

OIA-CE-2025-02870

23 April 2025

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email, received on 24 March 2025, to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) requesting information on Written Parliamentary Questions responses from the Minister for Children regarding social worker allocations. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Reports of Concern (ROCs) are made when a member of the public, professional, family member or other person or organisation shares concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a child or young person with Oranga Tamariki. You can find more information about ROCs on the Oranga Tamariki website [here](#). When a ROC is received, a social worker, usually based at the National Contact Centre, will complete an initial assessment of the concerns and if it is determined that Oranga Tamariki should be involved, the case is referred to a site to be allocated to a social worker.

I have responded to each part of your request below.

I have just been looking at written parliamentary questions and have noticed what seems to be an increase in the number of children overdue for allocation to a social worker, in recent years.

Why is this? Please state all contributing factors

While fluctuations in the numbers of children overdue for allocation to a social worker over time are attributable to multiple factors, we believe the most presiding contribution over the last 12 months has been the significant increase in volumes of ROCs received by Oranga Tamariki, meaning there is simply a larger number of cases that need to be allocated to social workers. Almost 75,000 children and young people came to our attention in the 2023/24 financial year through a report of concern. As at the end of March 2025, we had received 81013 ROCs for this financial year to date. The 12 months to the end of March 2025 saw a nearly 45% increase in Reports of Concern received compared to the previous 12-month period.

Oranga Tamariki is working to understand the reasons behind the increase in ROCs. The factors likely to be at play include reports of concern from partners, greater engagement from schools, and family members being more likely to contact Oranga Tamariki seeking assistance. A recording change we introduced at the National Contact Centre to ensure we accurately record ROCs has accounted for a small portion of the increase in ROCs. Other factors that likely contribute to changes to the numbers of children overdue for allocation to a social worker include variations in case complexity and periods of organisational change.

Oranga Tamariki undertakes a range of measures to support safety while cases are awaiting allocation to a social worker. Cases are allocated according to urgency and need, with a particular focus on those that are deemed most urgent. ROCs involving babies and infants, or that involve matters requiring Police involvement, are also prioritised. Our focus on allocating the most urgent cases quickly means almost all cases that are unallocated at any point in time are those assessed as less urgent. Unallocated queues are also regularly reviewed and monitored by Practice Leaders at sites. If needed, notifiers are contacted again to ascertain if circumstances have changed in a way that would warrant more urgent attention.

What is Oranga Tamariki's target timeframe for allocating a social worker?

Every ROC is assessed at the time it is received and a decision is made about the most appropriate timeframe for response, reflecting the seriousness of the concerns and assessed risk of harm. The most critical reports of concern are assigned a timeframe for response of either 24 hours or 48 hours. Those that are less critical are assigned a response timeframe of 10 working days. Once received by the relevant site, the site will consider the ROC and, in some cases, may change the pathway or initial response timeframe due to changing circumstances or new information. A social worker is then allocated to the case. Allocation decisions also account for the capacity of social workers to respond.

What is Oranga Tamariki is doing to address the increase?

Please see my response to your first question about the measures in place to support safety while cases are awaiting allocation to a social worker. As also noted above, Oranga Tamariki triage responses to ensure more urgent cases receive a prompt response. Alongside these immediate responses, we have work underway to replace out existing case management system that social workers use every day, which is more than 20 years old. The new system will increase the amount of time social workers have to engage with tamariki, rangatahi, whānau, victims, caregivers and partners by reducing time spent duplicating information across multiple systems. It will also be easier and faster to find information when needed. You can find further information on the Frontline Technology Systems Upgrade on the Oranga Tamariki website [here](#).

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

IN-CONFIDENCE

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

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rachel Leota'.

Rachel Leota
Deputy Chief Executive
Tamariki and Whānau Services