

18 August 2022

9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 22 June 2022 to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki), requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

In relation to the Entitlement to Remain or Return programme:

1. *How come the uptake for the program was 'lower than expected'?*
2. *Will changes be made to the program to increase that uptake?*
3. *How did the kids who did go through the program find it?*
4. *Has the program been a success?*
5. *Is the program expected to continue?*
6. *Of the \$25 million that was earmarked for the program over four years, how much has been used?*
7. *How many young people have been part of the program since it started?*

You will find a response to each of your questions in turn below:

1. *How come the uptake for the program was 'lower than expected'?*

The original modelling over-estimated the number of young people who would be eligible for the Entitlement to Remain or Return to Living with a Caregiver (ETRR). When the programme was introduced, more 18-year-olds who had left care had returned to whānau or were living semi-independently than had been expected. This meant there were fewer young people still with caregivers who could exercise the option to remain with them. Many young people chose not to use their ETRR entitlements. For example, some return to whānau after they turn 18 and others move for study or employment.

To ensure we are meeting the needs of young people we have commissioned VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai to undertake research with young people to understand how best to offer this support and explore whether there are areas we need to improve on. We expect to receive this report in August.

2. Will changes be made to the program to increase that uptake?

Once we receive the report from VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai regarding ETRR, we will review the findings and consider changes that would support better experiences and opportunities for young people transitioning from care into adulthood. We note some requirements around accessing ETRR are prescribed in the Oranga Tamariki Act.

3. How did the kids who did go through the program find it?

We do not have direct feedback from young people about their experience of ETRR. Work to date has focused on increasing awareness and access to this support. We expect young people's feedback on their experiences of ETRR as part of the research commissioned through VOYCE Whakarongo Mai.

4. Has the program been a success?

80 young people have been able to continue to live with caregivers beyond the age of 18 years because of the ETRR. This has enabled a more gradual transition from care to independent living and provided these young people with more support and help as they grow into adulthood.

5. Is the program expected to continue?

ETRR is a legal entitlement young people can choose to access (or decline) rather than a programme. It will continue for at least as long as it remains a legal requirement.

6. Of the \$25 million that was earmarked for the program over four years, how much has been used?

Oranga Tamariki received \$17.086 million of funding for ETRR across the three financial years, 2019/20 2020/21 and 2021/22 (\$8.092 million for 2022/23). Over the three financial years \$0.694 million has been used to fund placements for young people remaining or returning to their caregivers under Entitlement to Return or Remain ETRR.

Underspends related to this initiative were reprioritised within the Multi-Category Appropriation.

7. How many young people have been part of the program since it started?

80 young people have taken up their entitlement to remain or return to living with a caregiver to date.

Oranga Tamariki intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public shortly. We will do this by publishing this letter on our website. Your personal details will be deleted and we will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

IN-CONFIDENCE

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@ot.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. 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 blue ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Brown', is positioned above the printed name.

Shaun Brown
Transitional Associate DCE Youth Justice & Care Services, Service Delivery