

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre



Vasantha Krishnan
General Manager

Kia ora koutou katoa,

Despite heading into winter, life's outlook has become a little more sunny with the opening up of borders and the accompanying travel (and hope) that comes with it, as well as a vaccination rollout on the horizon.

New Zealand's overall approach to its management of Covid-19 has drawn praise from around the world and in particular has been noted for its approach being guided by science – and the science being well communicated to everyone. Likewise in Oranga Tamariki, the Evidence Centre has continued to produce a wealth of knowledge and insights to guide transformation and decision making.

In the last quarter, we've been busy publishing work on a number of topics: An evaluation of the Family Start Programme, a voluntary

home-visiting programme that supports whānau to improve children's health, learning and relationships; an evidence brief looking at respite care and how this contributes to wellbeing; an engagement survey that captures the views of some of our partners in a structured and quantifiable way that can be tracked over time; and a report presenting findings from Te Tohu o te Ora, the first national survey of tamariki and rangatahi in care, in which more than 1,500 tamariki took part.

I wish you all a warm and 'hygge' winter, wherever you are in Aotearoa, and I look forward to updating you with our latest research and data offerings again very soon

Ngā mihi,
Vasantha.

Our Recent Publications

The Evidence Centre works to build the evidence base that helps us better understand wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children, young people, and their whānau.



Respite Care: Benefits to wellbeing

This evidence brief considered how respite care contributes to wellbeing for children and for their caregivers, in order to inform policy and practices regarding the types and range of respite care that could be provided as part of the Oranga Tamariki aim to keep families together.

This evidence brief addresses five research questions:

- How is respite care provided in Aotearoa New Zealand and other jurisdictions, for children outside of, or within, the state care and protection system?
- What is the evidence for respite care (formal and informal) being beneficial to the wellbeing of children and young people?
- What is the evidence for respite care (formal and informal) being beneficial to the wellbeing of the parent/caregiver?
- What is the evidence for respite care (formal and informal) contributing to stability in care arrangements?
- What are the attributes of respite models of care that result in wellbeing benefits for the child and/or the parent/caregiver?
- To address these questions, a literature search was carried out. The jurisdictions of interest were Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Republic of Ireland, United Kingdom (U.K.), and United States of America (U.S.).

[Read the report here.](#)

Evaluation of the Family Start programme

This report provided findings from an evaluation of the Family Start programme ('Family Start'), a voluntary home-visiting programme that supports whānau to improve children's health, learning and relationships, whānau circumstances, environment and safety.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the Family Start programme's impact and effectiveness. To achieve this purpose, the evaluation was undertaken through two workstreams:

- an impact evaluation, the purpose of which was to assess the impact that Family Start participation is having on the wellbeing of New Zealand children and their whānau. The evaluation examined a range of health, educational, and social outcomes for children, including separate analyses for Māori and Pasifika children.
- a process evaluation, the purpose of which was to explore the effectiveness of the programme's design and delivery, including how client whānau experience the programme, and how Family Start providers can optimise positive impacts for children and their whānau.

[Both reports are available to read here.](#)

Engagement Survey with partners providing social services

Oranga Tamariki works with some 500 partner organisations who have contracts to deliver social services (partners). During November 2020, partners were surveyed about their relationship with Oranga Tamariki to better understand how we can strengthen these relationships. Just over 40% (214) of partners took part in the survey.

The engagement survey covered by this report captures the views of these partners in a structured and quantifiable way that can be tracked over time.

In addition to the online survey, eight iwi partners were interviewed for their feedback. This allowed iwi to provide feedback kanoahi-ki-te-kanoahi, with the intention of understanding themes.

[Read the survey results here.](#)

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

Te Mātātaki 2021

Te Tohu o te Ora is an annual survey that helps Oranga Tamariki better understand the experiences of tamariki and rangatahi in care. More than 1,500 tamariki and rangatahi took part in the survey between March 2019 and September 2020.

The survey was designed with input from tamariki and rangatahi to ensure the survey approach is relevant, engaging, and accessible, and that questions are focussed on aspects of care experience that are important to them.

Te Mātātaki 2021 presents findings from the first year of the survey, and outlines priority areas where action is required to improve experiences for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

Together, Te Tohu o te Ora and Te Mātātaki ensure Oranga Tamariki is listening to the voices of tamariki and rangatahi in care and can be held accountable for whether their experiences are improving.

[Read the report here.](#)

Details of the survey design and delivery, and an explanation of how results were analysed, is provided in the accompanying [Methodology Report](#).



Growing Up in New Zealand

More than 6,000 New Zealand children and their families are at the heart of Growing Up in New Zealand (GUINZ) - this country's largest contemporary longitudinal study of child development. The University of Auckland study has been following the lives of these children since 2009 and 2010 – before they were even born.

They visit the children and their parents around every three years to gather vital information to build a picture of what it's like to be a child growing up in the complex world of 21st Century New Zealand.

The 6,000 children included in the study reflect the ethnic and socioeconomic make-up of New Zealand today, so provide us with an accurate representation of the diverse experiences of our tamariki.

A recent study in partnership with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) included:

- [Adversities of Childhood Experience and School Readiness - Focus on children born to teen and non-teen mothers in the Growing Up in New Zealand Data.](#)
- [School Readiness, Adversities in Childhood Experience and Access to Government Services: A Scoping Study on Potential Protective Factors.](#)

The studies build on [previous work](#) that found exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) was associated with poor school readiness; school readiness decreased as more childhood adversities were experienced.

Youth Justice pathways

To help a young person find a new pathway, we need to understand their current path. A new report from within the Evidence Centre – Youth justice pathways: wellbeing indicators and outcomes for young people involved with youth justice – shines a light on some of what happens in the lives of young people before they enter youth justice.

[Read the report here.](#)

[There is also some accompanying work underway that responds to the findings from Youth justice pathways. Read it here.](#)

Our Research Seminars

Seeking Transformational Change

Our sixteenth seminar in the series will be a particularly interesting one: Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith is one of the world's leading scholars and founding thought leaders of Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Education and Kaupapa Māori research. Professor Smith will be presenting on 'seeking transformational change' at the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre seminar on 10 June 2021.

Professor Smith's book "Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples" is considered one of the most influential texts on Indigenous research. Her work demonstrates a commitment to Māori and indigenous wellbeing and self-determination.

Her numerous awards and recognition acknowledge the national and international significance of her research, her contribution to knowledge and the impact of her expertise on the global Indigenous society.

Appointments to organisations such as the Marsden Fund, the Waitangi Tribunal and Māori Economic Development Board are reflections of her expertise, contributions to the New Zealand research community and to Māori/iwi development. Professor Smith has recently been elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences. From early June she will be working at Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī.

[Register now to secure your place in the seminar.](#)

Please note that for those who cannot make the seminar, it will also be filmed and be made available on our ['Seminars'](#) webpage shortly after the presentation.

Meet Erin O'Donnell: Analyst - Analytics and Insights



Meet Erin O'Donnell: Analyst,
Analytics and Insights

Erin is an Analyst who has recently joined the Analytics and Insights team within the Evidence Centre.

Originally from Gisborne, Erin moved to Wellington three months ago after completing her studies in Auckland. She is still trying to acclimatise to the cold mornings (and harsh Wellington winds) and can often be seen wearing her coat at her desk and around the office.

Prior to joining Oranga Tamariki, she completed a Masters of Science majoring in Biology at the University of Auckland. Her thesis investigated the associations between early childhood adversity, gene regulation and childhood depression in participants of the longitudinal study Growing Up in New Zealand.

Erin arrived at Oranga Tamariki with an interesting take on data analysis. With a Bachelor's in Biology and Statistics and a Postgraduate Diploma in Bioinformatics, she has completed a large amount of analysis on large and complex genomic data sets, with her studies involving the analysis of organisms including viruses, plants onboard the international space station, and a large cohort of New Zealand children.

She came to know about the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre through her previous internship there as a part of the Analytics Research in Government programme. She was placed with the Evidence Centre due to her interests in childhood health and wellbeing and she gained some valuable experience involving data analysis within the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI). Erin has already put this previous experience to good use, as she is currently investigating family complexity of those reported to Oranga Tamariki using IDI data.

"I was so keen to come back to the Evidence Centre after my internship here. Not just because I know it is a place where I can help make a real difference to the lives of tamariki, but also because everyone in the Evidence Centre is just so darn friendly!"