

# EVIDENCE CENTRE UPDATE

EVIDENCE CENTRE  
TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

UNDERSTANDING WHAT  
WORKS FOR TAMARIKI

## THE ORANGA TAMARIKI EVIDENCE CENTRE



Kia ora koutou katoa. A lot has happened since our last newsletter in September, so I am excited to give you an update of what's going on across the Evidence Centre. Over the past few months we have published work on a variety of topics, including out-of-home care services for children overseas, and understanding young people with high needs transitioning out of care.

Right now we are winding down for a Christmas break, and would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year. 2019 is sure to bring with it a lot of positive change and exciting work for the Evidence Centre, starting with our next research seminar on February 1st 2019.

Our eighth seminar in the series will feature two presentations, one from Linda Pannekoek (Ministry of Health) on the subject of Social, Emotional, and Behavioural Difficulties in New Zealand Children and the other from Kiri Milne and Duncan McCann (Oranga Tamariki) about young people's engagement in education. The seminar will take place on Friday 1st February at 10:30am. [Click here to register for a seat.](#)

As always, we love to hear from our friends across the social sector, so please get in touch if you have any questions or ideas. And keep an eye on our Research page for regular updates and interesting publications. Noho ora mai and see you in 2019, Vasantha.

## OUR RECENT PUBLICATIONS



**Transition Needs Survey** In 2018 we undertook an intelligence gathering exercise to better understand the needs of young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki who are at risk of not making a successful transition to independence. The purpose of this report was to inform the design of the Ministry's new services. Key findings showed that four in five of these children had diagnosed or suspected mental health needs, over a third were not in regular education, training or employment, and over half were exhibiting behaviours that put themselves or others at risk of harm weekly. Read the full report [here](#).

### Care Continuum -- Overseas Jurisdictions: Evidence Brief

The 'care continuum' refers to the complete range of services for children within child protection systems.

Oranga Tamariki commissioned a high-level overview of the services for children in out-of-home care in a selection of countries around the world including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, and the United States of America. This report touches on a range of topics including the need for out-of-home care, the orientation of care systems, principles in the provision of care, and some of the key challenges faced. Read the full evidence brief [here](#).

**International Measurement Models: Harm in Care** This report offers a high-level overview of how different countries report on the harm experienced by children in the custody of care and protection agencies. The review's key findings tell us that data sources vary across the countries looked at, and that reporting has a range of applications, including performance monitoring of the care and protection system, and informing national statistics. Read the full report [here](#).

**Evidence Brief: Complex Needs** Some children and young people within the care and youth justice systems have what are described as 'complex needs.' These can include behavioural issues, mental health problems, and substance abuse. In order to ensure a successful, wrap-around care system, we need to understand the factors affecting children and young people and have an up-to-date understanding of the most effective services and therapeutic responses for them. This report offers a high-level review of international research on complex needs in children and young people involved in care and youth justice. Read it [here](#).

Visit our [website](#) to catch up on all of our latest research.

## RESEARCH SEMINARS

The Evidence Centre hosts regular seminars, in collaboration with social sector partners. Learn more about our recent seminars showcasing research for those working in areas that impact the lives of New Zealand's children and families.

### Engaging in Education, Employment, and Work: Insights from the IDI

Data from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) helps inform research into Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) rates, as well as a study looking at the impact of Social Workers in Schools (SWiS) programme.



#### Unpacking the higher NEET rate for Māori and Pacific peoples using administrative data

Eyal Apatov is a Senior Analyst within the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre. Eyal presented his work examining which factors can explain the persistently greater Māori and Pacific youth Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) rates. This combines personal, family, and geographical data from the IDI and a focus on youth experiencing long-term NEET spells.



#### Estimating the impact of Social Workers in Schools using linked administrative data

Moira Wilson is a Principal Analyst in the Research & Evaluation team at the Ministry of Social Development and Min Vette is the current Team Leader for Services in Schools at Oranga Tamariki. Their presentation looked at the recent study of Social Workers in Schools (SWiS) and the impact on outcomes that are measurable using linked administrative data in the IDI, as well as plans for a new study to hear how family and whānau experience the service.

### Transitions: Understanding Children & Young People at Key Life Moments

Understanding children and young people means we can inform policies and practices aimed at meeting their needs. The following presentations explored two of the many different ways we can gather this understanding; a survey for social workers, and the Growing Up in New Zealand (GUINZ) study.



#### Longitudinal Studies: Transforming Ordinary into Extraordinary

Susan Morton is the Principal Investigator of New Zealand's contemporary longitudinal study of child development, GUINZ. The study follows a cohort of more than 6,800 children. Data is gathered to inform policies and programmes to better meet the needs of children and families in New Zealand. She provided an overview of the study and some of its key findings to date, with a particular focus on vulnerability, risk and protective factors.



#### Understanding Young People with High Needs Transitioning Out of Care

Damian O'Neill is a Senior Analyst within the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre. Damian presented key findings from the transitions cohort needs assessment survey, undertaken to inform the design of the new Transition Support Service operating from July 2019. In the survey, social workers provided information on the circumstances, needs, and service delivery gaps of selected 'high' and 'very high' needs 15 to 17 year olds – a group at particular risk of not making a successful transition from care to independence.

## MEET THE MANAGER: DAVINA JONES



*Davina is Manager of the Evaluation team within the Evidence Centre. She came to New Zealand 21 years ago as a high school teacher and athlete. As injuries gradually curtailed her athletics career, she engaged in an MBA at Massey University where a research paper sparked her curiosity and a career change to social research. She came to Wellington 15 years ago to work at the Ministry of Social Development's Centre for Social*

*Research Evaluation, and has since worked for The Retirement Commission, Oranga Tamariki, and has been Co-President of a rural Playcentre.*

*Davina has a strong research interest in understanding what works for people with multiple and complex needs. She has worked on evaluations spanning family violence, cross-sector initiatives for rangatahi, those on invalid's benefits, disabilities and employment, and a community development initiative to help refugees and new migrants form connections and settle in to New Zealand. Highlights include working on the Living Standards of New Zealanders project, which influenced the Working For Families package, and writing the first National Strategy for Financial Literacy.*

It is an exciting time to be working for Oranga Tamariki as we pursue our goal to transform the system, with the central tenet that New Zealand values the wellbeing of tamariki above all else. We are public with our values – aroha matters and is now, radically, in legislation. Similarly cultural competency and mana tamaiti are priorities with legislative backing from July 2019. These values matter to our work in the Evidence Centre because evaluation is essentially a valuing activity.

To evaluate is to come to an assessment of the merit or worth of an activity or intervention. To come to such judgements we have to apply criteria, or values – and the question is whose values are we applying? Historically, we know that the values, experiences and voices of tamariki and rangatahi have been under-represented or even absent in policies and decisions made about them. Our researchers and evaluators are now working closely with the Voices of Children team to make sure that this is not the case going forward. We recognise that people are the experts in their own lives.

The Evaluation team works across the full spectrum from continuous improvement to impact evaluation. We support new service design in the test-and-learn phase, as critical friends to uplift insights and learning. We unearth theories of change and examine how they are implemented in the real world with process evaluation. We draw on the full range of social science research methods to understand whether new processes and interventions are making a difference for tamariki and rangatahi with impact evaluation.