

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre



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General Manager

Kia ora koutou ngā mihi o te Kirihimete

And welcome to our final newsletter of the year. 2021 has certainly continued on where 2020 left off for many of us – and I'm thinking particularly of colleagues and whānau in Auckland, Northland and Waikato who have borne the brunt of our COVID response this year.

The new protection framework to guide the country's COVID response signals a change of strategy, and change is also a theme within Oranga Tamariki. The Evidence Centre's been working with our regional social worker teams and others, gathering evidence and analysing it to support and inform our practice shift. This move to a more community/whānau-led, regionally-supported system and nationally enabled way of working for the Ministry is a positive step, and recognises that communities know and understand their own needs and challenges, and how to work with these, best.

This point is well made in our case study of Manaaki Tairāwhiti – an illustration of a successful and connected whānau-led social sector that's making a real difference to the local Gisborne community.

Other reports reflect a renewed focus on supporting rangatahi as they prepare to leave the care or youth justice system. We've produced a literature review on accommodation options for care-experienced young people and published an evaluation of the Transitions Support Service, that has been in place since mid-2019. Some interesting work has been released looking at how children and young people who are in care, adopted or whāngai make sense of

and learn about their situation and the Youth19 surveys capture the voices of young people, talking about identity and their home situations. We review services available for child victims of sexual crimes, and learn more about what is needed for these to be effective.

After moving our seminar series online to accommodate COVID restrictions, we have decided to keep running them virtually. We've had such positive feedback, our reach has been extended and the technology has been, on the whole, reliable and straightforward. Since the last newsletter, we've run two events based on children and health, with presentations from Dr Patrick Kelly about Medical Child Abuse and Sarah Williams on her research into health services in schools; and early in December Professor Cameron Grant spoke about the impacts of COVID on children's health and wellbeing.

After another disrupted and challenging year, I sincerely wish all of you a restful summer break, and hope you have the opportunity to recharge and reconnect.

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.



Making sense of being in care, adopted or whāngai

Many New Zealand children are raised by people other than their birth parents and the Evidence Centre was keen to understand more about how the tamariki and rangatahi involved made sense of their situation, learned about it and spoke of it.

The qualitative study and literature review focused on three groups: young people in care, those who are adopted or those who are whāngai, and sought to find out more about how their situation affects their sense of identity and belonging, and how their understanding of their situation changed over time. This research will inform part of Oranga Tamariki's response to new adoption legislation, and also influence the language used in social work practice.

[Read the report here.](#)

Supporting rangatahi

There has been a recent focus on support for young people leaving care or youth justice and we have released new research in the last quarter that relates to this group.

Transitions Support Service (TSS) evaluation: The TSS is for young people moving from care into independent adulthood, and is provided by a range of NGO and Iwi partners. So far 1,251 young people have been referred to a TSS partner – 53 percent of those eligible for support. This evaluation is a synthesis report, informed by studies including [Just Sayin' surveys](#) and [Ngā Haerenga](#). It found that TSS had been successfully established and early indications are that outcomes for rangatahi are more positive.

[Read the report here.](#)

Accommodation options for rangatahi leaving care:

Finding safe and stable accommodation for this group can be difficult. Entitlement to Remain or Return has been part of transitions arrangements in place since mid-2019, but take-up has been lower than expected. This literature review was commissioned to help us better understand what's happening elsewhere in the world; it also considered the reasons behind the low uptake. It summarises the strengths of different approaches and the challenges faced.

[Read the report here.](#)

Youth19 Surveys

A series of reports has been commissioned by Oranga Tamariki from the Adolescent Health Research Group's Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey. These reports compare outcomes between students who reported involvement with Oranga Tamariki and those who did not. More than 7,700

year 9–13 students in 49 secondary schools, including four kura kaupapa Māori, in the Auckland, Northland and Waikato regions were surveyed. Reports focus on culture and identity, housing and home life, health and wellbeing, and community and safety. This work forms the basis of our next seminar, scheduled for 15 February.

[Read the report here.](#)

Manaaki Tairāwhiti – a case study

Manaaki Tairāwhiti is an Iwi-led partnership changing the way that social services work together across Tairāwhiti. It is a response to issues familiar across our social sector – disconnection, duplication, siloed working, and services being developed and delivered without first understanding the needs of whānau and communities. This short case study captures the factors that underpin Manaaki Tairāwhiti successes, and looks at how the group has addressed the inevitable challenges.

[Read the report here.](#)

Support for child victims of sexual abuse

Studies indicate that in New Zealand sexual abuse is experienced by a significant number of people before they turn 16. Support services are often provided by specialist NGOs, but few cater specifically for children or young people, and there is a shortage of Kaupapa Māori services – even though evidence shows that tamariki and rangatahi Māori are at greater risk. This evidence brief reviews services and supports available here and internationally, and looks at what helps them to be effective in reducing long-term trauma.

[Read the report here.](#)

View our website to catch up on all of our latest research.

Our Research Seminars



The new virtual format for our research seminars has attracted a widely dispersed audience, and also allowed us to more easily host speakers from outside Wellington.

Our October seminar featured Dr Patrick Kelly, a paediatrician and academic based at Starship Hospital who presented on Medical Child Abuse – also known as Factitious Disorder Imposed on Another (FDIA), or Munchausen's syndrome by proxy. His presentation was supported by our [research on the subject](#). Sarah Williams, a nurse educator and consultant, then presented the findings from her PhD research – *Silos and Systems: the relationship between primary schools and health services*. Presentations, video footage and transcripts are available from our web page: [View here](#).

Earlier in December we were delighted to have Professor Cameron Grant, another paediatrician and academic with Starship Hospital present. He gave a detailed and compelling picture of the challenges faced by New Zealand's children and young people – not to mention the health service – as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Go to our seminar web page for more: [View here](#).

Looking ahead, our next seminar on 15 February will focus on the series of Youth19 reports. For an invitation to join our online audience, make sure you're on our mailing list by sending your details to research@ot.govt.nz.

Meet Eyal Apatov: Senior Analyst, Evaluation & Insights



Eyal and Zoe
on Mt Tauhara, near Taupō.

Eyal's been part of the Evaluation & Insights team for over three years. Originally from Israel, Eyal has been in New Zealand for over 14 years, seven of them in Wellington where he lives with his partner Zoe, her cat Cherrie, and many of her pot plants and pillows.

For most of his career, Eyal worked in the economic and social sectors using statistical methods to uncover the cause-and-effect a range of government interventions and initiatives has had on outcomes for New Zealanders. Eyal has a background in economics and statistics, and is very passionate about improving his technical skills. He recently completed two postgraduate econometrics courses at Victoria University.

Eyal moved to the social sector after a few years working in economics, and feeling that many of the economic issues in New Zealand reflect deeper social ones. Oranga Tamariki was a natural choice, as he agrees that the most important time to intervene and prevent harm is during childhood and the early years.

Outside of work, Eyal enjoys the outdoors, is re-learning to surf, and recently changed tack from hitting bags at the boxing gym to lifting heavy things at the gym. He's also a history fan, and musical – playing both guitar and piano.

"My main motivation at work is to see beyond the day-to-day and focus on the long-term issues faced by many New Zealanders, and provide good advice about the impacts of what we do. What I enjoy the most about working in the Evidence Centre is the diversity of projects I can be involved in, and the diversity in backgrounds and world views from my workmates. This has expanded how I see the world and think about issues, both within my role and outside."



We hope you've enjoyed learning more about our work and our team. If you have any feedback or queries, feel free to email the team at research@ot.govt.nz