

# UCB as an alternative pathway

**EVIDENCE CENTRE**  
TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

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Exploration of UCB supported care which followed a Report of Concern to Oranga Tamariki in 2019

# EVIDENCE CENTRE

## TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

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Aurora Centre, 56 The Terrace, Wellington

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre works to rebuild 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.

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**ISBN:** 978-1-99-115370-8

**Published:** Originally published June 2021, updated September 2021

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### Citation guidance:

This report can be referenced as Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre. (2021). *UCB as an alternative pathway: Exploration of UCB supported care which followed a report of concern to Oranga Tamariki in 2019*. Wellington, New Zealand: Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children.

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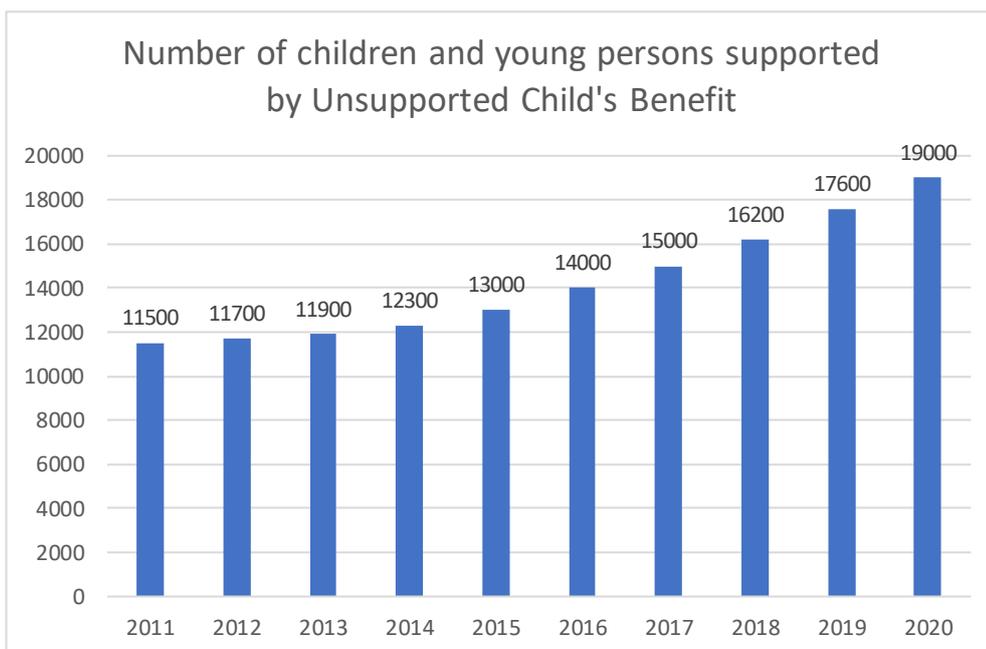
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Key findings

The Unsupported Child's Benefit (UCB) is a weekly payment, administered by Work & Income (WINZ), for whānau or non-whānau caregivers, caring for tamariki or rangatahi aged 18 years or younger who cannot be cared for by their parents or step-parents (see Appendix for full details).

The number of tamariki supported by the UCB, where there have been Reports of Concern (ROC) to Oranga Tamariki, has been increasing since 2006. At the same time there has been an overall decrease in entries to Oranga Tamariki care and it is likely that these two trends are related.



Using a small sample, we explored the nature of whānau care arrangements for this group.

Our study found that UCB was supporting whānau with complex issues to provide care, without which there would likely be a need for further intervention by Oranga Tamariki. In many cases, the change in caregiver had been organised by whānau themselves and there was no prolonged engagement with Oranga Tamariki. There was little assessment of caregivers and support discussion were limited.

Although whānau act decisively to develop their own solutions, they do appear under-served, with stretched resources and insufficient support plans to sustain care into the future. Unlike care that is arranged through the permanency policy for tamariki in care, there is no mechanism within Oranga Tamariki to help caregivers deal with unforeseen circumstances, without re-engagement with Oranga Tamariki. Without proper conversations about caregiver and tamariki needs and without access to a readily accessible funding stream for unforeseen circumstances, these care arrangements may become unstable in the longer term.

# INTRODUCTION

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## Background

UCB is a weekly payment paid to the caregiver of a tamaiti if there has been a breakdown within the whānau and no parent or step-parent is able to provide care or fully support them, and the situation is likely to last for at least 12 months<sup>1</sup>. To establish eligibility, Work and Income (WINZ) must determine there has been a family breakdown by interviewing the natural parents and caregivers, and others (e.g. teachers or social workers)<sup>2</sup>. The interviewing – known as assessment – is predominantly carried out by Barnardos on behalf of WINZ. Barnardos make a recommendation to WINZ, who then make the final decision. WINZ staff may accept an application without an assessment when there is clear evidence of a family breakdown, e.g. when there is a Court order.

The UCB is not income-tested. Claimants normally also receive a one-off Establishment Grant of \$350 per tamaiti to help covers costs of te tamaiti coming into their care. The claimant can also apply for the annual School and Year Start-up Payment to help cover costs associated with the beginning of the school year. The claimant must apply for this between mid-January and the end of February each year. Claimants can also apply to the Extraordinary Care Fund to help support te tamaiti who are showing promise in a particular area to reach their potential, or if te tamaiti are experiencing difficulties affecting their development. However there is a \$2000 cap on this fund and not all applications can be approved<sup>3</sup>.

Since 2011, the number of tamariki supported by UCB has been increasing (see chart page 4 for details). During the same period there has been a decline in entries to Oranga Tamariki care which accelerated markedly during 2019, 2020 and 2021 financial years.

We undertook a case note analysis to explore the nature of UCB supported care arrangements which follow a proximate Report of Concern to Oranga Tamariki.

## Section 7AA

Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act sets out requirements to assess the impact of policies on tamariki Māori and to understand disparities in outcomes between Māori and non-Māori. UCB provides a pathway to financially support whānau who are acting protectively and independently to resolve issues which impact on the wellbeing of tamariki. Understanding how UCB can support whānau where there is care and protection involvement with Oranga Tamariki, but no formal care proceedings, helps to illuminate outcomes for tamariki Māori. It can provide insights into pathways which support whānau who have found their own solutions and can help avoid unnecessary statutory intervention.

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<sup>1</sup> This '12-month rule' was in place for the period relevant to the cases in this analysis

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix for details on UCB eligibility

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix for details on the Extraordinary Care Fund

## Research question

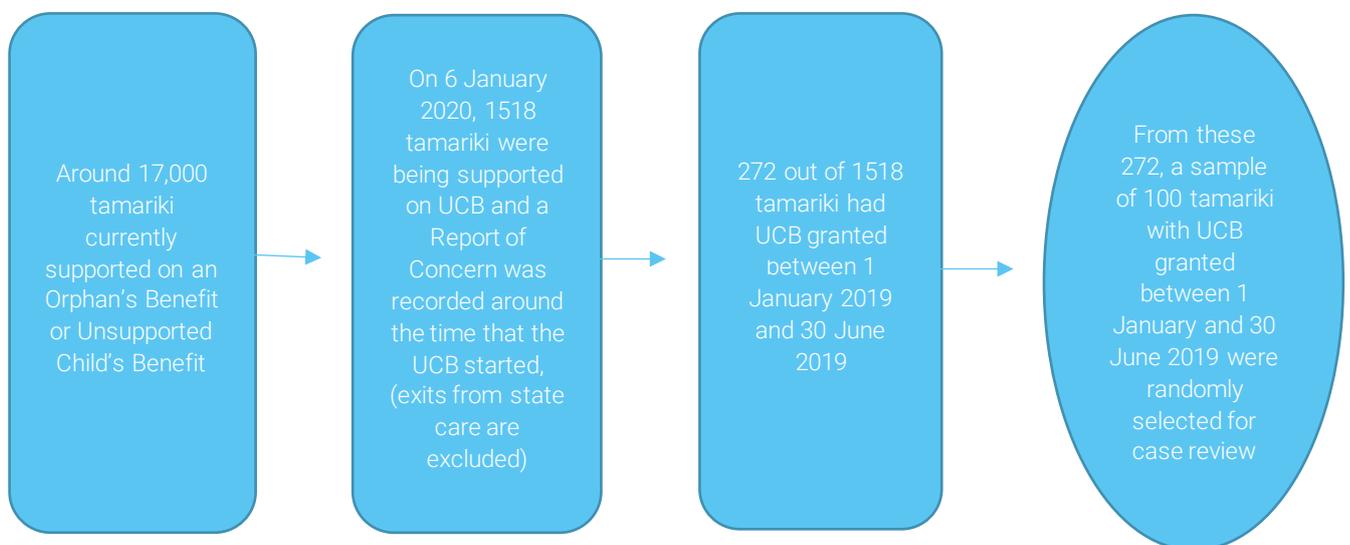
The purpose of this research was to explore UCB supported care where there have been care and protection concerns raised in a Report of Concern, but where there has been no statutory care intervention by Oranga Tamariki.

It seeks to understand the nature of care and protection concerns raised, how these relate to the change in whānau caregiver and the level of involvement by Oranga Tamariki in this move, along with understanding support offered to caregivers.

## Study cohort<sup>4</sup>

We considered tamariki first cared for during the period 1 January to 30 June 2019, where the UCB, which supported their care followed a proximate Report of Concern, and this UCB was still active in January 2020. It included all Care and Protection Reports of Concern received in the 90 days before or after the UCB start date and excluded circumstances where a UCB payment followed an exit from statutory care. As this was a convenience dataset, that was already established, it is suitable for exploratory research but cannot be used to generate estimates for wider UCB populations.<sup>5</sup>

The sample was drawn as follows:



## Methodology

CYRAS records, relating to the Report of Concern and any following assessment and intervention, were reviewed through a structured data inquiry process. Data were coded and collated in an Excel spreadsheet with controlled entry and free text fields. A guidance document (available on request) provided advice to reviewers about the interpretation of case notes and the coding of this text. Where possible, text was categorised within the coding framework provided, with 'other' categories

<sup>4</sup> There is no detailed documentation about how the data was extracted, so codes cannot be reviewed, but our fundamental assumption is the data pertaining to 'all active UCB/OB on 6 January 2020 with a ROC around the time entering UCB/OB' are correct.

<sup>5</sup> The Evidence Centre is in the process of requesting UCB data from MSD which would enable data analysis to be replicated in the future.

only used where there was no code that could be reliably applied. This guidance document mirrored the spreadsheet that captured structured data and reviewers' comments.

This review followed the care and protection pathway of receiving information, making an NFA/FAR (no further action/further action required) decision, carrying out assessment (including that which might happen in intake), making a finding<sup>6</sup> and holding a hui-a-whānau or FGC to consider the care and protection concerns. As a whānau care arrangement through UCB can happen anywhere throughout this process, reviewers looked at Safety and Risk Screens and Tuituia reports for reference to a change in a care arrangement.

Three reviewers carried out an initial analysis of a group of test case records in the sample, working together on developing the guidance document and on the analysis and interpretation of results. They reviewed a group of cases independently and used this as a basis for discussion, interpretation and revision of codes and categories. Two reviewers then worked independently on reviewing the cases in the sample and submitted a group of cases to each other for co-moderation – these included cases where reviewers had made borderline or cannot be determined judgements.

CYRAS recording limitations and data access issues mean this is a limited exploratory study, using a convenience sample and conducted within a short timeframe. It can provide initial insights into care arrangements made this way during 2019 and the findings may generate further research proposals.

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<sup>6</sup> In this document a finding refers to the conclusion that a social worker draws based on the information available about te tamaiti and their circumstances.

# ANALYSIS

## Demographics

As the graph on page 4 shows, around 17,634 tamariki were being cared for under an Orphan's Benefit or Unsupported Child's Benefit as at 30 June 2019.<sup>7</sup> Data provided for the study population on 6 January 2019 showed 1518 tamariki were being cared for by a caregiver supported by UCB where a Report of Concern was recorded around the time UCB started.<sup>8</sup> Among 1518 active UCB tamariki, 272 were supported by UCB between 1 January 2019 and 30 June 2019. A sample of 100 tamariki were randomly selected from this group of 272 for case note study.

The following tables show the demographic characteristics of the sample group:

Table 1: Number of tamariki by ethnicity

| Ethnicity group | Number of tamariki | Percentage |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------|
| Māori           | 58                 | 58%        |
| Māori & Pacific | 8                  | 8%         |
| NZ Euro Other   | 28                 | 28%        |
| Pacific         | 6                  | 6%         |
| Total           | 100                | 100%       |

Tamariki Māori make up the largest group in this sample, with 66% identifying as Māori or Māori and Pacific.

Table 2: Number of tamariki by age group

| Age group   | Number of tamariki | Percentage |
|-------------|--------------------|------------|
| 0-4 years   | 17                 | 17%        |
| 5-11 years  | 44                 | 44%        |
| 12-18 years | 39                 | 39%        |

Tamariki who are aged between 5 and 11 years make up the biggest age group.

## History of previous Oranga Tamariki involvement

Most tamariki in this sample had been previously involved with Oranga Tamariki. Sixty-five out of 100 tamariki had more than five Reports of Concern (care and protection) recorded prior to becoming supported by UCB (Table 3). Sixty-seven out of 100 (67%) tamariki had substantiated assessment findings relating to them including behavioural and relationship difficulties, emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, self-harm and suicidal behaviours (Table 5). However, less than half of tamariki (30) of 100 had had a family group conference (FGC) convened (Table 6) prior to becoming supported by UCB.

<sup>7</sup> This number is generated from the IDI. These results are not official statistics.

<sup>8</sup> Data is provided from a previous UCB/OB project however there are no detailed data rules available showing how this data was extracted.

Table 3: Number of tamariki by ROC history

| Number of ROCs | Number of tamariki |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1              | 9                  |
| 2-4            | 26                 |
| More than 5    | 65                 |

Table 4: Number of tamariki by number of ROCs with 'FAR' outcomes (further action required)

| Number of ROCs with 'FAR' outcome | Number of tamariki |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1                                 | 17                 |
| 2-4                               | 46                 |
| More than 5                       | 37                 |

Table 5: Number of tamariki by findings

| Number of findings prior to UCB | Number of tamariki |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1                               | 14                 |
| 2-4                             | 34                 |
| 5 and more                      | 19                 |
| No findings                     | 33                 |

Table 6: Number of tamariki FGCs held prior to UCB

| Number of FGCs held | Number of tamariki |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 0                   | 70                 |
| 1                   | 21                 |
| 2-4                 | 9                  |

## Where are tamariki living when they are notified?

The majority (94) of tamariki were living with their parents, step-parents or their whānau at the time of the Report of Concern, including three who were unborn pēpi at that time (Table 7).

Table 7: Number of tamariki by living status when notified.

| Tamariki status                                   | Number of tamariki |
|---|--------------------|
| At home with parents/step-parents                 | 64                 |
| Whānau care                                       | 16                 |
| Informally moving between parents and whānau care | 11                 |
| Informal care by friends or neighbours            | 6                  |
| Unborn  | 3                  |

## Notifiers of concerns

Police were the largest notifier group, followed by whānau members and the health sector (Table 8).

Table 8: Number of tamariki by notifier type

| Notifier type          | Number of tamariki |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Police                 | 25                 |
| Whānau                 | 15                 |
| Health (PHN, hospital) | 12                 |
| Other                  | 11                 |
| Education              | 11                 |
| NGO                    | 10                 |
| Oranga Tamariki Staff  | 10                 |
| Anonymous              | 6                  |

### Concerns that are notified

Most tamariki were described by notifiers as living in difficult situations with multiple concerns. Alleged maltreatment (56%) was the most common issue raised, with a quarter of tamariki having concerns related to family violence.

Table 9: Number of children by types of concern notified

| Report concern | Maltreatment | Risky tamariki behaviours | Parental alcohol and drug use | Parental methamphetamine use | Family violence |
|----------------|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Yes            | 56           | 15                        | 22                            | 15                           | 27              |
| No             | 44           | 85                        | 78                            | 85                           | 73              |

### Urgency of Report of Concern

Most tamariki who were notified required an urgent response to the Report of Concern. Twenty-nine out of 100 children notified received a critical or very urgent response to the Report of Concern by Oranga Tamariki. The biggest group (52) required action within 7 days.

Table 10: Number of children by urgency of Report of Concern

| Outcome of ROC             | Number of tamariki |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| FAR 20 days                | 19                 |
| FAR 7 days                 | 52                 |
| FAR very urgent (48 hours) | 7                  |
| FAR critical (24 hours)    | 22                 |

## Assessed care and protection concerns

All the Reports of Concern which we reviewed in this sample received an assessment or an investigation. This involved assessing a range of concerns which are described in the table below. Maltreatment is again the biggest group, followed by family violence and methamphetamine use.

Table 11: Number of tamariki by type of assessed care and protection concerns

| Did Assessment substantiate the ROC? | Maltreatment | Risk tamariki behaviours | Parental alcohol and drug use | Parental methamphetamine use | Family violence |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Yes                                  | 51           | 17                       | 22                            | 24                           | 28              |
| No                                   | 49           | 83                       | 78                            | 76                           | 72              |

### Outcome of the investigation or assessment

Seventy-three out of 100 tamariki had abuse findings related to the Report of Concern, with emotional abuse and physical abuse as the most common maltreatment types.

While more than half of tamariki in the group required no further action following the assessment, for 40 out of 100 tamariki, the assessed Report of Concern ended with an intention to make a referral for an FGC.

Table 12: Number of tamariki by type of response from the investigation and assessment

| Response                      | Number of tamariki |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| No further action             | 54                 |
| Family Group Conference (FGC) | 40                 |
| Family Whānau Agreement (FWA) | 3                  |
| Family Court Orders           | 3                  |

### Level of whānau engagement in assessment or investigation

Whānau members were engaged with during the assessment or investigation in 94 out of 100 cases. For 80 out of 100 this was face-to-face contact with Oranga Tamariki.

Table 13: Number of tamariki by whānau engagement type

| Whānau engagement                                   | Number of tamariki |
|---|--------------------|
| No record of whānau engagement                      | 6                  |
| Some whānau engagement – phone calls or emails      | 14                 |
| Whānau engagement – face-to-face in home            | 43                 |
| Whānau engagement – face-to-face in office          | 14                 |
| Whānau engagement – face-to-face in office and home | 23                 |

Sixty-six tamariki in the sample identify as Māori. In most cases (52 out of 66) there was no cultural support engaged with as part of the investigation or assessment, with kairaranga advice received for three tamariki Māori. For a further 11 tamariki, Māori cultural advice was obtained through Iwi Social Services, marae or other sources.

Table 14: Number of tamariki by cultural support status

Thirty-four tamariki are not included in this table since they are non-Māori.

| Cultural support for tamariki Māori* | Number of tamariki |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Kairaranga advice received           | 3                  |
| No kairaranga or cultural support    | 52                 |
| No kairaranga or cultural support    | 11                 |

\*Note that these figures are indicative only and are likely to under-record instances of kairaranga advice as this is a relatively new service and systematic reporting is not yet embedded in practice

## Caregiving arrangements made

Forty-four out of 100 tamariki had their care already arranged by whānau at the time of the Report of Concern. For 19 tamariki care was discussed within a whānau hui with Oranga Tamariki present and for 20 tamariki caregiving arrangements were facilitated during the process of assessment or investigation.

Table 15: Number of children by caregiving arrangement type

| Caregiving arrangement                    | Number of tamariki |
|---|--------------------|
| Whānau arranged                           | 44                 |
| Facilitate in assessment or investigation | 20                 |
| Following whānau hui only                 | 19                 |
| Other                                     | 9                  |
| Within an FGC plan                        | 7                  |
| Within an FWA                             | 1                  |

## Permanent care

The largest group of tamariki were supported by UCB with the intention that new caregivers were offering permanent care. For almost a third of the group (30), UCB was supporting care to enable parents to obtain access to services, programmes or treatment.

Table 16: Number of tamariki by reasons for change

| Reason for change                   | Number of tamariki |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Alternative permanent care          | 55                 |
| Care while parents receive services | 24                 |
| Other                               | 14                 |
| Alongside care by parents           | 4                  |

## Details of caregivers, assessment and support

The biggest group of whānau caregivers were great grandparents or grandparents (42 out of 100), with maternal great grandparents or grandparents (28 out of 100) accounting for almost twice the number of paternal great grandparents or grandparents (14 out of 100). Paternal aunts or uncles were the next biggest group (19), with 16 tamariki cared for by maternal aunts or uncles.

Table 17: Number of children by caregivers

| Who are care givers?          | Number of tamariki |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Great/grandparents (maternal) | 28                 |
| Great/grandparents (paternal) | 14                 |
| Aunt/uncle (maternal)         | 16                 |
| Aunt/uncle (paternal)         | 19                 |
| Sibling                       | 5                  |
| Other                         | 18                 |

Most of the investigations or assessments (60 out of 100) had no structured caregiver assessment activities evident on the record.

Table 18: Number of tamariki by caregiver assessment status

| Caregiver assessment   | Number of tamariki |
|--|--------------------|
| No assessment activities evident on the record                         | 60                 |
| Meeting for assessment purposes with caregiver in the caregiver's home | 17                 |
| Police or Work and Income checks                                       | 11                 |
| Other  | 9                  |
| Already has CoCA orders  | 2                  |
| Caregiver currently approved by Oranga Tamariki                        | 1                  |

In only one-quarter of cases, 25 out 100, was there any record of a support discussion held with caregivers. It is possible that support discussions were taking place between whānau caregivers and Oranga Tamariki social workers, but were not being entered into the record. There was however evidence in the records of frequent referral to agencies and programmes for caregiver support.

Table 19: Number of tamariki by support arranged<sup>9</sup>

| Support arranged                                   | Number of tamariki |
|--|--------------------|
| Referral to agency/programme for caregiver support | 58                 |
| No support discussed                               | 25                 |
| Other  | 20                 |
| Material assistance by Oranga Tamariki             | 12                 |

### Was the new care arrangement an alternative pathway?

For 72 out of 100 tamariki (72%) UCB was supporting whānau to provide care, without which tamariki would likely require further intervention by Oranga Tamariki. Only seven tamariki in the sample were considered to be below this threshold. For a further group, insufficient records or individual circumstances made it difficult to make this judgement.

Table 20: Number of tamariki likely were on UCBs as alternative pathway

| Alternative pathway?                      | Number of tamariki |
|---|--------------------|
| Yes                                       | 72                 |
| Unable to determine                       | 21                 |
| No (likely below the statutory threshold) | 7                  |

<sup>9</sup> This table does not add to 100, since tamariki might have more than one support arrangement.

## Re-engagement and stability

Table 21: Tamariki re-engagement and stability after entry to UCB

| Stability post-UCB entry | Number of tamariki |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Not applicable           | 1                  |
| No                       | 27                 |
| Unknown                  | 23                 |
| Yes                      | 49                 |

For 24 out of 100 tamariki in the sample, there was no further information available about their care as there was no further engagement with Oranga Tamariki<sup>10</sup>. For those 76 tamariki where there was further information available, case records suggested that 49 were still with their caregiver and that 27 had either returned to parents or moved to another caregiver.

For tamariki where there had been a subsequent change of caregiver, management of tamariki behaviour was an issue. Difficulties managing the care of large sibling groups, conflicts around access and poor living conditions were also referenced. Changed caregiver circumstances and youth offending were other factors.

Table 22: Reports of Concern after entry to UCB

| Number of ROC post-UCB entry | Number of tamariki |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 0                            | 39                 |
| 1                            | 27                 |
| 2                            | 17                 |
| 3                            | 13                 |
| 5+                           | 4                  |

Some tamariki (61) re-engaged through a further Report of Concern and two of them entered Oranga Tamariki care<sup>11</sup>. Apart from 24 of 39 tamariki who had no ROC recorded, other tamariki remained involved with Oranga Tamariki under support orders or FGC plans, so case note information about care was available.

## Discussion

### An alternative pathway

We considered that, for the majority of whānau in this study, care and protection issues were being resolved by proactive actions by whānau, which meant further statutory intervention was avoided. In making this judgement we considered the nature of the concerns, whether these concerns required an investigation or assessment and whether findings were made from this assessment.

**Whānau are already known to Oranga Tamariki.** We had expected that some tamariki would be previously unknown to Oranga Tamariki or have concerns that were one-off or not at the level where they would require a statutory response. However, the majority of tamariki in this sample already had multiple Reports of Concern to Oranga Tamariki and multiple assessments.

<sup>10</sup> Up to 30 March 2021.

<sup>11</sup> One additional child went to CE custody for youth justice reasons.

**Care and protection issues.** Amongst the group of tamariki who were notified, there were serious concerns held by notifiers. The majority related to allegations of maltreatment, with family violence, alcohol or drug use (including methamphetamine use) raised as concerns. A further group were tamariki who were identified as having at-risk behaviours.

**These concerns required investigation or assessment.** We had expected that some of the matters raised in these Reports of Concern would have been at a level that did not require statutory investigation and therefore would have been closed at intake or immediately referred to agencies. However, every case in the sample we reviewed received a response of further action with an investigation or assessment following, and most were conducted within urgent, very urgent or critical timeframes. However, full assessments were not always carried out, and some were resolved very quickly at the point of the safety and risk screen, with little additional information gathered beyond that already detailed in the Report of Concern.

**Substantiated care and protection concerns.** For the majority of tamariki, a finding of abuse was made. For some tamariki, where abuse was not substantiated, the change of whānau caregiver, usually arranged by whānau, acted to prevent maltreatment or mitigate risk. For others, 'not found' reflected an incomplete assessment, curtailed because a new caregiving arrangement was established. In some, 'not found' represented issues that were below the threshold.

**Reducing the need for Oranga Tamariki intervention.** The case notes suggest that the change in whānau caregiver enabled Oranga Tamariki to resolve an investigation or assessment of a care and protection matter without the need for further intervention. For a large number of tamariki, an FGC was seen as the next step, however in only a small number of cases was the whānau caregiving arrangement actually covered off in an FGC plan. In most cases, despite the intention, it was seen as unnecessary to convene an FGC, sometimes because caregivers had already obtained Court orders.

There were some minor matters we reviewed which we considered did not represent serious care and protection concerns and where the UCB supported arrangements did not concern wellbeing issues. These circumstances involved new custodial arrangements where parents had separated, or a change of caregiving which enabled a parent to relocate overseas for a period. There was also a group where the investigation or assessment records were insufficient for reviewers to make a determination.

## Supporting whānau caregivers

**Whānau engagement is happening but it is brief.** Changes in whānau caregiving are made, often prior to the Report of Concern or early in the care and protection process and outside of an FGC. Most often, the change was not initiated by Oranga Tamariki and was determined by whānau prior to the conclusion of the assessment or investigation. As such, Oranga Tamariki were not engaging with wider whānau and where a whānau hui did happen these were small meetings, with few attendees beyond parents and whānau caregivers. However wider consultation may be happening within the whānau, which did not involve Oranga Tamariki and was therefore not reflected in case records.

**Support discussions are not recorded.** Whānau caregivers were often providing care in stretched circumstances, including in overcrowded houses, amidst poverty, and where caregivers already were caring for sick partners, older parents and other mokopuna. There were few case-notes recording in-depth discussion about what support caregivers needed. Age and health of caregivers were not generally explored. The conversations that were recorded were focused on benefit entitlement, obtaining letters from Oranga Tamariki in support of UCB applications, how to contact lawyers to apply for orders and the costs of legal fees. In some cases, there was evidence that Oranga Tamariki

was providing material assistance in the form of food vouchers to assist whānau to manage while benefit entitlement was arranged. In many cases, there were referrals made to agencies for caregiver support. Caregivers seldom raised their own support needs, perhaps through concern that if they did not provide care, mokopuna may become further involved with Oranga Tamariki. Again, it is also possible that discussions were taking place but that these conversations were not recorded.

**Assessment activities are variable.** In most cases there was very little structured assessment of caregivers recorded. In some cases, checks were conducted as part of the investigation or assessment process. This involved assessing physical surroundings and safety, as well as talking to caregivers about dealing with stress and attitudes to discipline. In other cases, Police and/or Work and Income checks were conducted. Overall a comprehensive approach to assessing caregiving situations was missing.

**FGC referrals made but FGCs not often held.** For a significant group of cases there was an intention to go to FGC as a result of the investigation or assessment. However often the FGC did not take place and there were few records of the changed circumstances that enabled the social worker to withdraw their referral. In some circumstances, caregivers had been granted orders or care arrangements had bedded in and so the FGC was viewed as unnecessary. These may represent lost opportunities to build whānau connections and support strategies.

**Little engagement with tamariki.** Overall, we saw very little engagement with tamariki beyond collecting evidential material about maltreatment and its impact. In many cases there was no effort to sight te tamaiti or understand what the change of caregiver meant to them and what they needed to settle in well. The exception to this were those arrangements made alongside the youth justice process, where there was much stronger engagement with whānau and rangatahi.

## Strengthening this care

These findings suggest that whānau, willing to take on the care of mokopuna early in the care and protection process, may be under-served by Oranga Tamariki. Where self-organising whānau offer care solutions, assessment of these situations is brief, perhaps driven by an intention to minimise intervention and to enable te whānau to direct matters.

There is substantial evidence from surveys and interviews that whānau carers find the level of financial and other support from Oranga Tamariki inadequate to cover their costs and to adequately meet the needs of the child/ren in their care. Whānau may feel constrained about raising their support needs in case this drives further intervention by Oranga Tamariki.

## Limitations

This study is limited by the nature of the sample used and the case note review methodology. The dataset was not specifically designed for this study and so restricts the extent to which findings can be generalised to the wider population. Further limitations relate to the nature of case note review which relies on the accuracy and extent of case notes made by individual social workers. There will be incomplete records and there will be data that it not easily interpreted by those who are not involved with these decisions. These are sources of error which are anticipated in case note review work. Assessing care and protection concerns is a complex process and reviewing and coding this content involves a range of judgements, which can never be completely free of subjective judgement.

The Evidence Centre is in the process requesting historical UCB data for future research analysis which would enable a proper study on 'UCB as a contributor to the decline of children entering to

statutory care'. Case review analysis using this population could enable an estimation of how many tamariki with a Report of Concern in last 10 years, where support by UCB offers an alternative to further statutory intervention.

## Conclusion

We reviewed a sample of 100 Unsupported Child's Benefit (UCB) cases where there was a proximate Report of Concern received, in order to understand the nature of whānau care provided.

Following this review, we estimate that for the majority of tamariki in this study UCB was supporting their whānau to provide care, without which further intervention by Oranga Tamariki was likely. We noted however, that whānau offering this care appear to be under-served, with stretched resources and insufficient support plans to sustain care over the longer term.

It is worth noting however that there is policy work underway looking at simplifying and aligning financial and other support for all Oranga Tamariki carers, including consulting with carers. See [Reforming financial assistance and support for caregivers](https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/caregiving/financial-help/review-of-financial-assistance-for-caregivers/) for more information. ([www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/caregiving/financial-help/review-of-financial-assistance-for-caregivers/](https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/caregiving/financial-help/review-of-financial-assistance-for-caregivers/))

# APPENDIX

## Unsupported Child's Benefit and Extraordinary Care Fund details

### Unsupported Child's Benefit

Administered by Work and Income, the Unsupported Child's Benefit is a weekly payment for family/whānau or non-whānau caregivers caring for tamariki or rangatahi who are not in the custody of the Oranga Tamariki chief executive and who are:

- 18 years or younger
- financially dependent on their caregivers
- not cared for by their parents.

The person applying for the benefit must:

- be 18 years or older and the main carer of te tamaiti or rangatahi
- expect te tamaiti or rangatahi to live with them for 12 months or more (for in the analysis period)
- be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
- not be the natural or adoptive parent or step-parent of te tamaiti or rangatahi.

If the decision for tamariki to live away from their usual parent or caregiver is an outcome of a family group conference (FGC) or family/whānau agreement, we encourage family/whānau and non-whānau caregivers to talk directly with Work and Income about their entitlements. If the plan is shorter than 12 months then the FGC plan or family/whānau agreement needs to include who and how financial costs will be covered.

When te tamaiti is transitioning out of our custody into the custody of family/whānau, then the family/whānau/caregivers can apply for the Unsupported Child's Benefit up to 20 days before the custody order to the chief executive is discharged.

### Extraordinary Care Fund

The ECF is a \$2000 grant provided by Work and Income. Recipients of the UCB (or Orphan's Benefit) can apply for one grant each financial year, and applications are considered during various funding periods during the year (for example, if an application is received before mid-February (and after mid-October) then the applicant will receive an answer after mid-April). The ECF is established to support tamariki who are experiencing difficulties that are significantly impacting on their development or to support tamariki showing promise in a particular area.

If the cost of the support package is over \$2000, the caregiver must pay the difference, and how this will be obtained must be evidenced as part of the application. If the application is for more than \$500, there must be two letters of support from an independent person of standing in the community (e.g. teacher, coach). The fund is limited, so not all applications are approved.