesser support from frontline workers, the general public and community meetings.

Māori have an accountability to each other as well as government. Government structures that continue to implement policy that does not include these accountability safeguards effectively relegate Māori as receivers of a culturally inappropriate and unsafe service. (NGO)

Ideas in the submissions included:

- the principles of the Treaty, including the right to self-determination, full participation in society and protection
- the role of colonisation in producing poorer outcomes for Māori children
- practical strategies for making the Treaty work; for example Māori staff development within government agencies
- the need to acknowledge another worldview (Te Ao Māori) in developing policy and delivering services to get them right for Māori whānau
- recognising the indigenous status of Māori in New Zealand.

Commit to equal outcomes: A small minority of submissions identified the disproportionate burden of vulnerability on Māori children, and argued that disproportionate funding is required to achieve equal outcomes. Other organisations were most likely to put forward an argument for commitment to equal outcomes, followed by frontline workers and NGOs. This argument was not a strong feature of submissions from the general public.

For Māori whānau to succeed and tamariki to flourish we must address the wider socio-economic context and the impact that this has on issues such as whānau violence. We need to “get real” and acknowledge that for Māori it is not an “even playing field”. While many families struggle in our communities, Māori have been disproportionately affected by the impacts of colonisation and the loss of resources such as land and language. Disenfranchisement and marginalisation have actively prevented Māori from determining how critical social services such as health, education and employment work best for them. (frontline worker)

Work in partnership to deliver services: A small minority of submissions supported government working in partnership with Māori to deliver services. Working in partnership was most likely to be raised by other organisations (a large minority of other organisations supported this idea) and was also a feature, to a lesser extent, of submissions from frontline workers, NGOs and the general public. Working in partnership was raised in a small number of community meetings.

In order to provide culturally appropriate responses, strategies need to be based on partnerships between Māori and families, whānau and communities, and between Māori agencies, mainstream service providers and government. (NGO)

Working in partnership included:

- having structures and formal mechanisms for Māori in policy

Whānau, hapū and iwi need to be inclusive and present at the decision making level, have the confidence and resources of government to develop our own solutions and implementation of those solutions from a whānau, hapū and Iwi level. (NGO)
- having structures and formal mechanisms for Māori in funding and purchasing services for Māori, including support of kaupapa Māori services

Encourage whānau, hapū and iwi to advocate for joined up approaches across health, education and welfare domains. This can be achieved by whānau, hapū and iwi leaders as well as child health and welfare services collaborate and develop joint goals and measures to collectively achieve the same end for vulnerable tamariki and their whānau. (NGO)
- supporting Māori-initiated solutions

We would like the Government to accept that the weight of evidence derived from reputable research clearly identifies the need to resource high-quality strongly performing Māori organisations to take a lead in every aspect of Māori life where early, intelligent and effective support for Māori people are the proven solutions to need. (NGO)
- recognising and supporting the community as first supporter of families, including using community bases to provide services.

Strong communities require work and strategic plans; each community should have development that includes a stocktake of services for children and young people. Deficits should be identified and every effort made to change it. (NGO)

Our communities of whānau whānui (family/extended family) have significant influences on tamariki and rangatahi, which is so very dependent on the wellbeing of those interactions between members of the whānau whānui. (NGO)

Resource allocation to culturally relevant services: This relates to working in partnership with Māori. A small minority of submissions focused on the importance of funding and supporting culturally relevant services to achieve good whānau and child outcomes. Submissions talked about adequate funding, capacity building and monitoring of both kaupapa Māori and mainstream services. This theme, endorsed by a minority of submissions, was the most strongly supported by NGOs.

Mainstream services must be acceptable and accessible to Māori. Māori-led, sector supported services with sufficient funds allocated are needed to improve wellbeing for tamariki Māori. (NGO)

An explicit commitment to developing governance, management and clinical leadership within kaupapa Māori organisations using local relationships, principles of effective commissioning and the principles of prioritisation made. (NGO)

Whānau Ora: A large minority of NGO submissions specifically endorsed a Whānau Ora model of working. This was the most strongly supported service option for working with whānau, hapū and iwi.

As the needs are multi-systemic and multi-factorial in nature, so they require multiple and flexible solutions. In our opinion the Whānau Ora renaissance being regenerated by the Government's Whānau Ora policy in the pathway to long term success.... Identify vulnerable children early through Whānau Ora organisations; ensure resources go to parents, caregivers and whānau of vulnerable children under a Whānau Ora-managed programme. (NGO)

Other programmes and services: Mainstream programmes captured in the submissions with specific support from a small minority of submissions included Incredible Years, Well Child, SKIP, PAFT, HIPPIY, Strengthening Families, Home Visitation and Social Workers in Schools.

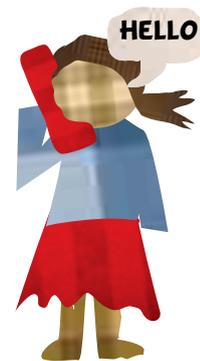
A small minority of submissions specifically supported programmes with roots in Te Ao Māori including Kura Kaupapa Māori and Te Kōhanga Reo.

It is our position that the obligations of partnership, protection and participation demand that the Crown take active steps in facilitating the provision of by Māori for Māori services in the social welfare sector that enable Māori to develop as a people. The Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa movements and Whānau Ora provide good models. (NGO)

Other programmes mentioned included those specific to local communities, such as KidsCan, programmes run by the Māori Women's Welfare League and Māori Women's Refuge, Family Start, Roots of Empathy, Kapa Haka, Nurturing the Future, Great Start Taita and Te Aroha Noa.

Other issues: Submissions suggested running early childhood centres based on Māori principles (for example, Whare Tapa Whā), better evaluating existing programmes and providing workers who are culturally competent.

For tamariki Māori, understanding their whakapapa is an integral part of the relationships they develop as their wellbeing is inextricably linked to that of their parents, caregivers, family, whānau, hapū, iwi and communities and wider society. Creating this context is fundamental to creating a sense of belonging and therefore provides a basis of identity. (NGO)



Connecting Māori to services

A small number of submissions specifically commented on the issue of how to better connect Māori to services. Answers to this issue in part repeat the wider discussions above about working in partnership and providing culturally relevant services, on the basis that with partnership and culturally relevant services in place, connection will follow.

Similar to the question and answer submissions, strategies can be divided into relationship-based strategies and making changes to services to make them easier to access. A small minority of submissions supported all strategies.

Relationship-based strategies: These include reaching families through kaumātua and kuia, through other trusted relationships, or an outreach worker. The “lead provider model” relies on one worker or agency having a relationship with a whānau and helping that whānau to access all the services they need.

My suggestion includes the stepping up of kaumatua/kuia on Marae all around the country. This will be a multi-departmental effort. We must use our elders to guide and support our young whānau and young parents. (general public)

I am seeking support for a Māori social worker whose job would be to help low income Māori people to access mainstream social services such as Work and Income New Zealand, budget advice and health services. The social worker would also help with access to non-government services such as food banks, the City Mission, and community law centres. I have found that it's very difficult for low-income Māori people to get access to any of these services. A Māori social worker would help bridge the gap that low-income Māori people constantly run up against. (general public)

Making services easier to access: A small minority of submissions suggested making services easier to access by making them places inviting for Māori, staffed by people who were culturally competent or culturally sensitive. This includes mainstream services.

Māori access services that are both Māori led and mainstream. Mainstream services must be acceptable and accessible to Māori. (NGO)

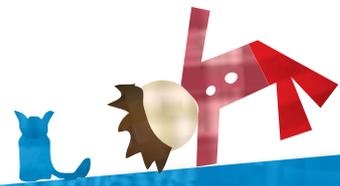
A small minority of submissions said groups should not be stigmatised as “hard to reach”. Provision of free universal services (as opposed to targeted services) is a related idea.

We support an evidence-based approach to services which are universal so all children benefit and vulnerable children are not stigmatised. (NGO)

A small minority of submissions suggested taking services to where people are – in their own home, through mobile clinics, or based in marae and schools.

Research has shown that providing meals or fruit free at schools could potentially improve food security outcomes for children, with possible flow-on effects for household food budgets. (NGO)

Better use of ECE includes the wrap-around services which are a condition of enrolment, eg the parents, caregivers and whānau at Te Mirumiru in Kawakawa are required to opt into the wrap-around programmes. This should be a requirement of all ECEs. (NGO)



Make child-centred policy changes

The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children asked New Zealanders for their ideas about child-centred policy. The feedback received is presented under three broad topic headings.

- Review changes to government spending to get better results for vulnerable children
- Vulnerable child-first allocation policy
- Watching out for vulnerable children, including information-sharing.

Submissions relating to each of these topics will be discussed separately. First, we summarise the submissions' ideas for each of the three topics, then report in more detail what submitters said in answer to specific questions in the Green Paper followed by what the free-form submissions covered.

Review government spending to get better results for vulnerable children

The Green Paper asked three questions about reviewing government spending to get better results for vulnerable children.

- Do you think the Government should provide more targeted services for vulnerable children? If yes, from where should funding be taken to do so?
- Should the Government reprioritise spending to provide more early intervention – that is, more services for younger children and/or services for children that address problems as they are beginning to surface? If so, from where should the funding be taken?
- Should the Government focus its spending on programmes and services that have a sound evidential basis?

Summary

Targeting vulnerable children: Submissions showed strong support for providing tailored services to vulnerable children. Most argued all children need to have their basic needs met by universal services, but that vulnerable children should receive additional services to meet their specific needs.

Early intervention: Most submissions supported a stronger focus on early intervention. Submissions argued the early years were critical in a child's development and prevention was better and cheaper than cure. Some submissions qualified this position by arguing that we need to make sure this would not reduce support for older children. These submissions were particularly keen to see that the needs of vulnerable youth are not overlooked.

Reallocating funding: Submissions commonly argued money spent on children was money saved. These submissions argued money directed to vulnerable children would be recouped on reduced demand for “bottom-of-the-cliff” expenditure. Submissions suggested funds could be found by creating efficiencies in current government spending. Another common suggestion was to direct funds away from expenses that did not directly benefit children, such as sporting events. Submissions also argued for increasing tax on things such as alcohol and cigarettes, and increasing the tax paid by higher income earners and businesses.

Evidence-based funding: Submissions showed overall support for funding programmes and services with a sound evidential base. Some submissions expressed concerns that a focus on evidence could stifle innovation, waste time when urgent action is needed, or that definitions of what counts as evidence are too narrow.



Review government spending to get better results for vulnerable children: Question and answer submissions

Do you think the Government should provide more targeted services for vulnerable children? If yes, from where should funding be taken to do so?

We will report the responses to this two-part question separately, beginning with support for targeting services to vulnerable children.

Support for targeting: The majority of submissions were in support of targeting tailored services to individual vulnerable children. The main message arising from submissions was to improve the utilisation of existing services to better meet the needs of vulnerable children. Submissions in support of targeted services often argued funding of these services should not come at the expense of other services and should be in addition to present funding.

Of course it should, and it should increase funding, not take away from other areas. I cannot think of any public service with surplus to share. (frontline worker)

Our NZ children are suffering not just looking at the abuse stats but also the health stats we now have children in NZ suffering and clogging up the health system with 3rd world preventable diseases – surely targeted services would save money in the long run. (general public)

Opposed to targeting: A minority of submissions argued against targeting funding to vulnerable children. The most common concern expressed about targeted funding was there should be adequate services available for all children and families. Submissions opposing targeting of services often argued that government should focus on resolving problems with existing universal programmes and services before trying to develop new ways of helping people.

Review what is already in place – and make it work! (general public)

Whatever we do needs to be for all children and families because if we focus on one small group then we run the risk of missing problems. (general public)

If you support targeting, where should funds be taken from?

Savings on other services: About half the submissions showed support for funding to be generated by savings on other services. These submissions suggested creating efficiencies in government spending by:

- merging overlapping departments and services (such as the Police and SIS)
- savings on services (including Member of Parliament salaries, and prisons)
- eliminating spending on under-performing services.

Eliminate the current waste in the system. Too many agencies all playing in the space but lack of targeted measurable delivery. Significant cost savings and efficiencies are there for the picking. Improve back office via shared services across agencies and get rid of cost wastage. (frontline worker)

Reduce funding when not child-centred: Other submissions argued for child-centred funding decisions that directed funds away from things that could not be seen to directly improve the wellbeing of children. A common example was spending on prisons and defence. Some submissions argued government support for the arts, rugby and the America's Cup were wasteful.

Non-essential services, e.g. recreation, sport, the arts. Even roading is less important than our tamariki. (general public)

Older generation: A smaller group argued money could be found by raising the retirement age to 67 and means testing the Gold Card.

Increasing the tax take: A large minority of submissions were in support of increasing the tax take to pay for services for vulnerable children. These submissions argued for four main sources of tax:

- higher taxes on alcohol, cigarettes and gambling
- increasing tax rates and reducing tax evasion for the wealthy and businesses
- a reversal of the recent tax rate breaks or a small universal tax rate rise
- a capital gains tax.

Lower payments to beneficiaries: A small minority of submissions argued that funds could be found by reducing payments to beneficiaries. While some argued for benefit cuts across the board, others advocated cuts to benefit rates for those who were found to have been abusing their children. Some argued that a renewed focus on benefit fraud could provide a useful source of funding.

A small number of submissions argued for each of the following funding sources:

- Treaty of Waitangi settlements
- philanthropy
- fraud detection.

Should the Government reprioritise spending to provide more early intervention – this is, more services for younger children and/or services for children that address problems as they are beginning to surface?

Support for early intervention: Almost all submissions were in favour of reprioritising spending to provide more early intervention services. These submissions generally argued targeting services to children in the early years would prove to be an important social investment.

Definitely, as research shows (Dunedin longitudinal study) that by the age of three a child's sociability, future career or criminal pathway etc can already be predicted. Early intervention is likely to result in huge government savings once the child is a teenager/adult. (frontline worker)

Yes. Please let's stop being the ambulance at the bottom of the hill. It doesn't work and the statistics prove it. (general public)

Opposition to early intervention: A small minority of question and answer submissions opposed early intervention funding. These submissions argued:

- to make best use of existing services
- not to overlook older children.

All children are at risk and sometimes less attention is spent on teenagers. We should not take our eye off the ball for this group. (general public)

If so, from where should funding be taken?

Answers to this question were largely similar to previous questions asking where any extra money should or could come from.

Generating efficiencies in government spending: The majority of submissions suggested funds to support early intervention should be gained by savings on other services. One of the main suggestions was for the Government to look to rationalise current government spending, such as:

- reducing numbers of back office “pen-pushers”
- merging overlapping government agencies
- better targeting of current services to those most in need.

Existing services that are building up a whole lot of community entities and not the community itself. It's not just about money and people having flash offices and cars etc. It's about the community knowing where to go to get help and advice and guidance. (general public)

Prevention will produce savings: Another group argued preventative measures would result in reduced spending on services such as health and justice, and so will produce savings.

Government needs to invest in the future of its citizens. Early intervention is considerably cheaper than later costs incurred without intervention where it is needed. This initiative is worth borrowing money for as it will lead to more cohesive, responsible, content, and productive communities. Significant reductions in future crime rates, reliance on social welfare benefits, divorce, and domestic violence are other benefits of successful implementation. (frontline worker)

Increasing the tax take: A large minority of submissions argued for funding for early intervention to be taken from tax. There were three main sources of tax proposed:

- higher tax on alcohol, cigarettes and gambling
- higher tax rates, and reduced tax evasion, for high income earners, businesses and banks
- capital gains tax.

Put the tax back up for people in the top bracket and introduce the tax on people selling houses. (general public)

Focusing expenditure on services that directly benefit children: Some other submissions suggested diverting money away from expenses that did not directly benefit children, such as:

- prisons and policing

- new motorways and bike tracks
- Member of Parliament and corporate salaries
- new cars for Ministers
- travel perks for ex-Members of Parliament.

Reduced spending on glamour events: A theme to emerge from these submissions was spending on “glamour events” such as the Rugby World Cup and the America’s Cup should be redirected to services for vulnerable children. Others said that funding for culture and the arts could be usefully redirected to support child wellbeing.

The America’s Cup, the Rugby World Cup, politicians’ allowances, and increasing taxes for those that can afford it. (general public)

Retirement: A small minority of submissions argued the retirement age should be raised to pay for early intervention in childhood.

Benefits: A small minority of submissions called for a reduction of benefit payments to fund early intervention.

Other ideas of where to find funding for early intervention were:

- philanthropy
- Treaty of Waitangi settlements
- fraud detection
- fines.

Should the Government focus its spending on programmes and services that have a sound evidential basis?

Support for evidence-based funding: The majority of submissions supported evidence-based programmes and services. Generally this group of submissions said it was important for any initiative to prove it is effective in order to earn the right to continued funding.

Spending should be focused on what works, not who yells the loudest. (frontline workers)

Sometimes there are too many well-meaning people organising programmes for which there is no sound evidential basis. (general public)

Go to Sweden, Norway, Denmark and see what they do there and adapt for NZ conditions. (general public)

Some submissions said that it was important to explore different ways of producing evidence.

There needs to be recognition that qualitative data is as valuable and valid as quantitative data if it is collected properly. (frontline worker)

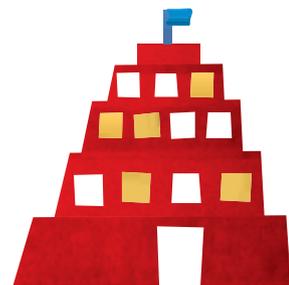
Evidenced-based practice entails researching programmes that have proven results for similar situations and ensuring cultural diversity is taken into account. It entails listening to educationalists, formulating an agreed plan, understanding there is no quick fix – but time, education and appropriate supports will eventually return appropriate results. (general public)

Reservations about evidence-based funding: A minority of submissions provided some qualifications about what the “evidence base” should include, and when it was appropriate to fund activities that were not evidence-based. These submissions were concerned that what counts as evidence is too narrow, and questioned who decides what counts as evidence and on what basis. This included arguments that:

- what counts as evidence should be broadened to include the hands-on experience of people dealing with vulnerable families
- current ideas about evidence were often based on a “Western” ideas of evidence, and should take into account other traditions, such as Māori worldviews
- the Government should fund programmes that are relevant to the people they are serving, and a focus on evidence may result in a greater reliance on programmes sourced from overseas
- focusing on evidence might exclude initiatives that are working well, but do not have a formal evidence base yet
- the current evidence base only tells us about things that have worked in the past, and an emphasis on evidence should not stop us trialling new and innovative approaches
- we need to evaluate what we already have
- getting hard evidence for social services is difficult, and evidence for change in outcomes accumulates over time.

No. That would mean that new ideas or those that simply haven't been thought of yet would go unseen. I think that chances have to be taken to get to the heart of the matter in a way that is more productive than the status quo. (general public)

Evidential-base thinking is incredibly Westernised. Again for generations now traditional values have continuously had to be accountable to mainstream systems. I believe it is time to empower our whānau, communities, children and young people again with a key focus on identity and understanding the significance of cultures to which we belong. Imposing evidential-based programmes on whānau and communities does not necessarily achieve sound outcomes. (frontline worker)



Review government spending to get better results for vulnerable children: Free-form submissions

In this section we discuss suggestions from the free-form submissions about reviewing government spending to get better results for vulnerable children under the following three broad headings:

- Targeting vulnerable children
- Early intervention
- Evidence-based funding.

Targeting vulnerable children

Submissions showed support for providing tailored services to individual vulnerable children.

Progressive/proportionate universalism: The position with the greatest level of support was progressive/proportionate universalism. This position argues that every child should receive a core set of services that funnel into extra services for children with further identified needs. A large minority of other organisations and NGOs supported this.

Any action plan should be for all children and should ensure that all children are cared for and their basic individual needs for safety, health, housing and education are met.... We recognise that some children will need additional support to achieve some of the above. (NGO)

Progressive universalism is a fairer process than simple targeting. It reduces the risks associated with targeting, such as the inadequacies of risk assessment tools, some children falling through gaps, and stigmatisation. (NGO)

To adequately protect our children, we therefore need a) to create a social and economic environment that is supportive to all children, as well as b) to have flexible funding and support systems to meet the greater needs of children who have particular weaknesses in their immediate environment or need particular support and intervention to protect them. Such support needs to recognise the uniqueness of each child. (NGO)

Support for targeting: A minority of submissions voiced support for targeting tailored services towards vulnerable children. Most of these submissions talked about targeting services to the needs of individual vulnerable children, in combination with universal services for all children.

Fairness is when everyone gets what they need, not when everyone gets the same. (NGO)

A small number of these submissions talked about targeting preventative services to specific groups considered to be high risk.

Children and families in disadvantaged groups (e.g. Māori and Pacific populations, and low income families) are particularly at risk. Actions to improve the wellbeing of children, should give extra priority to improving the lives of these children, will improve social equity. (general public)

The groups offering the highest support for targeting were NGOs and other organisations. Frontline workers were half as likely to talk about targeting as these groups. Submissions from the general public were least likely to explicitly support targeting. Submissions argued three main reasons why targeting tailored services to vulnerable children was a smart policy strategy:

- targeting offered the best “bang for the Government’s buck”. This argument was that if there were limited funds available then children most in need should have first priority for services
- society contained distinct communities of dysfunction and deprivation that could be efficiently and effectively wrapped in services
- vulnerable children often had needs that differed from other children. These submissions argued, for instance, that child victims of violence and sexual abuse have therapeutic needs that differ greatly from the needs of the general populace.

Against targeting services: A small minority of submissions argued against targeting. The main concerns expressed were:

- targeting may be carried out for the wrong reasons
- some children may miss out on support if services are targeted
- all children should be supported.

The more narrowly targeted a programme, the greater the risk that some of the vulnerable will be missed. (general public)

Funding Māori services: Some submissions from Māori organisation providers specifically endorsed resource allocation to culturally relevant services for Māori. The importance of culture for all people more generally was recognised in submissions that extended an argument for culturally relevant services for Pasifika and other communities.

We are aware of recently completed research (as yet unpublished) that affirms the benefits of kaupapa Māori programmes and practices when dealing with whānau violence. This experience has also taught us of the need for locally governed, locally managed Māori social infrastructure upon which Māori people can rely. (NGO)

There was no dominant view on funding allocation strategies among submissions from Māori organisations. Arguments were made for more targeting of funding to vulnerable children, universalism and proportionate universalism.

The particular notion of “universalism” that demands that everyone shares equally in the benefits of govt spending, that ensure middle class capture of resources and that frustrates the targeting of spending on those living in poverty, needs to be bravely addressed at a political level to ensure appropriate over proportionate spending in Māori, Pacific and [high deprivation] communities. (frontline worker)

Targeting Pasifika: Some submissions from Pasifika groups argued for more preventative and targeted programmes for vulnerable children, provided they are culturally appropriate for Pasifika families.

The Green Paper does not discuss strategies for supporting Pacific people’s children, their families and communities. Pacific people’s children are frequently over represented in unintentional injury outcomes. (NGO)

Support for universalism: A small minority of submissions did not support targeting, rather supporting providing universal services to all. Submissions most likely to take this position were from other organisations and NGOs. These submissions generally argued that all children need to be supported adequately in an approach that seeks to prevent vulnerability rather than cure it.

A basic level of service should be provided to all children. It is not practical for all services to be targeted only at those who need them most. (NGO)

Universal services reduce stigmatisation and increase the likelihood of maintaining contact with the most marginalised and vulnerable families. Universal service can also help prevent a problem from escalating by ensuring pathways to more specialised or intensive services. (NGO)

These submissions tended to talk about prevention of harm through ensuring basic needs are met for all children. Some submissions expressed concerns that explicit targeting of services to some groups can marginalise other groups. Similarly there were concerns targeting could create barriers to receiving services if thresholds of vulnerability are not met.

Early intervention

Support for early intervention: A large minority of free-form submissions argued for increased early intervention services. Most of the submissions in support of early intervention argued preventative approaches are more effective than reactive responses. It was argued money directed into early intervention would be recouped on reduced demand for “bottom of the cliff” expenditure.

There is already a body of evidence which tells us that early medical intervention and prevention improves health and is cost effective and saves money down the track. We currently have an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff approach. We need to get the ambulance to the top of the cliff. (general public)

Investing in child wellbeing: A key theme to emerge from free-form submissions was that money spent on meeting the needs of children should be understood as an investment in building a healthy, well-functioning populace.

Failure to support families and prevent maltreatment of children is extremely costly long term. By reprioritising spending towards prevention the Government will save large amounts of money in the future. (NGO)

Early years critical: Some submissions argued harm done to a child in the early years is very difficult to repair.

It's too late when children are three years, or five years or whatever. The damage is done. (general public).

Concerns about early intervention: A minority of submissions argued there should be more early intervention funding but this should be in addition to, not at the expense of, other services. The main concern expressed by this group is that a focus on early intervention could mean vulnerable youth are overlooked.

Focusing on the early years and intervening early in development...makes good sense in terms of long term outcomes. This means investing adequately in these areas. It does not mean giving up on other children. (NGO)

Opposition to early intervention: A small minority of submissions was opposed to a focus on early intervention. Most of these submissions argued intervention should be targeted at problems rather than people, and problems can arise at any life stage.

Child-centred budgeting: A small minority of submissions argued for savings on other government services. Many submissions suggested that government rationalise spending across its whole budget to prioritise the needs of vulnerable children. Many submissions argued this was not a matter of juggling funds within existing social services budgets – it was more a matter of government putting the needs of children to the fore when all funding decisions were made.

We do not support slicing up the social services cake differently – we support a bigger cake. To that extent, we prefer investment to be cut from areas that cannot demonstrate they advance the best interests of children. (NGO)

Increasing the tax take: A small minority of submissions called for the Government to increase its tax take to fund early intervention initiatives. Free-form submissions echoed the suggestions of the question and answers submissions:

- higher tax on alcohol, cigarettes and gambling
- higher tax rates, and reduced tax evasion, for high income earners, businesses and banks
- capital gains tax.

Some submissions also suggested they would be prepared to pay more tax to ensure vulnerable children received the support they needed. Many of these submissions referred to the fact that New Zealand's spending on children is low compared with other OECD countries. They argued that New Zealand needs to invest resources more in children and that a higher tax rate was a small price to pay for improved wellbeing in children.

Reducing vulnerability amongst children and their family/whānau requires investment. The Green Paper's reference to funding from within existing allocation through redistribution of resources overlooks evidence that NZ expenditure on children is among the lowest in the OECD. (NGO)

A small minority of submissions argued for fines as a source of funding.

Evidence-based funding

Support for evidence-based programmes: A minority of submissions expressed support for evidence-based funding. About half of other organisations, and a large minority of NGOs, community meetings and a minority of frontline workers supported this idea.

It is illogical for central government to be funding any social service without being in a position to provide to the tax payer reasonable evidence that this service is improving people's lives and reducing child maltreatment. (NGO)



Evaluating existing programmes and services: A small minority of submissions argued for an evaluation of existing programmes and services. A large minority of other organisations and a minority of NGOs and community meetings approved of this idea. The main view was that evaluation was an essential part of quality service provision.

MSD has funded a vast array of interventions over the years, very few of which have been evaluated. However in the case of child abuse, almost no interventions have been evaluated in terms of efficacy, and that includes CYF interventions, police interventions, the criminal justice system and hospital-based child protection teams. (frontline worker)

Another smaller group of respondents were concerned existing programmes were not resulting in good outcomes for children, and said we needed to work out where we are going wrong.

I believe that a review of existing services looking out for the children and vulnerable families is vital – given that the outcomes for better statistics for the wellbeing of the children have not improved and we seem to have more and more organisations, fragmented at best, all trying to do that same thing and the results are not there. (general public)

Evidence from overseas: A small minority of submissions argued there was rich evidence available overseas that could be adapted to the New Zealand context. In particular these submissions recommended examining examples available in Nordic nations, the United Kingdom and Australia.

Programmes based on international best evidence need evaluation to ensure they are appropriate for the NZ context. (other organisation)

Investing in more research: A small minority said we needed to invest in more research to help us understand child vulnerability. This view was particularly strong among NGOs and community meetings. Most of these respondents expressed a desire for research to be undertaken on specific issues such as:

- autism
- parent/child bonding
- research based on tikanga Māori principles.

A small group of submissions expressed support for investing in research evidence in principle, irrespective of the particular subject matter.

Some submissions, particularly from NGOs, argued government must invest in research into the potential impact of policy reform before changes are carried out.

Further research and analysis on the impact of welfare reforms on our most vulnerable children be undertaken prior to the introduction of the policy. (NGO)

Urgent action should be taken to commission evaluative research to inform legislative developments and changes in social work practice. (NGO)

Supporting innovation: Another small minority of submissions said that it was important to support innovation. This position was particularly prevalent among submissions from other organisations. These submissions argued while evidence was important, it was vital to leave space for people to explore new ideas. In particular, these submissions argued innovation emerging from the community level needs to be nurtured, evaluated and rolled out if successful.

There must be greater scope for innovation within government and communities, through use of high-trust contracts, results-based accountability and standardised measurement of outcomes. (NGO)

Concerns about evidence-based funding: A small minority of submissions expressed concerns about evidence-based funding. These submissions were concerned assessment could be reduced to a tick-box exercise. Their main concern was that holistic, qualitative outcomes and cultural values are not easily measured with mainstream evaluation and monitoring techniques. Some submissions expressed concern small-scale localised approaches could be disadvantaged if funding was dependant on evidence. Similarly some were concerned that practice-based knowledge may be marginalised by privileging scientific evidence.

No, because what you consider evidence is a form of scientific relativism; and what you consider "results" is probably dubious in its foundation. The goal is not simply to stop abuse but to facilitate healthy parenting practices. The perspective of govt is too superficial....and politically reactionary. (general public)

Evidence in cultural contexts: Some submissions stressed the importance of researching and understanding cultural aspects of social service provision.

In order to achieve the objectives of Whānau Ora, it is vital that culturally distinct approaches to violence intervention and prevention are supported and evaluated. It is important that policies designed to address family violence, including agency responses and practices, are also culturally appropriate and respond to the needs of Pacific Island, Asian and other ethnic groups. (community meeting)

Many Māori and Pacific programmes are grounded in identified cultural needs and preferences. They may not have a mainstream evidence base due to a lack of research, so appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems are particularly important. (other organisation)

Vulnerable child-first allocation policy

The Green Paper and its associated questionnaires asked five questions about having a vulnerable child-first allocation policy.

- Is it appropriate that all Government agencies promote and prioritise the wellbeing of vulnerable children in their day-to-day work?
- Should some people get priority over others when allocated support and services because they are caring for vulnerable children?
- What priority should the Government give to the families and whānau of those caring for vulnerable children when allocating services that impact on the children they are caring for?
- When should adults who care for vulnerable children be prioritised for services over others?
- What services do you think should be included in this policy?

Summary

Prioritising carers, family and whānau of vulnerable children: Submissions were generally in support of prioritising services to the carers of vulnerable children. Supporters argued those caring for vulnerable children need to be looked after in order for children to have the best possible outcomes. Many submissions argued non-parental carers of vulnerable children, such as grandparents and foster parents, needed more support.

What services and when: The most commonly suggested services to target to carers of vulnerable children were health services, early childhood education, addiction services, financial assistance and social housing. Most submissions argued support and prioritisation should be offered on a case-by-case basis when it was observed carers were unable to meet children's basic needs for health and safety.





Vulnerable child-first allocation policy: Question and answer submissions

Is it appropriate that all Government agencies promote and prioritise the wellbeing of vulnerable children in their day-to-day work?

Support for prioritising vulnerable children: Of the responses to this question, almost all submissions said it would be appropriate for all government agencies to promote and prioritise the wellbeing of vulnerable children in their day-to-day work.

Yes absolutely, with the initial priority on babies and preschool children as they are the most vulnerable of all. (general public).

Submissions agreeing with this proposition included those that emphasised:

- the importance of valuing children in their own right and respecting the rights of children
- the link between the quality of experiences children have when young to the sorts of adults children become, and the sort of society we have in the future.

Concerns about prioritising vulnerable children: A small minority of submissions qualified their agreement, arguing agencies should only prioritise the wellbeing of vulnerable children in certain instances. These instances included:

- when other children do not miss out
- when all sources of vulnerability are recognised, and vulnerability is not just based on demographics
- when it is done in a way that does not stigmatise families.

No. Prioritisation is difficult. How do you prioritise and on what basis? I believe that universal funding, not targeted funding, is important. Targeting increases alienation and stigmatisation. (frontline worker)

Should some people get priority over others when allocated support and services because they are caring for vulnerable children?

Support priority for carers: The majority of submissions answering this question stated their support for the idea. Most submissions understood “carers” to be any adults, including parents and whānau, who are guardians of children. Other submissions understood “carers” to be people caring for children after the state has removed them from their family because of concerns for their safety, including foster parents and Child, Youth and Family residential carers.

NGOs were most likely to state their support for prioritising carers for services, followed by frontline workers, and then the general public. Submissions in favour of prioritisation made the following arguments:

- supporting the family is the most effective way of supporting the child
- the most “at-risk” or “in need” should receive the top priority

- prioritisation should be considered on a case by case basis
- prioritisation for specific “at-risk” groups (eg non-parental carers, Māori, and beneficiaries).

It must become a national priority that vulnerable families are given whatever help, support and other interventions that they might need to enable them to function better and parent safely. (frontline worker)

Not all children’s needs are equal and vulnerable children and families need more support. (general public)

Oppose priority for carers: A minority of submissions indicated their opposition to this idea. This was consistent across frontline workers, general public and other organisations. Submissions that presented this view drew on the following arguments:

- all children deserve priority
- prioritising one group may disadvantage another
- everyone should be treated equally.

Priority is the wrong word. Everyone should be treated fairly according to individual need and circumstances. (general public)

How to prioritise: A small minority of submissions commented on how prioritisation should take place. Ideas included:

- on a case-by-case basis/when they need it
- those most in need
- more support for non-parent carers
- when carers earn the support through good behaviour
- if families are prioritised for services, this should result in increased monitoring of the household by government agencies.

I think every case should be considered on its individual merits. So in short, yes – if there is genuine need for more support in this case, it should be given. (general public)

What priority should the Government give to the families and whānau of those caring for vulnerable children when allocating services that impact on the children they are caring for?

Support for granting priority to carers: The majority of submissions responding to this question were in favour of granting priority to carers of vulnerable children for support and services. About half of submissions said carers should be granted high priority. A small minority said they should be granted medium priority. Most of these submissions argued parents are not able to meet the needs of their children if their own needs are not met.

High priority. The carers of these precious children need support and finances to love and raise them. (general public)

Opposition to granting priority to carers: A small minority of submissions were opposed to giving priority to support and services for carers of vulnerable children. These submissions were concerned that:

- services should be targeted to all parents, not just those with vulnerable children
- carers should only be prioritised when they show evidence they are putting effort into turning their lives around
- support should bypass the carers and go directly to the child.

When should adults who care for vulnerable children be prioritised for services over others?

Carers to be prioritised when they need it: About half of the responses to this question said carers should be supported only when they need it or when it was observed that a child was at risk. Submissions argued that carers should be prioritised when:

- it was observed that carers were unable to meet children's basic needs
- there was risk to the carer's or the child's health
- there were mental health, addiction or violence problems in the household
- parents had demonstrated they were caring for the children well.

When failure to do so results in an increased risk to that child/children. (general public)

Carers to be prioritised always: A large minority of submissions said carers of vulnerable children should always be prioritised for services. Most submissions in this category argued the children and the carer were a "package deal" and it was important to support both at the same time.

They should have the same priority as those children who are vulnerable. It should go hand-in-hand. (general public)

Look after the adults. They'll look after the kids. (frontline worker)

Carers never to be prioritised: A small minority said carers of vulnerable children should never be prioritised for services. These submissions argued that:

- support should be universally distributed
- carers of vulnerable children should not be rewarded for mistreating their children and that these children would be better off being removed from the home all together.

I would rather see the children taken away from these adults and the children given priority. The adults have got to want to get help. It may not necessarily help the adults or the children over others. Often these people take, take, take from the system and no-one benefits. (general public)

The needs of non-parent carers: A theme to emerge from the submissions was that non-parent carers need to be given more support than they currently receive. These submissions argued non-parent carers are often caring for children who have been damaged by previous neglectful or abusive parenting. These submissions argued these non-parent carers are often ill-equipped to meet these special needs. Other submissions said grandparents and non-family carers needed the same level of financial support as other foster carers, and access to respite care.

Adults such as grandparents and aunts/uncles who are looking after children should be given help to do this.... These people need to keep the children when there is nowhere for the young to go.... Some of the older people are going without food and basics for themselves to enable them to provide for the children. (general public)

What services do you think should be included in this policy?

Services we need to prioritise for carers of vulnerable children: A large minority of submissions responding to this question said health services were most important to target to the carers of vulnerable children. A small minority said addiction services needed to be prioritised for carers of vulnerable children. Generally, submissions stressed the importance of providing psychological, counselling, and social work assistance to carers of vulnerable children.

Services should be broad to accommodate a wide range of needs – the policy should be worded in such a way so as to not marginalise any groups or limit their opportunity for services. (general public)

A large minority argued for the provision of parenting courses. Another large minority argued for all social services in general. Other services with small minority support were:

- early childhood education
- special education
- budgeting services
- food parcels.

A smaller number of submissions argued that social housing, respite care and contraception should be targeted to carers of vulnerable children.

Vulnerable child-first allocation policy: Free-form submissions

The following section looks at what free-form submissions had to say about prioritising some services for vulnerable children and their carers.

Support for prioritising carers: A small minority of submissions said that carers of vulnerable children should be prioritised. These submissions supported services being preferentially allocated to people caring for vulnerable children. Support for prioritisation was highest among NGOs and other organisations. The general public showed the lowest level of support for this idea.

Vulnerable children are often those whose parents need ongoing, long-term support themselves, with access to services without stigma. (NGO)

I can only reiterate [view of a retired Judge] that resources should be targeted at the parents/caregivers of children considered most at risk and thus most in need. (general public)

Supporters of prioritisation for carers of vulnerable children argued that:

- those caring for vulnerable children needed to be looked after in order for their children to have the best possible outcomes
- non-parental carers of vulnerable children, such as grandparents and foster parents, needed more support
- the process for establishing need should be trustworthy and transparent
- where preferential treatment was given, there should be more monitoring of the carers to ensure services were benefiting the vulnerable children and not just the carers.

Opposition to prioritising carers: A small minority of submissions did not support prioritising carers of vulnerable children. These submissions drew on the following arguments:

- everyone should get the support they need
- parents and caregivers of children all need help with the parenting role at some stage
- targeting carers would breach human rights
- targeting carers would reward and encourage family dysfunction.

Don't reward parents of vulnerable children or prioritise resources. This will reward bad behaviour and dysfunction and will encourage parents to nurse their children's vulnerability in the same way that some ACC and invalid's beneficiaries nurse their disabilities to make sure that they do not get better. (general public)

Services we need to prioritise for carers of vulnerable children: Submissions commonly argued the Government should target services that directly improved the quality of life for the child. Submissions indicated that a small minority supported a variety of services being targeted to parents of vulnerable children, such as:

- health services
- parenting programmes
- budgeting services
- special education
- early childhood education
- social housing
- financial assistance.

Frontline workers said health services were the most important service to target to carers of vulnerable children, followed by early childhood education and housing.

We believe that all support services should be included in this, including housing and mental health, and it should also reach down to local government. (NGO)

Addiction services: NGOs specified the need to provide addiction services to parents of vulnerable children. NGOs were keen to point out that parents with addiction problems need to address these issues before further progress can be made in improving outcomes for children. NGOs were also concerned that parents of vulnerable children be given priority access to social housing and early childhood education.

Drug and alcohol treatment, while provided free to court-mandated clients, is not provided for those people who self refer. This we find illogical, given their motivation level is likely to be better than a court-mandated client. We have numerous examples in our own caseload of mothers with young children that do not fit the court-mandated status, who cannot afford therefore to receive much-needed treatment that would have a huge benefit on their children. (NGO)

Financial assistance: A small minority of submissions argued for increased financial assistance for carers of vulnerable children. The two main themes were:

- carers needed a realistic, liveable income to be able to care for their children well
- income support should be changed to allow carers to stay at home with their children in the early years.

Some submissions from Pasifika groups suggested mentoring parenting programmes for parents or caregivers who look after vulnerable children.

Often parents do not understand how children develop. Providing education will remove this barrier. Time to learn and be mentored is another barrier that needs to be removed. (NGO)

Watching out for vulnerable children

The Green Paper asked 11 questions about watching out for vulnerable children, including the issue of information-sharing about children and families.

- Should we regularly monitor vulnerable children and their families/whānau to see how they are going? Who should do this and under what circumstances?
- How much monitoring of vulnerable children should the Government allow?
- Should we monitor every child from birth?
- Who should monitor vulnerable children and under what circumstances?
- How can the possible negative consequences of increased monitoring be minimised?
- What other mechanisms could be used to keep track of vulnerable children and their families and whānau?
- What information should professionals be able, or required, to share about vulnerable children?
- How much personal information should be shared between the professionals and others who are working with a particular child or family/whānau?
- Who should be able to share information, and with whom?
- Under what circumstances should they share information?
- What else can the Government do to make sure professionals and services have all the information they need to make the best decisions about services for vulnerable children and their families and whānau?

Summary

Monitoring vulnerable children: There were diverse views on how much monitoring should take place, with most submissions either advocating for as much monitoring as possible or monitoring at a minimum level to ensure child safety. A small number opposed any form of monitoring. Some suggested monitoring be limited to vulnerable children while others favoured universal monitoring. Submissions stated that monitoring should be conducted in a positive way with emphasis on supporting families, and this could be achieved if it were conducted by those already involved with children (for example, Plunket). Some submissions also discussed ways of

minimising the negative consequences associated with monitoring, including the need for well trained professionals, a focus on transparency and a balance between monitoring and privacy rights.

Use of monitoring information: Many submissions suggested effective information-sharing between professionals as a way of tracking vulnerable children. A centralised database was the most common suggestion for implementing this idea. However, the need for confidentiality of information was raised as a concern.

Mandatory reporting: A small number of submissions addressed mandatory reporting. The weighting between support and opposition for mandatory reporting was very close, with support for mandatory reporting slightly higher than opposition. Submissions supporting mandatory reporting commonly suggested it should be implemented with care, limited to highly trained professionals, and that mandatory reporting would only be beneficial if agencies were adequately resourced to follow up all reports. A small number of submitters supported mandatory reporting for everyone. Those opposed to mandatory reporting argued that it would be unfeasible, may deter help seeking and does not reduce child abuse/neglect. Some submissions suggested a more constructive approach would be to have highly trained, well-resourced professionals, who were able to use their own sound judgement to report when necessary.

How much information should be shared: The balance of opinion was for information to be shared among professionals to ensure child safety. Most submissions were in support of sharing only enough information to keep children safe. Support for sharing all information was low in comparison as was total opposition to information-sharing. Many submissions talked about the need for protocols to guide those sharing information in order to minimise encroachments on family privacy.

Who should share information: Most submissions were in support of information-sharing among Crown sector agencies and NGOs working with families. Submissions were in support of trained professionals sharing information, with the aid of training, professional codes of ethics and a centralised database. A smaller number of submissions argued that information should be shared among both the relevant professionals and the families involved in child welfare cases.

When information should be shared: Submissions supported sharing information when there were concerns about a particular child. A smaller, but substantial, group of submissions argued that information should be shared as a part of usual practice.



Watching out for vulnerable children: Question and answer submissions

Should we regularly monitor vulnerable children and their families/whānau to see how they are going?

Yes to monitoring: Almost all submissions supported some form of regular monitoring of vulnerable children and their families/whānau. Submissions that supported monitoring drew on the following arguments:

- monitoring should be framed in terms of support and should not impact on people's likelihood of seeking help
- higher-risk children should receive greater levels of monitoring, with regular monitoring where there is risk of abuse or neglect, or where a family is of concern to more than one agency
- monitoring should be carried out by professionals who are specifically trained to undertake monitoring and are adequately funded to do the job effectively
- monitoring should start as early as possible, possibly during pregnancy
- monitoring of "vulnerable" children should be compulsory
- a definition of vulnerable is needed that would ensure no child who requires monitoring and support is left out, or there should be universal monitoring for the same reason.

If the families were regularly monitored, support would be discussed and altered as the need changed. (frontline worker)

We recommend every unborn child is automatically screened against a standardised set of risk versus strengths assessment tool, conducted by the lead maternity provider and fed into a national database. From there it would be important to properly assess all those infants and their parents who met the threshold for requiring additional monitoring and support.... If this screening tool separated out the level of need required for each family, and the services selected matched this need, it would likely result in a more efficient use of limited resources. (NGO)

The criteria to measure "vulnerable" must not be too restrictive to ensure that children outside the system are included. (frontline worker)

No to monitoring: A small minority of submissions opposed monitoring of vulnerable children and their families/whānau. These submissions drew on the following arguments:

- the focus should be on support for vulnerable families and prevention of child vulnerability rather than monitoring
- monitoring is seen in a negative light, putting additional stress on vulnerable families and deterring them from seeking help
- monitoring is expensive and unfeasible and may divert funds away from service delivery.

This may lead to families hiding problems rather than seeking help. Offering support and intervening at an early stage is a better course of action. (frontline worker)

How much monitoring of vulnerable children should the Government allow?

As much as possible: About half of the submissions argued for as much monitoring of vulnerable children as possible. This idea was most prevalent among submissions from the general public, followed by frontline workers and NGOs. Supporters raised the following ideas:

- absolute monitoring is required, with submitters using words such as “total” and “100%”
- the needs of vulnerable children should come before the privacy rights of families
- some submissions raised the idea of child safety, while many did not specify a specific monitoring goal.

If a child is vulnerable, then that parent has lost its right to privacy surrounding their child so as much monitoring as needed. (general public)

Minimum necessary: A large minority of submissions argued for minimal monitoring. Frontline workers were most likely to argue for minimal monitoring, followed by NGOs and the general public. Supporters of minimal monitoring drew on the following ideas:

- monitoring should be reserved for those most at risk
- the risks associated with monitoring need to be weighed against the benefits.

As much [monitoring] as necessary if the children are at risk. (frontline worker)

Only in the context of support: A minority of submissions answering this question argued for monitoring to occur only within the context of support. Frontline workers were the most likely to offer this response, followed by NGOs and then the general public.

The word monitoring is totally inappropriate.... Support the child within its family with a holistic programme such as Whānau Ora. (general public)

Some submissions also indicated what they considered to be an acceptable level of monitoring for vulnerable children. These ranged from 24 hours per day (for the most vulnerable children), to check-ups at regular intervals, including monthly, three-monthly, six-monthly or annually.

Should we monitor every child from birth?

Support universal monitoring: The majority of submissions responding to this question supported universal monitoring. This view was most commonly expressed by frontline workers, followed by submissions from the general public. Submissions supporting universal monitoring drew on the following arguments:

- all mothers of young children need support
- universal monitoring could identify children who might otherwise “slip through the net”
- New Zealand’s child abuse statistics suggest universal monitoring is necessary.

I believe following our babies from birth will protect both the babies AND the mothers. Post-natal stress can do horrible things to a mother’s sense of what is ok. (general public)

Although we would at first be tracking thousands needlessly, we would then possibly be better prepared for the likes of the ones that seem to be slipping through the cracks now. (general public)

Ten years ago I would have said "NO" to this big brother approach, however after losing SO many of NZ's little ones, I think we do need to "track" the babies. (general public)

Some submissions supporting universal monitoring also mentioned the need for heightened levels of monitoring for at-risk children.

Especially children whose parents have any violent criminal convictions or evidence of substance abuse. (general public)

Some submissions that supported universal monitoring made suggestions regarding who should undertake this monitoring. Suggestions included health workers, Plunket, schools, early childhood education centres (ECEs), Crown social sector agencies, police, social workers, NGOs, family, neighbours and friends.

If parents disengage from these (health and school) systems, then perhaps monitoring could occur through WINZ or Housing NZ Corporation. (general public)

Against universal monitoring: However, a large minority of submissions opposed universal monitoring, arguing:

- monitoring is an invasion of privacy
- monitoring won't stop child abuse
- resources diverted to monitoring could be more effectively utilised elsewhere.

We are entitled to privacy. Just because others are bad parents we all shouldn't have to be tracked. (general public)

How is tracking a child from birth going to stop a child from being brain damaged by a family member? It won't. (general public)

We need all resources available to focus on those children at risk. At the moment we aren't succeeding in preventing these tragedies. To track all children will be too costly, too time consuming. (general public)

Universal monitoring for at-risk groups: A small minority of submissions suggested universal monitoring for some at-risk groups of children or families. Suggestions of groups to be targeted included:

- children living in homes where abuse is suspected or there is a family history of abuse or violence
- children who are already known to child protection agencies
- children of high-risk parents, such as very young parents, step-parents, parents with mental health problems, and gang members
- children of parents who are receiving benefits.

Somebody in government needs to identify at-risk families and those children need to be tracked. We all know which families they are, i.e. unemployed, young parents, alcohol & drug families, gang affiliated families etc. (general public)

Who should monitor vulnerable children and under what circumstances?

The responses to each part of this two-part question are reported separately.

Who should monitor vulnerable children?

Child, Youth and Family: A minority of submissions suggested monitoring be conducted by Child, Youth and Family. Some submissions suggested monitoring be limited to children referred to Child, Youth and Family, while others suggested Child, Youth and Family receive additional funding to monitor a range of vulnerable children who were not previously known to them.

CYF need to have the appropriate resources (training/staffing) to be the tracking system. Also reporting could be done through multiple means, e.g. online confidential reporting. (general public)

Plunket: Monitoring through Plunket was suggested in a minority of submissions, with its Well Child programme singled out as a good entry point to monitoring. Submissions suggested expanding existing Plunket services to provide more effective support and monitoring for families of young children.

Plunket or a similar appropriate agency should have resources to visit all young children regularly. (general public)

Health providers: Monitoring by health providers was suggested in a minority of submissions. Health services suggested for monitoring included doctors, nurses and District Health Boards.

Free doctor's visits for all children till 16 years old, which should allow their GP to monitor them through more frequent appointments. (general public)

Education: ECE/schools were suggested as potential candidates for monitoring vulnerable children in a minority of submissions. Some submissions suggested schools were in a position to monitor children without compromising family privacy.

Teachers at school would be the first most likely to notice a vulnerable child. (general public)

Social sector agencies: A minority of submissions argued that monitoring should be undertaken by social sector agencies. Some submissions named specific agencies such as Internal Affairs, Work and Income and the Ministry of Health, while others suggested the establishment of a new government agency whose primary focus was the monitoring and/or welfare of children.

Professional workers who are working with the families and children. (frontline worker)

NGOs: A small minority of submissions argued for NGOs working with families to be responsible for monitoring vulnerable children. Suggestions included Barnardos, Family Start and community/iwi run family support centres.

Contact/monitoring/support through community organisations. (general public)

Social workers: A small minority of submissions indicated support for monitoring of vulnerable children via social workers. Submissions argued social workers should be well-trained and well-resourced in order to carry out effective monitoring and support of vulnerable children and their families.

Well trained, well resourced case workers. (frontline workers)

Family, neighbourhood and friends: Community-based monitoring was mentioned in a small minority of submissions. Submissions that supported this option pointed to it as a non-intrusive and culturally appropriate solution.

This should be managed by key people in the community who have in depth knowledge of whānau whakapapa links. Resources should be made available for rural areas to develop a komiti on their marae with a mandate to do this. (frontline worker)

Police: A small minority of submissions indicated their support for monitoring of vulnerable children by the Police.

All parties involved with the child should monitor the child, and where necessary this should be consistently overseen by the Police and authorities of necessary power to protect the child. (general public)

Under what circumstances should we monitor vulnerable children?

At-risk children: Monitoring where there is a risk of maltreatment was suggested by a small minority of submissions. While only a small minority, this was the most commonly suggested circumstance to trigger monitoring.

Priority to children from families of intergenerational abuse and neglect. (frontline worker)

Universal monitoring: A small minority of submissions argued for universal monitoring of children. Some submissions supported monitoring of all children while others suggested universal monitoring of pre-schoolers only.

Regular monitoring of all children from pregnancy. (general public)



At-risk parents: A small minority of submissions suggested monitoring for children of at-risk parents, such as those with criminal convictions, mental health problems, substance abusers and very young parents.

Monitoring of young solo mothers and their children's environment is very important. (frontline worker)

How can the possible negative consequences of increased monitoring be minimised?

Focus on support/service provision: A large minority of submissions suggested the negative consequences of increased monitoring could be minimised when monitoring was portrayed in terms of support, and resulted in appropriate service provision for vulnerable children and their families.

By offering support rather than monitoring. Social workers could be funded to spend more meaningful time with children and their whānau to increase trust, build relationships and protect children through healing family. (general public)

Transparency: A large minority of submissions argued for transparency in the process as a way of minimising the negative consequences of increased monitoring. Frontline workers were most likely to argue for transparency, followed by the general public and NGOs. Submissions said transparency could be achieved by informing families about monitoring processes, building relationships between families and those monitoring them and, where possible, obtaining consent for monitoring to take place.

Clear and transparent policies, processes and communication. (frontline worker)

Well-trained professionals: The importance of having well-trained people conducting monitoring was stressed in a minority of submissions. This was most commonly argued by frontline workers, followed by the general public and NGOs. Suggestions of the type of person suitable for the position included well-trained, well-resourced, empathetic, culturally sensitive people with good interpersonal skills.

Having the right person for the job with the right training, skills and support. (frontline worker)



Universal monitoring: Reducing the stigma associated with monitoring by having every child monitored was suggested in a minority of submissions. The idea of universal monitoring was most commonly mentioned in submissions from frontline workers, followed by the general public, while NGOs were less likely to suggest universal monitoring. Submissions supporting universal monitoring advocated the normalisation of monitoring so it is seen in terms of support and helping, rather than surveillance. Many submissions that supported universal monitoring suggested utilising existing universal services (such as Plunket) to monitor as part of normal practice.

Ensuring that the services of Plunket clinics and Family Building Centres are available to all – not stigmatised as places that only “vulnerable” children and families go to, but seen as helpful, supportive places for ALL children. (frontline worker)

Focusing on the positive: A small minority of submissions argued that any negative consequences associated with monitoring could not be as bad as allowing the continuation of child maltreatment.

What negative consequences are important enough to back away and allow a child to be abused? (general public)

Confidentiality: A small minority of submissions suggested ensuring confidentiality would help mitigate the negative effects of increased monitoring.

Careful protection of data – limited access to the information. (frontline worker)

Children come first: A small minority of submissions stated that any negative consequences associated with monitoring would be incurred by the families of vulnerable children, rather than the children themselves. These submitters assumed the parents or carers were the cause of the children's vulnerability, and argued that as a result such negative consequences were not important.

Tough then! If the outcome is a saved or helped child then that is the focus, bad parents or family should be shamed into changing by relentless monitoring. (general public)

What other mechanisms could be used to keep track of vulnerable children and their families and whānau?

Centralised database: A large minority of submissions supported the development of a centralised database for keeping track of children. This idea had the greatest support from NGO submissions, followed by frontline workers, other organisations and the general public. Some submissions advocated for a database for vulnerable children only, while others supported a database that included all New Zealand children. Submissions supporting a central database suggested it should store a range of information relevant to individuals (such as health, education and criminal information) and that the information should be available to a range of relevant parties.

National database implemented and actively used by all health, social services and education. (general public)

Information-sharing: About half of submissions suggested sharing information among agencies using mechanisms other than a centralised database. This was most commonly supported by frontline workers, then the general public, followed by other organisations and NGOs. Of those who specified how information should be shared, the most common theme was direct contact between different agencies in a child's life. Submitters suggested the sharing of information by schools, doctors, ACC, Child, Youth and Family, Work and Income and Plunket.

The development of trusting partnerships with local organisations/institutions by Govt. combined with a focus on producing effective integrated care plans for every child would ensure a better quality of decision making. (NGO)

Monitoring within the community: A large minority of submissions suggested utilising the community as a resource for effective and non-judgemental monitoring. Submissions suggested community monitoring would be particularly effective in monitoring hard-to-reach families who may slip through the cracks of traditional monitoring. Submitters suggested community monitoring could involve doctors/Well Child services, ECE/schools, Plunket, neighbours and churches.

School and social service tracking to follow and protect the vulnerable children throughout their development. (general public)

Information-sharing

Several questions around who should share what information and under what circumstances were asked in the Green Paper.

What information should professionals be able, or required, to share about vulnerable children?

All information to be shared: About half of the submissions responding to this question called for all information to be shared. Support was strongest with frontline workers and the general public. Support for sharing all information was lower with NGOs and the lowest in submissions from other organisations. Submissions in support of sharing all information commonly drew on arguments such as:

- the safety of the child is paramount
- protection for children must come before rights to privacy.

The only clear way is to share as much as possible, to ensure nothing is missed. The risk of this is too much personal information being shared, but that is a risk worth taking due to possible consequences of under-reporting. (frontline worker)

However, submissions cautioned:

- the information shared must be accurate
- those with access to information must use it a professional way.

All information. And with that comes the requirement for absolute integrity and professionalism on behalf of all the services involved. This should be reflected in the remuneration of these professions and the raising of the social standing of people in these fields. (general public)

To do this well, professionals need to be trained and there needs to be a very clear set of protocols to guide the process. (NGOs)

Relevant information only: A large minority of answers to this question argued for only relevant information to be shared. Submissions from other organisations were most likely to argue for this approach. NGO submitters responding to this question were slightly more likely to support the sharing of relevant information only, than they were to support sharing all information. The level of support was even across all groups of submitters.

As much as needed. People need to hear about what's going on. (NGO)

Whatever is needed and relevant to assess the case fully so the proper outcome can be decided upon. (general public)

Anything that affects their safety and well-being. (general public)

As little as possible: A small minority of submissions argued that minimal information should be shared.

Types of information that should be shared: Very few submissions discussed the type of information that should be shared. A minority called for information on education, health and welfare to be shared. A small minority of submissions called for sharing information about family circumstances and police/youth justice information.

How much personal information should be shared between the professionals and others who are working with a particular child or family/whānau?

As much as possible: A clear majority said all information should be shared, and a majority said at least as much as necessary to keep a child safe. A clear majority of NGO submissions supported sharing only enough information as necessary to keep individual vulnerable children safe.

A small minority of submissions that advocated for information-sharing argued the rights of children should take precedence over the rights of adults, particularly with regard to child safety which was the 'bottom line'.

Professionals need to know as much as they can about who they are working with. Too often, we spend too much time finding out what other people already know. (frontline worker)

At the end of the day, if a kid is seriously harmed or dies, it reflects on the entire nation, and it's not enough to stand back and say we protected someone's rights while they violate a child's rights. We have to protect those who can't speak for themselves and rely on us. So bottom line – individual rights are second to the rights of the child. (general public)

Share all information: Submissions taking the position all information should be shared argued that:

- freely sharing information would give professionals more time to do their jobs, foster collaboration, and enable them to see a single problem in the context of a family's entire needs
- a lack of information-sharing enabled professionals to assume that someone else would take responsibility for a child's safety and wellbeing.

All of it. Knowledge is power and we need to be very transparent and informed. That way people do not fall between the cracks in our existing system. If we know help is required, we can assist. If not, we are all ignorant and the young are even more vulnerable – common sense, really. (general public)

Supporters of this idea often discussed the ethical principles employed by professionals. These submissions argued professionals should be trusted to use information in the best interests of a child.

All of it. If you don't know the full background, you don't have the full picture. Any professional person working in this field would be mindful of the confidentiality. (general public)

Share enough information as is necessary: Submissions proposing sharing as much information as necessary to keep a child safe argued that:

- agencies should be able to share whatever was necessary and appropriate to get a "complete picture" of a child and/or their family, address a child's issues, or ensure the "best outcome for the child"
- information should only be shared if it were relevant to the child's physical safety.

As much as is appropriate to ensure the safety of the child – we need to stop beating about the bush and say it like it is. Not sharing enough information with those working with a child leaves the child and the worker in a vulnerable position. We need to remember the focus is THE CHILD. (frontline worker)

If something has been noticed to be wrong then professionals need to know everything. But if there is no indication or “alarm bells” then there would be no reason to have huge amounts of information. (general public)

Reservations about information-sharing: A small minority of submissions expressed reservations about information-sharing, especially with non-professionals. These concerns included:

- those involved should be subject to strict confidentiality arrangements
- there need to be consequences for those who do not use the information in a professional way
- information-sharing should be conditional on family consent, and parents should be able to know what was shared about them.

If they want their information to be private, then they should keep it private. (general public)

No information-sharing: A small minority of submissions argued that no information should be shared because there were risks in collecting information, and government should respect the public’s wishes in relation to their privacy.

The basic right of privacy is a must. To date even the department has been unable to protect what personal information it holds and keep it secure. Unless this is done then taking on others’ information would be wrong. It is also too easy for incorrect information to end up on files which later cannot be changed. (frontline worker)

There is too much information shared and most of them get it wrong and report on what they heard and not what they were told. (general public)

Who should be able to share information, and with whom?

Professionals sharing information with professionals: The majority of responses to this question argued that information should be shared between Crown sector agencies and NGOs working with families. Support for this was strongest among frontline workers, and about even between NGOs and the general public. Submissions said that information needed to be accurate and used appropriately.

Any agency working with the family should be allowed to share information with other agencies working with the family/child. Systems need to be in place to protect all parties but not at the expense of successful outcomes for vulnerable children. (frontline worker)

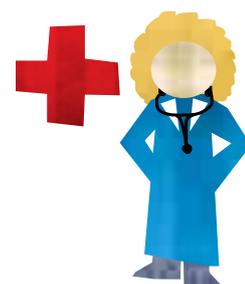
Supporters of information-sharing among professionals said that:

- information needed to be accurate and
- appropriate standards and behaviours needed to be displayed by people who have access to this information.

Professionals, wider family and beyond: A large minority of question and answer submissions argued that information should be shared by professionals, but also that the families themselves should be included in this circle of information.

Doctors, nurses, schools, parents, families. (general public)

A minority of submissions said information should be shared between health and welfare agencies, education and police.



Under what circumstances should they share information?

When there are concerns about a child: The majority of respondents to this question said information should be shared when there were concerns about the wellbeing of a child. Levels of support were roughly even across all submitter groups.

The first priority is the child – whatever needs to be shared to get the best outcome. (frontline worker)

As a part of usual practice: A large minority of submissions said information should be shared as a part of the normal practice of service provision. Support for this was slightly higher among NGOs than other groups.

Basic information should be shared as a matter of course, in order to ensure that every child has access to the benefits of living in our communities. (frontline worker)

Confidentiality: A small minority of submissions stipulated that information should only be shared when it would remain confidential to the professionals involved. NGO submissions were more likely to talk about confidentiality in answering this question than submissions from other groups.

Professionals should be able to discuss a common client in full detail with the understanding of confidentiality that goes alongside each of their professions. (frontline worker)

Concerns about caregivers: A small minority of submissions argued information should be shared when there was a concern about a carer that may impact on the wellbeing of the child.

What else can the Government do to make sure professionals and services have all the information they need to make the best decisions about services for vulnerable children and their families and whānau?

Centralised database: A large minority of responses to this question proposed the development of a centralised database. Support for this was highest among the general public and lowest among NGOs. These submissions stressed that staff with access to this database must be adequately trained and operate under strict protocols.

Vulnerable children on a database where senior teachers, medical staff, and social workers have access and all interactions are written up and shared. (frontline worker)

Protocols for information-sharing: A large minority of responses to this question suggested that there be guidelines and protocols developed to support information-sharing. Support was highest among frontline workers and lowest among NGOs.

Tell them who to contact, make sure each Government agency has a policy/process for their staff on what to do if they suspect or witness issues during the course of their job. (general public)

Have clearly defined systems and structures put in place to ensure there are no gaps or loopholes. (frontline worker)

Change legislation to allow information-sharing: A minority of answers to this question argued for a change in privacy legislation. Submissions generally said the Privacy Act was a barrier to information exchange and this placed already vulnerable children at greater risk. Support was highest among frontline workers and the general public and lowest with NGOs.

There is a barrier in information flow. Privacy law is interpreted by many in such a way that even within communities, people who could help to keep a child safe are left in the dark as to what the issues are. (general public)

Mandatory reporting by professionals: A small minority of responses to this question proposed mandatory reporting by professionals who suspect abuse. Support for mandatory reporting was slightly higher among NGO submissions than other groups, however the number of these responses was very small.

Common assessment framework: A small minority of responses suggested a common assessment framework should be developed and adopted across the sector.

Protection for notifiers: A small minority of submissions asked for better protection for people making notifications of maltreatment.

Watching out for vulnerable children: Free-form submissions

In this section we report the free-form submissions' ideas about watching out for vulnerable children. The themes are grouped under the following broad headings:

- Avenues for monitoring vulnerable children
- Circumstances of child monitoring
- Minimising the negative consequences of monitoring
- Mandatory reporting
- Information-sharing.

Avenues for monitoring vulnerable children

Some submissions commented on who should be responsible for monitoring vulnerable children. These were spread along much the same lines as the question and answer submissions. Suggestions regarding who should monitor vulnerable children are summarised into the categories below.

Health professionals: A small minority suggested vulnerable children be monitored by health professionals. Health professionals identified for the role of monitoring included Plunket, GPs and nurses. Submissions by frontline workers were most likely to suggest monitoring by health professionals, followed by submissions from NGOs, community meetings, the general public and other organisations.

All children monitored by having free health checks (including mental health). (NGO)

Frontline workers already working with children: A small minority of submissions suggested monitoring by frontline workers already working with children. Some submissions suggested specific groups of frontline workers that should be responsible for monitoring, while others suggested a collaborative approach involving multiple frontline workers. Submissions from community meetings were most likely to suggest monitoring through frontline workers, followed by other organisations, and to a lesser extent NGOs, frontline workers and the general public.

Multi-agency monitoring using a system such as universal child wellbeing record as well as the Vulnerable Children's Action Plan. A collaborative approach including both govt and non-govt organisations. (frontline worker)

Educators/teachers: A small minority of submissions suggested monitoring via educators/teachers. Submissions by frontline workers were most likely to suggest monitoring via educators/teachers, followed by NGOs, community meetings and the general public.

Teachers see children every day and are trusted by them. (frontline worker)

A small minority of submissions suggested:

- child protection agencies
- NGOs
- family, friends and neighbours.

Central database: A small minority of submissions expressed support for a central database for keeping track of vulnerable children. Other organisations were most likely to suggest a central database, followed by submissions from community meetings, NGOs, frontline workers and the general public. Suggestions for who could provide information for such a database included GPs, District Health Boards, police, social welfare agencies and schools. Many submitters argued that agencies need to share data in order to identify and intervene more effectively in the lives of at-risk children.

The effective use of systems and data-sharing should enable a more holistic approach to be taken to the care and development of vulnerable children. (NGO)

Other avenues suggested for keeping track of vulnerable children included:

- keeping track of vulnerable children through Work and Income
- monitoring parents rather than children
- monitoring conducted by a specialised agency, such as the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

We view the identification of vulnerable parents as paramount and would like to see strategies encompassing the identification of children, parents, family and whānau in the future development of this framework. (NGO)

Monitoring of Māori children: A small minority of submissions from Māori service providers argued that Māori organisations working with children were best placed to monitor vulnerable Māori children.

Monitoring of vulnerable children should be a function of Whānau Ora and all child care services and the govt should require reporting on the vulnerability status of children as a fundamental monitoring metric. (NGO)

Circumstances of child monitoring

Monitoring of at-risk children: A small minority of free-form submissions indicated their support for monitoring to be limited to at-risk children. Submissions from other organisations were most likely to support monitoring for at-risk children only, followed by community meetings, then frontline workers, NGOs and the general public. Submissions drew on ideas such as:

- monitoring all children is a waste of resources, which should be targeted to at-risk children
- monitoring is an important step in ensuring the safety of vulnerable children.

We strongly reject the notion of monitoring all children. This is a waste of resources and diverts our attention away from families that are clearly at risk and known to state and community agencies. (NGO)

If there is any concern at all about the safety of a child, then the government must intervene and monitor. (NGO)

Some submissions specified groups of at-risk children that should be targeted for increased monitoring. These included children of very young parents, beneficiaries, substance abusers, criminals or those suffering mental health issues.

Monitoring children of at-risk parents: A small minority of submissions suggested monitoring all children of at-risk parents. At-risk parents included beneficiaries, very young parents, and people with mental health or substance abuse problems.

Every person who is receiving welfare payments from the Government for looking after a child must be monitored by a three monthly audit. (general public)

Amount of monitoring

Some submissions commented on the amount of monitoring the Government should allow.

Having as much monitoring as possible was a theme identified in a small minority of submissions. Other organisations were most likely to suggest this idea, with lower levels of support found in submissions from NGOs, community meetings, the general public and frontline workers. Submissions that supported having as much monitoring as possible also argued:

- the level of monitoring should be proportional to the vulnerability of the child
- we should monitor children as much as is practically possible
- monitoring is especially important in the early years.

As much as is fiscally practical. It would also depend on the degree of vulnerability and the degree of the assessed risk in the care situation. (general public)

Intervention or intensive monitoring should occur earlier rather than later. (general public)

Universal monitoring: A small minority of submissions suggested monitoring of all children. Submissions in support of universal monitoring argued:

- universal monitoring is most important in the preschool years and for children who are not identified as vulnerable and it could be reduced as they age
- a child's level of vulnerability may change over time, so universal monitoring would ensure children who are becoming vulnerable are identified early.

Monitoring should be close for first six months then reduce on review and assessment if appropriate, and intensify if needed for crises or as planned for times when risks are anticipated to be higher. (general public)

Household dynamics and circumstances change over time and children's vulnerability may increase as these changes occur. The only way this can be truly assessed is by continuing in-home visiting. (general public)

Minimal monitoring to ensure child safety: The idea that monitoring should be conducted at a minimum level to ensure child safety was suggested in a small minority of submissions. Submissions that supported minimal monitoring suggested:

- monitoring should be reserved for those most at risk
- the risks associated with monitoring need to be weighed against the benefits.

Monitoring is simply a way of managing down the risks faced by vulnerable children – and is necessary at some level. (NGO)

Minimising the negative consequences of monitoring

Helping families in the context of service delivery: A small minority of free-form submissions stated a preference for the idea of helping families in the context of service delivery rather than "monitoring". Other organisations were most likely to state their support for helping within the context of service delivery, followed by NGOs, frontline workers, community meetings and then the general public. Submissions suggested:

- monitoring should be part of universally available services such as Plunket and GPs
- currently monitoring is seen as punitive by many people, which discourages participation. Any future monitoring should be conducted in a supportive way designed to encourage help-seeking behaviour
- data sharing should be more frequent among social agencies. This would decrease the quantity of contact between agencies and families and decrease the monitoring burden on families.

We favour increasing support, early intervention and education measures vs increasing surveillance and compliance measures; as in our experience, this enables collaboration and partnerships that lead to families making changes and choices that protect their children. (frontline worker)

Universal monitoring: A small minority of submissions made the argument that universal monitoring should be utilised to ensure all vulnerable children are identified, and to reduce the stigma typically associated with targeted monitoring

Targeting increases alienation and stigmatisation – this can lead to families withdrawing from services being offered. (NGO)

Increased service provision: A small minority of submissions suggested the negative consequences of monitoring could be mitigated if information gathered during monitoring was used to target services to the children who require them. Other organisations were most likely to make this suggestion, followed by frontline workers, NGOs and then the general public.

Minimise possible negative effects of monitoring by ensuring that the monitoring is “value added”, e.g. is accompanied with training, support, education, and has clear outcomes. (frontline worker)

Mandatory reporting

Submissions commenting on mandatory reporting were most likely to state their support for the idea, however, the weighting between support and opposition for mandatory reporting was very close.

In support of mandatory reporting: A minority of submissions indicated support for mandatory reporting. Support was highest among submissions from community meetings, followed by other organisations and frontline workers, then NGOs. The general public was least likely to express their support for mandatory reporting. Submissions stating support for mandatory reporting suggested:

- it needs to be implemented with care after proper consultation and in line with evidence-based research
- it should be limited to highly trained staff, following a set of clear protocols
- it should only be introduced where there are adequate resources to follow up all reports of child maltreatment
- it is used only in specific circumstances, for example where there is reasonable suspicion of physical or sexual abuse
- that mandatory reporting is for everyone.

In order for mandatory reporting for professionals to be effective, there must be an extensive review of literature and research both locally and internationally so that evidence-based decisions are made. (NGO)

We support the idea of mandatory reporting of child abuse but only when this is combined with mandatory training for professionals who will be expected to be involved and adequate resourcing for the agencies charged with responding to the notifications. (NGO)

People need to stop hiding their heads and start reporting when they suspect child abuse. (general public)

Opposition to mandatory reporting: A small minority of submissions opposed mandatory reporting. NGOs were most likely to oppose mandatory reporting, followed by submissions

from community meetings, other organisations and frontline workers. The general public were the least likely to state their opposition to mandatory reporting. Arguments against mandatory reporting stated it:

- deters help-seeking
- has not worked elsewhere and therefore is unlikely to work in New Zealand
- is unfeasible until the agencies involved in child protection are better resourced and people are taught how to identify child maltreatment
- is punitive towards professionals working with children.

As noted in the literature and research, mandatory reporting inhibits self-referral and can lead to a culture where professionals believe their only responsibility to a child is to report concerns, rather than engaging with the family to address the concerns. This can lead to families avoiding doctors and other professionals for fear of being reported. (NGO)

Without a significant increase in resourcing of child protection services in New Zealand, there is the strong likelihood that mandatory reporting would swamp already overloaded services and place vulnerable children at much greater risk. (NGO)

There is no point in introducing mandatory reporting of child abuse if people are not taught how to identify the abuse. (frontline worker)

Information-sharing

In support of information-sharing: Overall other organisations, NGOs and frontline workers were most interested in changing systems to improve information-sharing.

The need for greater information-sharing across Government agencies is a clear and constant theme from mortality review findings and from Coronial Inquiry into the deaths of vulnerable children. Failure to share information about a potential vulnerable child is not only a system failure to support that child, but it is also a failure to make the most efficient use of resources. (other organisation)

Sharing all information: A small minority of submissions were in favour of sharing all information. Support for this idea was strongest among submissions from community meetings. Support for sharing of information was very low among all other types of submissions.

Any information about the health, frame of mind, personality, risk factors, history, environments, programmes undertaken, level of engagement, by individual and family members. (general public)

Sharing information relevant to at-risk children: A small minority of submissions showed support for sharing information that is relevant to individual vulnerable children, rather than sharing all information for all children. Support for sharing relevant information only was approximately twice that for sharing of all information.

Support for this idea was highest among other organisations, followed by community meetings, NGOs and frontline workers. While only a minority of NGO submissions expressed support for sharing of relevant information, NGOs clearly preferred this option over the option of sharing all information. A small minority of submissions recommended the Government look into adopting the New South Wales legislative framework for information-sharing.

As much information as required to ensure the child(ren) are protected, provided there is reasonable grounds for the information to be shared. (NGO)

The issue of what agencies should be able to share has to be taken in the context of client confidentiality and trust with an agency, balanced against the usefulness of interagency sharing of information in order to provide a more effective service intervention. From the perspective of the child's needs being paramount, more sharing of information is vital and we need to set up ways that it is accepted practice as expected through the particular helping professions e.g. through amendments to codes of practice. (NGO)

Professionals to share information: A small minority of submissions supported information-sharing among professionals and other relevant agencies. While few NGO and frontline worker submissions discussed this issue, these submissions clearly favoured sharing of information with both professionals and others working with at-risk families.

All agencies working with vulnerable children must collaborate to share information essential or relevant to protect children. (NGO)

Family consent for information-sharing: A small number of submissions commented on whether the families of vulnerable children should be required to give consent to information-sharing or not. A small minority of submissions supported each opposing position, with a slightly higher level of support for sharing information only when families consented to it.

Agencies should not be able to share information with other agencies or services without the client's permission. (frontline worker)

Changing legislation to allow for information-sharing: A small minority of submissions asked for privacy legislation to be changed to improve information-sharing. Support for this was highest among other organisations and NGOs. This idea was least frequently mentioned by the general public and community meetings.

Recommend Government review the balance between privacy and intervention for the protection of vulnerable children, and consider reducing privacy rights when vulnerable children are at risk. The proposed Privacy Act Amendment Bill before parliament select committees allowing for information-sharing agreements is a good start. (NGO)



The privacy legislation needs to be addressed to enable cross agency communication. (NGO)

Information management: A small minority of submissions called for a centralised database. Other organisations were particularly in favour of this idea, followed by NGOs, community meetings and frontline workers.

Most of these submissions called for a "one child, one record" system whereby all child service agencies would input and access data. Submissions argued that this database should be accessible to all agencies and have strict training and protocols associated with its use. Other suggestions about data management included developing a method to track movements of transient vulnerable children and a vulnerable child register or a system of flagging at-risk children.

The 'one child-one-record' system that records a child's health, wellbeing, learning and social development must be implemented nationwide to monitor progress and milestone development. This will allow timely identification of developmental and social issues for immediate referral. (frontline worker)

Protocols for information-sharing: A small minority of submissions argued for protocols to be developed for information-sharing. Other organisations and community meetings in particular expressed support for this idea. Other submissions argued we need to develop clear and robust criteria to identify which children and families we need to share information about.

Any action plan needs to include the development of clear protocols to guide the way in which service providers can gather, record, store and share information. The agencies, NGOs and community/volunteer organisations need shared training so they are aware of each partner's roles within a collaborative approach. (NGO)

Support for the status quo: A small minority of submissions argued present legislation does not need to be changed. Numbers of submissions arguing this point were very small. These submissions argued we needed improved education about the existing legislation and improved networking among professionals.

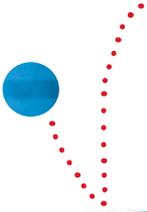
In my experience there is a sharing of information that takes place now between Statutory and NGOs. (frontline worker)

Assessment framework: A small minority of submissions called for a sector-wide common assessment framework.

Develop a three dimensional common assessment framework with tools and workforce development that support integrated practice (similar to those developed in the UK). (other organisation)

Strengthen the needs assessment process to ensure that vulnerable whānau are identified, service planning and interventions match identified needs. (NGO)

Māori views on information-sharing: A small number of submissions from Māori organisations endorsed sharing information among professionals and others working with the family (for example, NGOs). Information-sharing was endorsed as a practice to keep families well and children safe. Other ideas from Māori submitters included a shared database to improve care for families supported by a common assessment framework, for information-sharing among professionals only, and sharing information relevant to the situation.



Make child-centred practice changes

In terms of what child-centred practice changes could be made, the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children asked people for their ideas about:

- Improving the workforce for children
- Better connecting children and families to services
- Making improvements to service delivery.

Submissions relating to each of these topics will be discussed separately. First, we summarise the submissions' ideas for each topic, then report in more detail what submitters said in answer to specific questions in the Green Paper, followed by what the free-form submissions covered.

Improving the workforce for children

The Green Paper asked four questions about improving the workforce for children.

- What can be done to improve or promote collaboration between professionals and services?
- What principles, competencies or quality standards should be included in the minimum standards for a workforce for children?
- Who should be included in a workforce for children?
- What other changes could be made to increase the effectiveness of those who work with vulnerable children?

Summary

Improving collaboration between professionals and services: Submissions suggested various ways information could be better shared and services aligned. These included having joined-up services, networking, improving cross-sector co-operation, access to a centralised database, and service hubs. Another theme was case co-ordination by a lead agency or professional. Submissions indicated that some changes to contract and funding arrangements would be helpful in getting services to collaborate.

Improving the workforce for children: Submissions talked about the skills, competencies and quality standards of the workforce. They suggested that everyone who works in a professional capacity with children should have formal qualifications and training in child protection. Personal qualities and interpersonal skills were also important. Submissions said they wanted people in the workforce for children to be ethical and have life experience. Some submissions identified the importance of thorough vetting of staff and volunteers working with vulnerable children and families. Submissions said the workforce should know about the legal framework,

needs assessment, culture, mental health, child development, family violence, child maltreatment and addictions.

Submissions most frequently identified health and education workers and “all who affect a child’s wellbeing” as people who should be included in the workforce for children.

To increase the effectiveness of those working with vulnerable children and families, submissions suggested regular continuing education, professional supervision, a sense of being valued and improving pay and working conditions.



Improving the workforce for children: Question and answer submissions

What can be done to improve or promote collaboration between professionals and services?

A relatively small number of submissions responded to this question. The general tenor of the submissions was about sharing information and working towards a common purpose in the interests of the child.

The strongest support was for joined-up services.

Joined-up services and networking: The majority of the submissions supported joined-up services and networking. Comments about joined-up services referred to communication and consensus between agencies. These submissions talked about accessibility, integrated care and increasing the uptake of services. This included improved referral systems and all agencies being informed about the progress of families across services.

Joint agreements and initiatives and joint targets and goals/outcomes – shared responsibility with defined individual agency targets etc. (general public)

If there is to be collaboration between professionals and services, there needs to be training that is available so that they are walking the talk together, this should also include computer programmes that are able to talk and work together. (NGO)

Submissions talked about formal and informal relationships between organisations. This included face-to-face meetings. In particular, some submissions pointed out that government agencies needed to accept the contribution of NGOs as being of equal worth. The purpose of networking was two-fold: establishing relationships of trust between staff in different agencies, and sharing information and, sometimes, decision-making.

Fund a regular meeting time to discuss concerns and possible best solutions. (frontline worker)

Remind them that they are not in competition. Let them communicate. Run combined workshops so that service staff have opportunities to learn about each other and what they do and how they can therefore collaborate. (frontline worker)

Centralised database: A large minority of all types of submissions supported having a centralised database. Here submissions referred to a shared database that could be accessed by agencies to track children and “keep a better eye on them”. Submissions noted that access should be restricted and issues of confidentiality would need to be addressed.

A system to keep track of all children born in this country from birth, and a linking system between all the computer systems/govt departments/agencies that deal with children and their families – education, health, WINZ, police, etc. (general public)

This could also be helped by utilising a database that can be accessed by professionals to acquire and distribute information. Confidentiality will need to be addressed. (frontline worker)

Removing funding and contractual barriers: A minority of the general public and NGOs suggested removing funding and contractual barriers. This referred to cross-agency meetings being funded and counted as “outputs”. There were also comments that current contracting arrangements put agencies in the position of having to compete with each other for contracts, which was the antithesis of collaboration.

Collaboration between ministries requires cross-ministry budget allocation for children. The sector by sector approach to funding for State and community agencies and the input-output model introduced by the Public Finance Act 1993 inhibits the interdisciplinary collaboration and inter-agency cooperation required to effectively respond to the needs of vulnerable children who are members of families with multiple problems. (other organisation)

Case co-ordination by a lead agency or professional: A minority of submissions said that collaboration would be helped if there were a key professional overseeing the case and co-ordinating plans, meetings and so on.

Case managers, and the freedom to share information. (frontline worker)

Ensure that there is a lead agency in every given scenario, to ensure that someone takes accountability and responsibility for information being shared. (frontline worker)

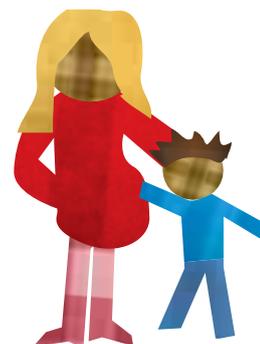
What principles, competencies or quality standards should be included in the minimum standards for a workforce for children?

The most commonly supported ideas about this theme were that the workforce for children should have formal qualifications and know about child protection. Other ideas were about personal qualities, ethical values, and interpersonal skills. Some submissions called for workers to be thoroughly vetted, have life experience and be culturally competent. Other areas of specialised knowledge were identified in some submissions.

A formal qualification: This was the most popular response to this question, supported by about half the submissions. Submissions referred to degrees or certificates. Some referred to registration for social workers.

The workforce for children should be designed at tiered levels of expertise, with the most vulnerable families seen by the staff with the most training. Currently in CYFS and in secondary mental health services, too many in the workforce are put into difficult roles with inadequate training... A thorough review of knowledge and skills is required to address the needs at all levels is needed. (NGO)

Professionals working with vulnerable children or within services should be registered. (other organisation)



Training in child protection: A large minority of submissions suggested that child protection training was vital for those who work with vulnerable children and families. They identified that knowing how to look out for maltreatment and understanding the notification processes to follow were key to this.

Service training of how to spot vulnerable children and what to do. (frontline worker)

Personal qualities: A large minority of submissions said that people who work with children should have personal qualities such as integrity and honesty.

Morally upright, culturally aware, just and fair, observant. (frontline worker)

Good character, understanding of the problems and a real desire to implement change. (general public)

Interpersonal skills: A minority of submissions identified attributes such as communications skills and personal warmth as key to a professional's interpersonal skills.

Confidentiality, concern for children, desire to see families whole, relate well with people. (frontline worker)

They need to be trained in communication skills so they are able to relate to family members and they need to know which agencies are available to refer the child or, more often, family to. (general public)

Professional ethics and principles: These were identified by a large minority of frontline workers, and a minority of the general public and NGO submissions, as part of the minimum standards for the workforce.

Accountability for their decisions. (general public)

Principles should include respect, safety, care, protection, consideration of their overall well being. (general public)

Vetted: A small minority of frontline workers and a minority of the general public and other organisations said workers should be investigated to ensure they do not pose a risk to children.

A thorough Police and CYF vetting process should be mandatory for all people working with children in a professional manner with clear standards of what is an acceptable history being defined based on their role. (NGO)

Cultural competence: A small minority of frontline workers and the general public and a minority of other organisations said services need to address cultural and linguistic diversity.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) training should be made available for all professionals who work with refugee children and their families. (NGO)

Cultural competency – cultural barriers acknowledged and remedied through empowerment of the cultural communities. With central and local government supporting cultural leaders and figureheads as they guide their own communities, they will be better placed to ensure vulnerable families access the right services and assistance. (other organisation)

Life experience: A small minority of frontline workers and the general public and a minority of other organisations said that maturity and life experience were valuable qualities in those who want to work with children and families.

Need to link agencies that have people who have been through the problems and come out the other side. Only able to talk with those who know. (community meeting)

Other suggestions in the submissions were about the need to have knowledge about child development, family violence, addictions, the legal framework, mental health and needs assessment.

Who should be included in a workforce for children?

Education workers: A large minority of submissions from frontline workers and general public and about half of the NGO submissions said that education workers are part of the workforce for children.

Health workers: A large minority of frontline workers and the general public and about half of NGOs said the workforce for children includes health workers.

NGOs: A large minority of frontline workers and NGOs and a minority of the general public said NGOs should be part of the workforce for children.

Social Workers: A large minority of frontline workers and NGOs and a minority of the general public said social workers should be part of the workforce for children.

Justice sector workers: A large minority of frontline workers and NGOs and a small minority of the general public suggested justice sector workers.

Volunteers: A small minority of all types of submissions suggested volunteers.

Diverse backgrounds: A small minority of frontline workers and a minority of NGOs and the general public suggested people from diverse backgrounds should be in the workforce for children.

Adequately trained people: A large minority of frontline workers and NGOs and a minority of the general public said the workforce should have adequately trained people.

All who affect a child's wellbeing: A large minority of frontline workers and the general public and a minority of NGOs said that all who affect a child's wellbeing should be considered part of the workforce for children.

What other changes could be made to increase the effectiveness of those who work with vulnerable children?

Training and professional development: About half the submissions identified training and professional development as the main ways to increase the effectiveness of those who work with children.

I can't stress enough the importance of upskilling and training professionals to ensure services are effective and tailored to specific family/whānau needs. (frontline worker)

What we recommend is that social work training is reviewed and that all caregivers, including family and whānau caregivers, have free training in the attachment needs of children and the impact of trauma, and are enabled to develop skills in promoting and nurturing attachments in children. (NGO)

Appropriate training and retraining. Training courses should be regularly evaluated. Professionals in all the disciplines necessary to support vulnerable children and their families need to be involved in the workforce for children and should be trained together. (NGO)

Pay and working conditions: A large minority of submissions made suggestions about improving pay and working conditions for those working with vulnerable children.

Less of a caseload so they can effectively make a difference in those they have responsibility for. (frontline worker)

Collaborative practice: A large minority of submissions suggested that collaborative practice would increase the effectiveness of those who work with children.

Encourage initiative and different ways of working in different circumstances. Encourage them to work with all who deal with the child – including teachers. (general public)

Collaboration, visibility between silos. (frontline worker)

Improving the workforce for children: Free-form submissions

In this section we discuss suggestions from the free-form submissions about improving the workforce under the following three broad headings:

- Collaboration
- Principles, competencies and quality standards in the workforce for children
- Supporting the workforce for children to do a better job.

Collaboration

Submissions that addressed service collaboration were similar across the different groups of submitters. Themes commonly suggested included networking, improving co-operation, using service hubs, having funding for collaboration, using an advocate/lead provider and having formal protocols.

Networking between professionals: A minority of frontline workers, a small minority of the general public, and a large minority of other organisations and NGOs supported networking between professionals.

Child wellbeing is multi-dimensional and complex, families frequently are involved with a number of agencies, so government policies, programmes and services need to be coordinated and link effectively and collaboratively with the community providers and environment where the family may have natural and informal supportive systems. The worker's ability to engage with families, work alongside them building on their existing skills and work collaboratively with community networks using local resources is an essential ingredient in the change process. (NGO)

Improving cross-sector and interagency co-operation: A minority of submissions overall supported improving cross-sector and inter-agency co-operation, to improve collaboration between services.

There appear to be so many organisations and departments in the NZ government structure dealing with a raft of social problems, welfare, and childcare, but [they are] not well coordinated. (general public)

To support New Zealand families we need to develop coordination and cooperation among government, non-profit agencies and private enterprises. (NGO)

Using service hubs or centres: A minority of submissions from frontline workers, and a large minority of other organisations and NGOs suggested using service hubs or centres, while only a few of the general public made this suggestion. Submissions spoke of one-stop shops, integrated family clinics and co-located services to make it easier for services to work in collaboration.

We want to see more one-stop shops and government services in close proximity of each other to provide easier access to the community and more communication and collaboration between the services. (NGO)

Easy access to integrated service centres is central to family wellbeing. We believe that siting local service centres near to preschool services, primary schools or local shopping centres is important. Such sites have the added advantage of enabling professionals to gather information from the community. We think that basing such a service within a school has the risk of making families or children not associated with that school feel excluded. (NGO)

Funding for collaboration: A small minority of frontline workers, and a minority of other organisations and NGOs suggested funding for collaboration. Submissions said partnerships between agencies needed to be encouraged by allowing sufficient time in their contracts to communicate with each other.

Agencies involved would need to allocate time to support this collaborative way of working and be financially supported to do so which will save considerable money in the long term. (NGO)

Collaboration between agencies is necessary but time intensive. This activity needs to be valued by those who collect activity information. (other organisation)

Case co-ordination by a lead agency or professional: A small minority of submissions suggested there was a need for this role.

There could be a requirement that a lead agency is established in known cases of child abuse. The lead agency would be responsible for coordinating care and ensuring communication between agencies. (frontline worker)

Having an identified key worker/contact person is viewed as an effective way to improve coordination and build trusted relationships with families that allow the "difficult conversations" to be held. Local area coordinators as proposed in the Ministry of Health's new model may fulfil this role but to be effective this needs to be grounded in a community development model. (NGO)

Formal protocols for collaboration between services: A small minority of frontline workers and NGOs and a minority of other organisations suggested Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) or contract arrangements to formalise their collaborative function.

The MOU between District Health Boards, CYF and Police requires each party to work together and share information. Agreements that formalise expected standards and include a monitoring framework contribute to effective inter-agency collaboration and information-sharing. (other organisation)

Principles, competencies and quality standards in the workforce for children

The most common theme was training in child protection, followed by having a formal qualification and having an understanding of family violence, common mental health problems, child development, alcohol and drugs, the legal framework, and needs assessment. Cultural competence, skills in relationship building and having professional ethics were also said to be important.

Knowledge of child protection: The most commonly suggested theme, made by a minority of submissions, was knowledge of child protection. These submissions discussed knowing what to look out for, knowing how to make a referral, understanding the services available and Child, Youth and Family processes. Some submitters recommended particular sources of training for this. Coupled with this theme, an “understanding of child maltreatment” was also suggested by a minority.

There should be mandatory care and protection training for all regulated professionals in the health, education and welfare sectors and possibly lawyers. (NGO)

Recognising and acting on signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect, knowledge about and skills to use and keep up to date with, relevant research findings on effective approaches to working with children and families and in particular where there are concerns about abuse or neglect. (other organisation)

Formal qualifications: A small minority of submissions made this suggestion. Submissions referred to having a degree or certificate, and to registration.

NGOs to employ more qualified practitioners. NGOs often provide non-evidence based non-qualified services to the most vulnerable families. (other organisation)

Family violence: A small minority of submissions identified the value of knowing about family violence and argued that agencies should screen for family violence when seeing families.

Screening for family violence should be standard practice for all agencies and organisations working with children and their families/whānau. (NGO)

Cultural competence: A small minority suggested that being responsive to diverse cultures, particularly Māori and Pasifika, and having knowledge of them, was an essential competence for the workforce.

Govt and community services need to be culturally competent to work with people from a range of cultures, and most importantly with Māori as Te Tiriti partners and given the current health profile of tamariki Māori. This includes addressing entrenched historical negative attitudes and unconscious bias before or during any professional development opportunities. (NGO)

We strongly support investment into health promotion, prevention and early intervention but this has to be done in a culturally safe way. (NGO)

Common mental health problems: A small minority of submissions suggested all those who work with vulnerable children should have some professional understanding of common mental health conditions.

Training of professionals needs to include recognising, assessing and intervening with infants, children, young people and their families with emotional, behavioural, learning and mental health problems. It also needs to include recognition of mental health problems in parents. (NGO)

The primary level services Plunket and the Well Child providers are able to ascertain general health problems but are much less confident with social, emotional and mental health problems and are hungry for education. (frontline worker)

Child development: A small minority said that an understanding of typical child development – and the effects of disabilities and illness – was important in the workforce for children.

A demonstrated understanding of infant, child, adolescent and family health from a strengths and resilience/vulnerability perspective should be included in all associated professional training core curricula. (NGO)

Providing good resource material and training for teachers of children with arthritis. Problems at school are the single most common problem cited by both children with arthritis and their parents. (NGO)

Addictions: A small minority of submissions suggested that professionals should be able to recognise problems of addiction.

Skills should include the ability to assess child abuse and family violence, addictions and abnormal development. (other organisations)

The legal framework: A small minority drew attention to legislation and to the United Nations conventions – including UNCROC – to which New Zealand is a party.

There needs to be ongoing education around applying the CYPF Act with regard to working with families and keeping the focus on the child. We need to be brave enough to say when a whānau and extended whānau is not safe, and not hide behind, interpret or blindly apply/promote one section of the Act over s6 – the rights of the child to protection and loving care. (frontline worker)

We need clear education around what children's rights mean. (community meeting)

Relationship building: A small minority commented on the importance of gaining rapport and building trust with children and families.

Many parents and their children in vulnerable situations do not necessarily trust Government officials. (NGO)

The need for real rapport and engagement is vital to young people. Without this it is far less likely the services will be accessed and utilised to their potential. (frontline worker)

Needs assessment: A small minority called for professionals to have skills in needs assessment processes.

Ensuring the workforce for children is competent in needs assessment and referral pathways and understanding the social determinants of health and wellbeing. (general public)

Ethics: A small minority of submissions said that people expect high ethical standards from the workforce for vulnerable children.

Codes of ethics/practice should be at a recognised standard and there should be quality training around it, not just initially but ongoing and upskilling. (NGO)

Supporting the workforce for children to do a better job

A relatively small number of submissions made suggestions about supporting the workforce to do a better job. The most common theme was training and professional development.

Other suggestions made were:

- supervision
- being valued/supported by the employer
- adequate pay and reasonable workloads.

Provide them with adequate support – it is hard having to deal with some of the awful stuff those working in this field deal with and they should have recourse to adequate support also. (general public)

Better connecting vulnerable children to services

The Green Paper asked three questions about better connecting vulnerable children to services.

- How can the Government's frontline services better connect vulnerable children and their families and whānau with the services they need?
- What services could be included in this action to better connect vulnerable children to the services they need?
- What other changes do you think could be made to ensure vulnerable children are connected to the services from which they would benefit?

Summary

There was common support for reducing barriers, such as cost, hours of operation and transport. Submissions also supported using an advocate/lead provider – a single point of contact for the family who would connect them to services and oversee their progress. Submissions talked about better connecting vulnerable children and families with services in terms of making people aware of services available, getting people into services and then maintaining engagement.

Submissions also talked about the early identification of problems, educating children to get help, and hotlines as ways of helping vulnerable children and families into services. Bringing services to where people are through outreach services, home visiting and community locations, flexibility, and the persistence of service providers were suggested as ways of maintaining engagement.

Services that could be included in any action to better connect services with families included health, education, social welfare, justice, religious or cultural groups and NGOs.





Better connecting vulnerable children to services: Question and answer submissions

How can the Government's frontline services better connect vulnerable children and their families and whānau with the services they need?

This question resulted in a variety of responses from a broad range of respondents with no clear majority view. The most common theme, supported by a large minority, was for reducing barriers, followed by having a "dedicated person", "advocate" or "lead provider" to co-ordinate services to vulnerable families and children. Respondents also discussed the need to raise awareness and advertise services.

Other ideas to connect services to people who need them included networking between professionals, and using community hubs for services (perhaps in schools or early children centres).

Reducing barriers: A large minority of submissions highlighted barriers to families taking up services. They identified distance, the cost of transport, limited hours of operation (difficult for working parents), cultural fit, and knowing what to expect.

Mobile units are great for getting out to hard-to-reach areas or even into the suburbs. (general public)

Fully accessible buildings for children with disabilities. (frontline worker)

Services need to be centralised in high need areas and able to be reached by bus/walking. They need to be child friendly as well. There should be toys etc in waiting areas at WINZ etc to show the children are welcomed. (general public)

Advocate/lead provider: This theme came up again in relation to connecting families to services and managing cross-agency case-work. It was supported by a large minority of submissions.

Appoint an accountable support person who will ensure they get the frontline services. (general public)

Raising awareness/advertising: A minority of submissions talked about better advertising of the services that already exist, using television, social networking, and information resources.

Better mapping of health and social services in a region with details of the services provided readily available from multiple sources, including websites. (NGO)

Easy, less opaque information about funding sources, respite etc. It's almost like you don't want us to know. (general public)

Other ideas for connecting families to the services that they need included:

- using early childhood education centres, childcare, and schools as a link to other services
- using non-government organisations and other community services to provide services
- the introduction, or reintroduction, of free, universal services, particularly early intervention services, and extensions to Plunket services
- expanding or improving existing services, including reducing workload and turnover in existing agencies, improving collaboration between agencies, and extending service integration programmes such as Strengthening Families and Whānau Ora. This category included arguments that services should be made more mobile and accessible, and should approach families (rather than the other way around)
- better information-sharing, including a central database shared by agencies
- incentivising families into services
- service hubs
- earlier identification of problems.

What services could be included in this action to better connect vulnerable children to the services they need?

The kinds of services submitters saw as being important to be connected with vulnerable children were ones that are already in frequent contact with children and families in the community. These included health and education services, which were suggested by about half of submissions. Child, Youth and Family services were also identified by a minority.

Health: About half of frontline workers and NGOs, and a large minority of general public suggested that health services must be included in this action. Many submissions specified Plunket as the ideal point of connection to services.

PLUNKET! Plunket Nurses are health professionals that have been involved in children's health for decades and are a well-known service. Plunket nurses are in a prime position to monitor children from 0–5. They go into homes, they see the child, their environment, monitor health and link families into further support if required. I believe Plunket could be developed further as a primary monitoring agency. When Plunket steps out at the child's age of five years, visiting school nurses can be a vital and regular part of monitoring, but this is a resource that needs to be expanded, as current visiting times by nurses is inadequate. (frontline worker)

Set up medical rooms in low decile areas with interns doing their first year. (frontline worker)

Education: A large minority of the general public submissions and about half of the frontline worker submissions said locating services within education settings is important to help vulnerable children.

Doctors/nurses in schools – to assess children's medical needs. Dieticians in schools – to assess health and nutritional needs or deficits. Social workers and counsellors in schools – so children have a safe place to talk about issues that concern them. Teachers that see kids' needs can directly get [a] doctor, nurse, social worker, counsellor, dietician involved immediately. Family members that have concerns can go directly to any of these people/services without delay. (frontline worker)

All services should feed through schools and vice versa to establish a visible network of social cohesion and support. (general public)

Child, Youth and Family: A large minority of frontline workers, a minority of the general public, and a minority of NGOs nominated Child, Youth and Family to better connect vulnerable children to the services they need.



*Central co-ordinating service – maybe a part of CYFP?
– where on the ground agencies/professionals can refer concerns. (frontline worker)*

Other services mentioned by a small minority of submissions were the Ministry of Justice, NGOs, hotlines/phone lines, and religious/cultural groups.

What other changes do you think could be made to ensure vulnerable children are connected to the services from which they would benefit?

Having an advocate/lead provider was supported by a small minority of submissions. Suggestions for other changes were earlier identification of problems, educating children on how to get help and persistence of service providers.

Early identification of problems: A large minority of submissions said that earlier identification of issues was key to ensuring children can access the services they need.

All children need to be assessed for risk at birth and then supported – young and needy mothers should have help and support post-natally. It is a difficult enough time especially if socially isolated, have mental health or other issues. Early discharge post-natally is not a good thing for many mothers. (frontline worker)

At risk families being identified early and early intervention being offered to them. (general public)

Educating children: A large minority of submissions said that educating children on how to get help would be of benefit.

A helpline for children, connected to a person they can talk to, and who can get them assistance if required. (general public)

Persistence of service providers: A large minority of submissions said encouraging service providers to persevere in offering children and families their services would also help. Submissions said that family change takes a long time and that workers should persist with families even when progress seemed slow.

Keep cases open until the outcomes are achieved and do not rely on the family to stick with a change programme. It gets too hard. (frontline worker)

Better connecting vulnerable children to services: Free-form submissions

In this section we report on what the free-form submissions said about better connecting vulnerable children to services.

Better connection: A minority of submissions suggested reducing barriers, and a small minority supported appointing advocates or lead providers for children. Other suggestions made by a small minority were home visiting, outreach services or flexible services, which could all be used as ways to reduce barriers to services.

Home visiting: Submissions highlighted that home visiting yields a lot of useful information as well as making the service more accessible for families.

By getting out of the office and driving to the home and knocking on the door – the back door. Reason being is you will be surprised when you go to the back door, just what you will see. (general public)

Services should embody a real life context and be based in the homes of vulnerable children and families. (NGO)

Outreach services: Similarly, submissions said that taking services to “where people are” reduces barriers.

Rural isolation can be a problem for mothers and pregnant women who live some distance from the nearest town, families, friends, general practitioners, early child care facilities and specialist mental health services. (NGO)

Flexible services: Submissions advocated for services having the capacity to adapt to the changing needs of children and families.

Need to put “hard-to-reach” children and whānau at the centre of service design and funding strategies which could result in services being more innovatively and flexibly delivered and funded. (NGO)

The ability for the young person to engage, disengage and then re-engage at their pace is vital for many of the vulnerable young people we deal with. This relies on continuity of service over the key transitional developmental years. (frontline worker)

Improving service delivery

The Green Paper asked three questions on the subject of improving service delivery to vulnerable children.

- How could early education centres and schools be better used as sites for the delivery of a wider range of services?
- What services could be better connected and how?
- What other opportunities exist to deliver services more effectively for vulnerable children and their families and whānau?

Summary

Submissions supported using universal services (such as Well Child) as an entry point, making changes to Child, Youth and Family to improve services and different ways of service delivery such as co-location of services and using schools and ECE centres as hubs for the delivery of services. Better communication and collaboration between services were referred to. Submissions suggested making improvements in contracting and funding arrangements. This included better resourcing of Crown agencies. Using community resources in some way was referred to in some submissions. Submissions suggested using an advocate/lead provider.

Submissions suggested a number of different approaches to service delivery, reflecting a range of philosophies about vulnerable children and families and how to bring about change. Of these, a child-centred approach had the most support.





Improving service delivery: Question and answer submissions

How could early education centres and schools be better used as sites for the delivery of a wider range of services?

A small number of submissions answered this question. Many submissions suggested that schools or ECEs could be hubs that have other services, such as health and social services, co-located with them. There was moderate support overall for social workers in schools, and some support for schools and ECEs being the providers of information about other services. Other suggestions were using universal services as the entry point, making changes to Child, Youth and Family to improve services, improving contract and funding arrangements, and more resourcing of Crown agencies.

Schools: The majority of submissions said that education sites could be used as the hub for the delivery of general practitioner, Plunket and other clinical and social services. These submissions talked about having services such as a nurse or social worker based in the school itself, while others talked about having GP surgeries, Plunket rooms, and Work and Income offices on school sites.

Community groups should branch out from schools, this way involving parents, children and the wider community under an umbrella where health, employment and education services are clearly visible and approachable and all ages in society can be involved. (general public)

School based CYFS liaison and social workers, comparable to Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour cluster Services. (frontline worker)

These places must become community centres for many activities and services. (frontline worker)

A small minority of submissions expressed opposition to the idea, citing lack of space, lack of teacher time, and the risk of excluding families whose children did not attend that particular school or ECE.

It should be remembered that schools are meant to educate, not solve all the community social problems. (NGO)

Social workers in schools: This was suggested by a large minority of submissions.

Put social workers into early childhood centres and schools. (general public)

Education providers: A large minority of submissions made the suggestion that education providers should be used as sources of information about other services.

What services could be better connected and how?

Very few submissions answered this question. The majority of submissions called for government social sector agencies and NGOs to be better connected to each other, and a large minority argued for health services and schools to be better connected also.

CYF, public health nurses, WINZ etc. Having chances for staff to meet each other based in the community and liaise with community development workers. (frontline worker)

What other opportunities exist to deliver services more effectively for vulnerable children and their families and whānau?

Again, a small number of submissions answered this question. The most frequent suggestion, made by a large minority, was for changes to Child, Youth and Family, followed by improving contract and funding arrangements. Using universal services as the entry point, more resourcing of Crown agencies, using someone the family trusts to liaise with the service, and having an advocate/lead provider were all supported by a minority of submissions

Changes to Child, Youth and Family: Submissions suggested improving response times and giving notifiers feedback about action taken. Submissions also commented on policies such as such as placing children with whānau.

A properly planned, monitored and reviewed response [from CYF] may decrease the number of placements a child in care is subjected to and, potentially, decrease the disturbed behaviour which can make a child in care so difficult. (other organisation)

Improving contract and funding arrangements: Submissions argued for simpler and more streamlined contract arrangements between government agencies and NGOs.

Using universal services as the entry point: The Well Child programme was frequently suggested.

Making more use of Plunket and other such groups. They are frontline and need to be better resourced. (general public)

More resourcing of Crown agencies: Submissions argued for more funding for agencies providing services for children, rather than redirecting existing funding.

Using someone the family trusts to liaise with the service: Submissions suggested that existing relationships with key individuals could be capitalised on.

Having an advocate/lead provider: As seen in responses to other questions, the role of an advocate/lead provider to co-ordinate services was suggested.

Improving service delivery: Free-form submissions

This section reports on what the free-form submissions had to say about improving service delivery, covered under the following three broad headings:

- Changes to services
- Funding
- Approaches to service delivery.

Changes to services

Child, Youth and Family: A minority of submissions suggested Child, Youth and Family changes. Comments about Child, Youth and Family changes frequently referred to difficulties in getting a response to a referral, the perceived variability in the skills of social workers, the need to ensure families get help when a child is removed and a perception that social workers are overloaded. There were also comments about what happens to children once they have been uplifted.

There needs to be an analysis of the practice of Child, Youth and Family operational methods with a view to identifying where the gaps are between practice and policy. These gaps contribute to a riskier outcome for vulnerable children in care such as multiple placements, return to known abusive family members and untested family or whānau placements. (NGO)

Funding

Contracts and funding: A minority of frontline workers, and a large majority of other organisations and NGOs said there should be improvements in contracts and funding arrangements.

Extra resources could be freed by government greatly simplifying and streamlining its contracting processes, e.g. making contracts consistent across departments and service types, bulk funding contracts and using properly funded robust outcomes evaluations rather than focussing on outputs. (NGO)

Approaches to service delivery

A large minority of submissions made suggestions about how to deliver services. Most of these submitters advocated that agencies should take a child-centred approach when delivering services.

Child-centred approach: A minority of frontline workers, NGOs, community meetings and a large minority of other organisation submissions suggested taking a child-centred approach. This was used to mean both a holistic approach (rather than focusing on just one need or problem), and a child-first approach (rather than a family/whānau-first approach).

...many existing services within the health system do not provide child-centred services and can become cumbersome for families to use...uncoordinated branches of services mean that a child is frequently regarded in his or her specific parts (such as hearing loss, behavioural need, or a cancer patient, not as a whole person. (other organisation)

Other suggestions made by a small minority of submissions were for a public health-based approach, a whole-of-family approach, and a strengths-based approach.

Public spending needs to prioritise preventative and proactive responses, which focus on ensuring that all New Zealand children are given the best start in life, and early recognition and intervention in respect of those children who are particularly at risk. (other organisation)

