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Formative evaluation of the court support service

June 2026



The Oranga Tamariki Social Impact and Research team 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.

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Executive Summary

The new court support service for tamariki and rangatahi was designed to address a significant service gap in the sector

The court support service is a new, holistic, and survivor-focused initiative designed for tamariki and rangatahi (aged 18 and under at referral) navigating the criminal justice process. It addresses a significant gap in the sector by providing dedicated care for young people, complementing the existing adult court support service managed by the Ministry of Social Development. The service provides intensive, relational support that spans the entire justice journey - from initial crisis and reporting to post-trial healing - aiming to reduce re-traumatisation and support long-term resilience.

Between April–July 2025, Oranga Tamariki contracted eleven court support providers to deliver services across Gisborne, Auckland, Mangere, Waitemata, Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Whanganui, and Canterbury.

A formative evaluation identified the value the service offers

In July 2025, Oranga Tamariki commissioned a formative evaluation which would incorporate a Value-for-Investment (Vfi) approach^{1,2,3}. The evaluation was informed by a document review, regional planning hui, and interviews with government agencies, service providers, and a small number of tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. All providers except in the far North/Kaipara/Whangarei region took part in the evaluation, as delivery delays precluded their inclusion in the evaluation.

The service represents value for tamariki and rangatahi – from survival to empowered participation

The court support service delivers value to tamariki and rangatahi by replacing an adult-centric justice experience with trauma-informed, whanaungatanga-led practice and care. By providing immediate stabilisation, crisis and ongoing therapeutic support for tamaiti and their whānau, the service enables informed decision-making from the outset, while guiding all through the justice system with clear, accessible explanations that reduce confusion and anxiety.

For many tamariki and rangatahi, Court Support Workers (CSWs) become a critical, reliable, and safe adult presence, significantly reducing their isolation. By demystifying a complex legal system and enabling voice and agency - most notably through advocacy and Victim Impact Statements – the service ensures tamariki, rangatahi and whānau feel validated, respected and emotionally held throughout their journey. Consequently, rangatahi and whānau described moving from a state of “*survival*” to navigating the system with great clarity and confidence. Whānau also described feeling

¹ King, J. (2024). Value for Money and the 5Es Designing a context-specific VfM framework. Available from: <https://www.julianking.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Value-for-Money-and-the-5Es-Julian-King.pdf>

² King, J. (2021). Expanding theory-based evaluation: incorporating value creation in a theory of change. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, Dec:89

³ More information on theories of value creation can also be found at <https://www.julianking.co.nz/vfi/>



reassured that their tamariki were genuinely supported by their CSWs when they could not be with them in a courtroom setting.

The impacts of the service extend far beyond legal proceedings to foster long-term healing and well-being. Through developmentally appropriate therapeutic support and clear explanations of sexual violence, tamariki and rangatahi are supported to release self-blame. Across both rangatahi and whānau, this contributes to restored self-worth, improved wellbeing, and more positive outlooks on life and ongoing healing journeys. The service also strengthens whānau resilience by actively supporting parents and caregivers to process their own trauma, which prevents adult distress from burdening their tamariki and rangatahi and creates a calmer environment and support system for tamaiti. This stabilising impact is further reinforced by practical assistance, such as support with food and household items. For whānau requiring urgent uplifts from housing arrangements, the provision of essential belongings - such as furniture, utensils, and bedding - is particularly vital, ensuring tamariki have familiar and comforting items during times of upheaval.

Overall, the value of the court support service lies in delivering critical, intangible outcomes such as increasing safety and trust, restoring dignity, and laying the essential foundation for long-term, multi-generational and sustained healing and resilience.

The service represents value for the justice sector – championing child-centric and culturally responsive practice

The court support service adds value to the justice sector by role-modelling highly responsive, child-centric care that addresses diverse developmental, neurodiverse, and cultural identities. This is achieved through trauma-informed therapeutic interventions - such as sand trays and play-based therapy outside of court - that help tamariki safely explore their thoughts, fears, and behaviours. Within the court environment, including Audio Visual Link (AVL) and post-testimony spaces, CSWs utilise practical calming supports like making sure phone chargers are available and providing fidget toys, stress balls and snacks, which are recognised as having a significant grounding effect for young people experiencing high levels of anxiety and overwhelm.

Providers consistently act in the best interests of tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau, frequently extending their support well beyond contractual boundaries. Recognising a sector-wide gap in accessible information (with the exception of the existing Manukau Court Support booklet), many providers have proactively invested their own time and resources into developing up-to-date tools and resources. To improve sector navigation, some have created plain-English step-by-step court journey flowcharts and/or bilingual and Pacific-responsive explanations.

To further embed this child-centric value across the broader justice system, providers advocate for improved referral pathways and targeted, sector-wide training. Critical capability priorities include education on child development, the use of developmentally appropriate messaging, and intentional, culturally responsive communication. In addition, future training must encompass whanaungatanga-based approaches to compassionately explain complex court processes - such as delays and adjournments - alongside practical planning that accounts for siblings, schooling, accommodation, and safety.



The service represents value for inclusive practice – delivering continuous care that is responsive to diverse and intersectional contexts

The service delivers value by providing flexible, culturally grounded, and holistic support that adapts to complex and intersectional needs, including neurodiversity, disability, and intergenerational trauma. Through accessible and continuous engagement, Kaupapa Māori and Pacific informed practice, and developmentally appropriate tools (like play-based therapy), providers create a safe, dignified and highly responsive environment for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. This sustained, responsive support helps strengthen rangatahi and whānau stability, safety, and capacity to stay engaged with the justice process on their own terms.

However, to ensure the justice ecosystem is fully inclusive and to reduce ongoing provider strain, critical equity and access gaps must be resolved. Future investment must address the severe under-resourcing of Pacific court support services, which face high demand across large geographic areas with very limited capacity. Additionally, systemic issues such as instances of misgendering in court and inconsistent access to specialist communication support remain pressure points that undermine the service's value and continue to exclude highly vulnerable young people.

The service represents value for the resources invested – delivering effective, system-wide support

Court support providers were contracted to deliver the new court support service, utilising 12 full-time equivalent (FTE) funding allocations. Most of these organisations brought significant expertise to the role, with eight already possessing experience in adult court support services.

The service's primary strength lies in its experienced, multidisciplinary workforce, which utilises a flexible, intentional, and team-based delivery model. Most providers maintain one primary CSW, supported by staff who hold broader social work and clinical responsibilities. This model allows providers to integrate court support into wider in-house services, such as social work, counselling, mentoring, youth therapy, and school-based supports. Consequently, whānau can move flexibly between services as their needs change - for example, re-engaging with crisis or counselling services following new disclosures or re-traumatisation -while broader needs like housing, food, and education are concurrently addressed.

Court commitments are treated as non-negotiable; when demand peaks, CSW caseloads are adjusted, and wider teams rally to support or cover other responsibilities. Providers acknowledge the emotional intensity and sustained case complexity involved in court support. Staff describe the work as deeply meaningful and values-aligned, viewing it as a long-term commitment driven by purpose and impact rather than financial motivation.

Currently, the service demonstrates good value for the resource invested. This value is further enhanced by providers going above and beyond to absorb unanticipated costs and ensure whānau needs are met. For example, providers respond immediately to meet basic needs - such as providing kai on arrival - and often absorb costs to protect tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau dignity, safety, and court participation until underlying systemic issues are resolved. This dedication highlights a kaupapa-driven practice centred on trust, safety, and meaningful engagement.



Beyond direct client support, the service plays a critical system coordination and navigation role.

CSWs act as a central point of contact and advocate, bridging gaps between fragmented justice agencies, improving communication, and reducing duplication across the service pathway. This coordination delivers broader systemic value by alleviating administrative pressures on Police and Court Victim Advisors, enabling them to focus on their core legal functions.

However, the work remains resource-intensive and relies heavily on provider adaptability to manage fluctuating demand and systemic inefficiencies. While the breadth and depth of outcomes achieved indicate that the service is highly effective and valuable, current contract funding is not well aligned with the realities of service delivery. To sustain a reliable court support ecosystem, it is essential to formalise cross-agency relationships, roles, and protocols, and to realign funding with the actual complexity and intensity of cases, rather than relying solely on case volumes.

Opportunities to strengthen the value the service offers

Sustaining effective and high-quality court support depends on preserving the core relational practice elements that underpin engagement, wellbeing, and positive outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. Essential factors to retain include:

- Flexible, trust-based whanaungatanga and engagement: Maintaining responsive contact that adjusts to whānau needs, including accessibility outside standard hours.
- Child- and whānau-centred practice: Continuing trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and holistic wraparound support that integrates social work, therapeutic counselling, and practical assistance.
- Continuous post-trial care and healing: Maintaining accessible, "*walk-alongside*" support that spans the entire justice journey, including after sentencing. This is critical to retain because post-court events - such as offender release or appeals - can re-trigger distress for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau, extending emotional demands well after formal case closure.
- Systemic advocacy and seamless pathways: Upholding strong cross-agency coordination and early intervention, particularly through "*warm handovers*" between crisis, therapeutic, and court support services to ensure timely and connected care.

Evaluative insights highlight a critical need to strengthen resourcing, coordination, and system alignment to maximise the court support service's return on investment. These insights have informed the following key considerations aligned with Vfl criteria.

- **Workforce and resourcing:** Sustain and scale the flexible, team-based delivery model by increasing dedicated staffing levels. This will ensure providers manage peak demands – such as back-to-back, overlapping or intensive five-week trials - without placing undue pressure on wider non-court support teams or compromising long-term sustainability. Additionally, funding and FTE allocations could be realigned to reflect the actual complexity, intensity, and duration of cases, rather than relying solely on case volumes. This may include introducing surge-capacity funding to manage unexpected referral spikes.
- **Sector capability:** Establish a nationally coordinated, provider-led training programme to ensure consistent, trauma-informed practice across the justice ecosystem. This programme should be sustainably resourced and accessible to all justice sector counterparts, including Police, Court Victim Advisors (CVAs), and registrars. Coordination and delivery could be



facilitated by a group of provider representatives or an umbrella body like TOAH-NNEST, with a focus on in-person training supplemented by structured, six-monthly refresher sessions. While establishing this national framework is the clear priority, local initiatives - such as the joint training led by court staff in Auckland – may serve as a helpful interim and supplementary measure for improving regional role clarity, collaboration, and system coordination.

- **System coordination and access:** Formalise interagency coordination to clarify cross-sector roles, responsibilities, and information-sharing protocols, reducing the current reliance on informal relationships. Overcoming ongoing systemic barriers - such as consent loops, incompatible systems, and regional silos - requires defining clear escalation pathways and a chain of command when logistical issues arise. Concurrently, referral pathways could be improved to minimise late referrals and enable earlier, relational engagement needed to build trust with whānau.
- **Whānau court participation funding and entitlements:** Formalise and adequately cover practical assistance providers currently deliver, such as whānau travel, food, and accommodation and/or investing significant time chasing up funding support and victim support grants. Streamlining the allocation of court participation entitlements is needed. This may be achieved either by vesting administrative control directly with court support providers or by introducing a flexible contingency fund to ensure urgent costs are met when standard entitlements fail in practice.
- **System-level review:** Drive system-level change to transition from a fundamentally adult-centric justice model to one that is child-centred, trauma-informed, and culturally grounded. This includes reducing system-induced harm by ensuring the judiciary and legal professionals use developmentally appropriate, plain language and demonstrate a stronger understanding of child trauma. In addition, there is a critical need to explore investment in specialist court models that place the wellbeing and dignity of tamariki and rangatahi at the centre of responses to sexual harm, rather than prioritising rigid legal processes.



1. Addressing the service gap for young sexual violence victim-survivors

The court support service for young sexual violence victim-survivors is a new service for both Oranga Tamariki and for the sector, and it complements the adult court support service managed by the Ministry of Social Development. The court support service is intended to:

- Provide holistic, victim-survivor-focused support to tamariki and rangatahi who have experienced sexual violence and are engaged in the criminal justice process. The service is intended to be trauma-responsive and culturally grounded, addressing mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and whānau wellbeing, with a focus on immediate safety and longer-term healing and resilience. It is intended that services are delivered in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and recognise the intersectional factors that shape need and recovery.
- Support tamariki and rangatahi aged 18 years and younger at the time of referral where criminal charges have been laid, and, where possible, their whānau. Tamariki and rangatahi may be referred at any point following the filing of charges through multiple pathways, including Police, the courts, statutory agencies, community services, or self-referral.
- Be available throughout the criminal justice process, including trials, sentencing, and appeals, with continued access for up to six months following the conclusion of proceedings to support transition. Engagement is intended to be flexible and responsive to need, with exit occurring through mutual agreement or disengagement, and re-engagement supported where appropriate.
- Reduce re-traumatisation, better support the healing of young victim-survivors of sexual violence and reduce intergenerational effects of sexual violence.

Between April and July 2025, eleven court support providers were contracted to develop and deliver the service. Providers are spread across different regions and districts⁴. Providers across all regions except for the Far North/Kaipara/Whangarei participated in the evaluation, as delivery delays precluded their participation.

In July 2025, Oranga Tamariki commissioned TIRIA (previously Malatest International) to provide a formative evaluation, incorporating Value-for-Investment⁵ (Vfi) considerations. The objectives of the evaluation were to broaden understanding of the service's initial effectiveness, assess its contribution to positive social outcomes for rangatahi and their whānau, deepen insight into what supported healing journeys from sexual violence, and inform future service development, including identifying opportunities to improve service delivery.

The evaluation aimed to address Oranga Tamariki's key evaluation questions (KEQs):

- **KEQ1.** To what extent does the service represent value for the resources used?

⁴ Including Gisborne, Auckland (Albert - Eden, Devonport - Takapuna, Franklin, Great Barrie, Henderson - Massey, Hibiscus and Bays, Howick, Kaipatiki, Mangere - Otahuhu, Manurewa, Maungakiekie - Tamaki, Orakei, Otara - Papatoetoe, Papakura, Puketapapa, Rodney, Upper Harbour, Waiheke, Waitakere Ranges, Waitemata, Whau Boards), Opotiki/Tauranga/Whakatane, Hamilton, New Plymouth/Stratford/South Taranaki/Whanganui, Christchurch/Hurunui/Waimakariri and the Far North/Kaipara/Whangarei

⁵ <https://www.julianking.co.nz/>



- **KEQ2.** How does the implementation of the court support service contribute to positive outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau?
- **KEQ3.** What factors are key to retain or improve for future delivery of the service?
- **KEQ4.** To what extent does the service meet the cultural, social, and contextual needs of tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau?



2. A co-created value-for-investment evaluation approach

The evaluation methodology and approach involved review and refinement of the court support logic model and co-creation of the Vfi value proposition, criteria and standards with representatives from government agencies and court support providers. Key methods included:

Initial planning and logic refinement (August - September 2025)

Stakeholder Interviews & Regional Planning Hui



Interviews with 3 government agency representatives (Aug 5-6) were followed by three regional planning hui to refine service logic.

Outlines the schedule and participation for regional planning sessions.

Regional hui	Date	# of participants
1 – East Coast, Taranaki/Manawatu/Horowhenua, Horowhenua, Canterbury	Thurs 14 August 2025, 10-12pm	15
2 – Waikato/BOP	Thurs 21 August 2025, 10-12pm	7
3 – Te Tai Tokerau, Auckland (South, North-West and Central)	Fri 5 Sept 2025, 10-12pm	6

Review and Refine the Court Support Service Logic



An initial model co-created by Oranga Tamariki and the sexual violence sector focused on activities and outputs.

The review identified that critical developmental processes and activities had been overlooked/assumed, which were necessary to ensure the court support providers and CSWs were adequately equipped to deliver holistic court support in a victim-survivor led and whānau centric way.

Framework Integration & Monitoring



Developmental processes and activities were added as assumptions within a revised logic model (Appendix 1).

Appropriate measures and indicators to show progress against these were integrated into a monitoring and evaluation framework (Appendix 2), and Vfi criteria and standards.

Vfi design, data collection and analysis (October 2025 - May 2026)

Co-create the Vfi Value Proposition

The court support service creates social value for tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau by delivering **inclusive trauma-informed care** that empowers dignified, informed, and healing engagement with the court system, while establishing sustainable infrastructure that advances equity, cultural responsiveness, and long-term service viability across the justice and social sectors.



Stakeholder Consultation & Document Review

Online interviews were held with 9 Oranga Tamariki regional staff (Oct 2025) and 25 managers/staff from 10 providers (Oct 2025-Feb 2026).

A document review was conducted to understand previous work, including planning documents and service specifications.



Site Visits, Follow-up, and Inductive Analysis

Follow-up interviews were conducted with 37 managers/staff from 9 providers (Mar-May 2026), alongside interviews with tamariki (2), rangatahi (2) and whānau (4).

A general inductive approach guided qualitative analysis, using a coding framework aligned with Vfi criteria to identify emergent themes.

*Note: One provider was not available for this evaluation. **Note: One provider was not available, and another could not be reached for a follow up interview despite multiple attempts to engage.

2.1. Strengths and limitations

Key strengths of the evaluation include:



Comprehensive Vfi approach: To comprehensively capture the true value of the court support service, a Vfi approach was co-created from the outset with government agencies and service providers. Early in the process, providers highlighted that what matters most are critical intangible outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau such as feelings of safety, trust, dignity and hope. These outcomes shape healing journeys, wellbeing and system value but are not easily captured through traditional economic evaluation and social investment metrics.

In response, the Vfi framework was designed to explicitly incorporate these dimensions, applying a structured approach to capturing both measurable outcomes and the critical but less visible factors that underpin long-term impact. The approach provides a structured and holistic lens for understanding value as the court support service is developing. At this formative stage, it offers an early, system-wide picture of how the service is contributing across the core Vfi dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency, economy, and equity.

Importantly, the Vfi approach establishes a foundation for ongoing evaluation, enabling clearer insights into what good resource use looks like, the value generated, and where further value can be realised. This enables the broad spectrum of value to be tracked, tested, and strengthened over time as court support service delivery matures.



Depth of stakeholder perspectives: Data collection prioritised a multi-layered perspective, capturing the voices of government representatives, provider managers, and frontline CSWs and staff alongside the lived experiences of tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. While the small sample of young survivors and their whānau means findings are not generalisable, the consistency and high correlation between their feedback and provider accounts provide authentic, credible evidence of the service's impact on emotional safety and healing.



Regional and contextual analysis: By collecting data from all but one of the court support regions, the evaluation provides a comprehensive understanding of how local contexts - such as rural isolation, regional agency relationships, and specific court cultures - influence service implementation. This allows for a sophisticated exploration of similarities and differences in delivery, ensuring the findings reflect the diverse geographic and social realities of the New Zealand justice landscape.

Limitations of the evaluation include:



Economic evaluation limitations: While the current Vfi evaluation approach identifies all aspects of value and resource use, due to the formative evaluation focus and early stage of implementation of the court support service, a formal economic assessment was not included. Future evaluation may benefit from quantifying financial returns, as part of – and contextualised - within the Vfi approach and aligned to the court support value proposition, criteria and standards.



Stakeholder representation: This evaluation primarily focuses on the perspectives of court support providers and CSWs, offering deep insight into the intensive, relational "walk-



alongside" service that supports tamariki, rangatahi and whānau before, during, and after the court process. It is important to note that because the provider in Te Tai Tokerau could not participate in the evaluation, engagement with CVAs served as a proxy during data collection. This engagement highlighted the extensive workload undertaken by CVAs once cases are elevated to court but also underscored the importance of CVAs and CSWs providing complementary support during court proceedings. Overall, while provider-centric views provide a strong foundation for understanding court support service development and delivery, future evaluation would benefit from assessing the collaborative interface between CSWs and CVAs.



3. Overview of evaluation findings

3.1. Answering the key evaluation questions

Analysis and synthesis of data collected through all evaluation methods against the Vfl criteria (see section 3.2), informed the following overarching summaries for each key evaluation question.

3.1.1. To what extent does the service represent value for the resources used?

Eleven court support providers were contracted to develop and deliver services between April and July 2025. Following an extensive recruitment and procurement period, 11 providers with a total of 12 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions delivered the court support service over the past 10-13 months. Eight of the 11 providers had existing funding to deliver adult court support services.

At this early stage of implementation, the court support service demonstrates good value for the FTE resource invested in each provider. This is achieved in part by the extensive commitment of providers who internally absorb unanticipated costs. The service creates value by acting as a system coordinator and advocate, bridging gaps between agencies and reducing duplication within the wider justice system. It provides integrated care across the full-service pathway, managing referrals efficiently to ensure needs are identified early and addressed without gaps in support.

A key strength of the service design was the engagement of experienced providers, all of whom already have established capability in working with tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau impacted by sexual harm, and most in court environments. Court support builds on this expertise, leveraging a skilled, multidisciplinary workforce and a flexible, team-based approach. While delivery is resource-intensive and relies on provider adaptability to manage system gaps and fluctuating demand, the breadth and depth of outcomes achieved - alongside efficiencies created across the wider justice system - indicate that the service is both effective and valuable.

While most provider services are delivered through a 1 FTE funding allocation, one provider – in collaboration with two other regional partners – operates with a 2 FTE allocation. Across these services, provider management, CSW employment, and service delivery shared across multidisciplinary teams. In practice, providers extend this resourcing by internally funding additional training costs and dedicating uncontracted effort to address system gaps.

3.1.2. How does the implementation of the court support service contribute to positive outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau?

The court support service contributes to positive outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau by delivering comprehensive, trauma-informed and whanaungatanga and relationship-driven practice. The service provides immediate stabilisation and crisis support that enables informed decision-making from the outset, while guiding tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau through the justice system with clear, accessible explanations that reduce confusion and anxiety. It delivers trauma-informed emotional and therapeutic support, helping individuals regulate distress, safely participate in proceedings, and process outcomes. Providers maintain continuity of care through consistent, trusted relationships across the entire court journey, alongside a focus on holistic whānau wellbeing that strengthens the wider whānau ability to cope and support each other. The service also



enables voice and agency - particularly through advocacy and victim impact processes - fostering validation and empowerment, while coordinating effectively with other services and agencies to ensure integrated, timely support and minimise delays or gaps.

Tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau consistently valued the support and identified positive outcomes in their healing journey as a result. They reported increased emotional safety, openness, and trust - often describing CSWs as someone they could rely on when no one else was available. Rangatahi developed a clearer understanding of court processes and outcomes, and alongside whānau, felt safe, supported, and increasingly confident to participate and remain engaged throughout often lengthy court proceedings. They were better able to manage distressing emotions during and after court and were more likely to seek help when needed. Whānau were supported to understand the court process and became more confident and empowered in their engagement. Many described moving from a state of survival to navigating the system with greater clarity and confidence, alongside reassurance that their tamariki were also genuinely supported by their CSWs. Support also enabled whānau to address their own trauma, reducing the emotional burden on tamariki and rangatahi and easing overall whānau stress.

Rangatahi also developed a stronger understanding of sexual violence and were supported to release self-blame. Across both rangatahi and whānau, this contributed to restored self-worth, improved wellbeing, and more positive outlooks on life and ongoing healing journeys. Court support also strengthened whānau relationships and built shared capacity to support tamariki and rangatahi over time.

3.1.3. What factors are key to retain or improve future delivery of the service

Sustaining effective and high-quality court support over time depends on preserving the core practice elements that underpin engagement, wellbeing, and positive outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. The core of the service is accessible and continuous care, maintaining contact that adjusts to the wellbeing of the tamariki, rangatahi and whānau before and during trial and sentencing, and post-trial healing. This is underpinned by strong organisational governance, stable leadership, and embedded supervision structures that prioritise CSW wellbeing and mitigate burnout and vicarious trauma.

Key factors to retain for future service delivery include maintaining relational, trust-based approaches where CSWs walk alongside whānau over time, supported by flexible, continuous engagement across all stages of the justice process, including outside standard hours.

Sustaining trauma-informed, child- and whānau-centred practice is essential, alongside therapeutic and culturally responsive approaches that uphold safety and dignity. The service should continue to provide holistic, wraparound care that integrates social work, counselling, and practical supports, while maintaining strong cross-agency relationships and advocacy to improve coordination and responsiveness within the justice system.

Early intervention and seamless referral pathways - particularly through warm handovers between crisis, counselling, and court support services - are also critical to ensuring timely, connected, and effective support.



Evaluative insights show a need to strengthen resourcing, coordination, and system alignment to improve future delivery of the service and maximise return on investment. These insights have informed the following key considerations aligned with the VFI criteria to strengthen future delivery of the service:

- **Staffing levels:** Sustain and scale the team-based delivery model by increasing dedicated resourcing and workforce capacity, ensuring providers can maintain continuity and responsiveness during peak demand and prolonged court activity without placing undue pressure on the wider team or compromising long-term service sustainability.
- **Training and other learning opportunities:** Establish a nationally coordinated, provider-led training programme for the court support ecosystem that is consistently embedded, sustainably resourced, and accessible across providers and justice sector counterparts. This programme should strengthen sector capability to deliver high-quality, trauma-informed practice that is responsive to the developmental needs, wellbeing, and lived experiences of tamariki and rangatahi.
- **Supervision:** Strengthen and formalise cross-provider collaboration and shared reflective practice by establishing structured forums, networks, and learning mechanisms that enhance consistency, reduce isolation, and support the ongoing wellbeing and effectiveness of the court support workforce.
- **Access to complementary services:** Strengthen accessible system-level resourcing, funding, and coordination mechanisms to ensure basic needs and court participation costs for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau are consistently met. This will formalise and adequately fund the critical practical assistance providers currently deliver to bridge these gaps.
- **Access to wrap-around services:** Improve referral pathways and court coordination processes to minimise late referrals and enable earlier engagement with all tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. This should include setting expectations for timely referrals, streamlining court scheduling and communication, and reducing avoidable delays, so providers can better balance urgent court demands with relational, kaupapa-driven practice and strengthen opportunities for whakawhanaungatanga and meaningful early engagement.
- **Collaboration across agencies** Formalise and embed system-wide coordination mechanisms to strengthen the awareness, effectiveness and sustainability of the CSW role before, during and after court. This includes clarifying cross-sector roles and responsibilities, establishing consistent communication protocols, and ensuring reliable information-sharing processes to reduce reliance on informal relationships and improve reliability and continuity.
- **Timely information sharing:** Expand and strengthen joint training and alignment initiatives (such as court staff-led training and collaboration with Oranga Tamariki in Auckland) to enhance shared understanding, improve system alignment, and enable more consistent, timely, and effective information sharing across the court support ecosystem.
- **Signs of systemic change:** Progress system-level reform to shift the justice response from an adult-centric model to one that is child-centred, trauma-informed, and culturally grounded. This would include prioritising the safety, wellbeing, and voices of tamariki and rangatahi across all stages of the court process, alongside exploring and investing in a specialist court model that places wellbeing at the centre of responses to sexual harm.



- **Funding, contracts and oversight:** Realign funding and contracting settings with service delivery realities, including:
 - Streamlining the allocation of whānau court participation funding and entitlements by vesting responsibility and control with court support providers or introducing a flexible contingency fund
 - Rebalancing FTE allocations to reflect complexity, intensity, and duration of cases rather than case volumes alone.

3.1.4. To what extent does the service meet the cultural, social, and contextual needs of tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau?

The court support service demonstrates a high level of responsiveness and adaptability in meeting the diverse cultural, social, and contextual needs of tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau as they begin and sustain their healing journeys. It adapts effectively to complex social contexts, including disability, neurodiversity, and situations of heightened vulnerability, while offering accessible and flexible engagement through home visits, community-based settings, and after-hours support.

The service meets diverse developmental and neurodiverse needs for tamariki and rangatahi by using trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate approaches and resources such as play-based therapy and practical calming tools. It is responsive to diverse cultural and identity needs, respects cultural preferences and facilitates meaningful connections with Kaupapa Māori and Pacific providers. Wider whānau dynamics and intergenerational needs are acknowledged by supporting whānau and caregivers to address intergenerational impacts and their own trauma so they are better equipped to support their tamariki.

Equity and access gaps remain a key pressure point for the service. Evaluative insights highlight the need for increasing targeted resourcing for Pacific court support services in light of extremely limited capacity and improved access to specialist supports (e.g. communication support, gender-affirming practices) to reduce provider strain and strengthen the justice sector eco-system's responsiveness to diverse needs.



3.2. Evaluative judgements against Value-for-Investment criteria

The tables below summarise performance against the co-created Vfi criteria, including assessments and a synthesis of summary evidence. Evaluative judgements reflect where most providers sit, with multiple ratings used where needed. They are presented using a colour-coded scale. It is important to note that evaluative judgements reflect the broader system context and the extent to which providers are enabled to deliver efficiently and effectively, rather than solely assessing provider performance.

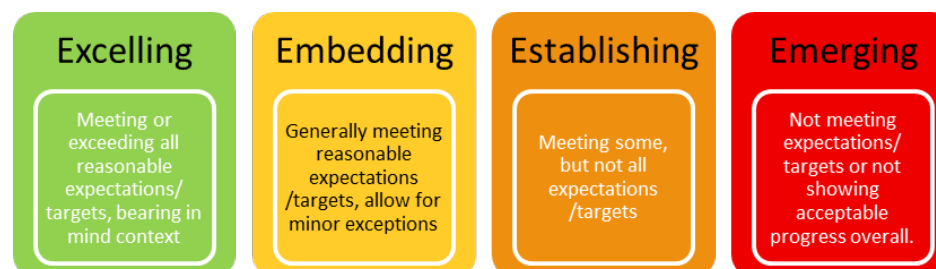


Table 1: Effectiveness – Creating social value for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau

Criteria	Standard	Evaluative reasoning
Short-term outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau	Safety, confidence and wellbeing Embedding Excelling	Court support services are achieving many short-term outcomes and showing credible early progress toward some medium-term outcomes aligned with the service logic model. Overall, court support contributes to enhanced rangatahi, tamariki and whānau wellbeing, restored self-worth, stronger relationships, and sustained capacity to support ongoing healing. At this stage of implementation, it is too early to assess several medium-term outcomes and all long-term outcomes. However, the strength and consistency of early outcomes suggest that, if identified system-level challenges are addressed, the court support service is on track to achieve its intended long-term impacts over time.

Table 2: Efficiency – Building multi-capital value by connecting systems and empowering communities

Criteria	Standard	Evaluative reasoning
Workforce capacity and capability	Staffing levels Embedding	Most providers maintain a primary CSW (recruited internally or externally), supported by staff who also hold broader social work and clinical responsibilities. However, this model is stretched during peak periods, placing additional pressure on the wider workforce when managing concurrent or prolonged court activity, and raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of delivery without additional dedicated resourcing.

	Training and other learning opportunities Establishing	Training across providers is variable, with strong, practice-informed capability in some organisations but significant gaps in consistency, access, and system alignment overall. While there is strong provider proactiveness and expertise to build from, court support provider training is not systematically embedded or sustainably supported, highlighting the need for a nationally coordinated, provider-led training programme for the court eco-system to ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery.
	Supervision Excelling	Providers have embedded regular supervision and wellbeing structures into everyday practice. Current CSW supervision practices are comprehensive and include regular clinical supervision, shared debriefing, rapid consultation, and peer support. A strong team-based culture ensures no CSW works in isolation. Providers also support flexible working arrangements, staff safety and self-care. Strengthening cross-provider collaboration and shared reflective practice represents a key opportunity to enhance consistency, shared learning and best practice.
Seamless service delivery and referrals	Access to complementary services Embedding	Court support is integrated with complementary supports for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau (e.g., financial, social and therapeutic services). CSWs bridge gaps between agencies by ensuring that barriers such as cost, logistics, and administrative breakdowns do not prevent whānau engagement with the court process. While this reflects strong commitment to preserve whānau dignity and wellbeing; highlights a need to strengthen systemic funding and coordination mechanisms to sustainably resource the extensive effort providers dedicate to bridging these gaps.
	Access to wraparound services Embedding	Providers link tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau to wraparound services - even when individuals do not meet strict court support criteria. The multidisciplinary workforce and end-to-end service model strengthen responsiveness, engagement, and alignment of supports, resulting in timely, holistic, and well-coordinated access to wraparound services. Challenges such as late referrals, tight court timeframes, and unpredictable demand highlight structural inefficiencies in referral timing and court coordination which, if addressed, would further enhance service effectiveness and sustainability.
Strong interagency relationships and communication	Collaboration across agencies Embedding	Court support plays a critical system coordination and navigation role. CSWs act as a central point of contact to improve communication and reduce duplication across agencies. This coordination alleviates administrative pressures on Police and Court Victim Advisors, enabling them to focus on core legal functions. Formalising cross-agency relationships, roles and protocols is important to sustaining a reliable court support ecosystem.
	Timely information sharing Establishing	The initial rollout of the court support service was constrained by low visibility and awareness across the sector, unclear roles, and fragmented information-sharing processes. Ongoing challenges - including consent barriers, system silos, inconsistent communication, and incompatible systems - continue to affect the timeliness and quality of information flow, placing additional pressure on providers to source accurate information. Targeted initiatives, such as court staff-led training and collaborative efforts with Oranga tamariki in Auckland, have the potential to improve shared understanding, alignment and information sharing.

Understanding and tracking need	Monitoring reached and unreached clients Establishing	Providers deliver quarterly reports to Oranga Tamariki on the number of clients monitored and reached. However, reported uptake likely understates true reach and demand, as data often records whānau as a single unit and may not capture all individuals supported. Inconsistencies in data entry and definitions across providers further limit reliability, highlighting the need for clearer reporting standards and aligned data practices to accurately reflect service reach.
	Waitlist demand and visibility Embedding	Court support providers effectively manage fluctuating demand through adaptive, integrated service design, using early engagement points and flexible pathways to anticipate and respond to need. By leveraging in-house and external referrals and maintaining contact while clients await services (such as ACC-funded counselling), providers sustain continuity of care, reduce disengagement, and support consistent engagement for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau despite ongoing waitlist pressures.
	Data informed planning Embedding	Providers use data to guide service design and resource allocation but often rely on lived experience and qualitative feedback, with impacts not yet consistently or systematically measured. Current evaluation and funding models, such as ROI frameworks, are seen as misaligned with the relational, trauma-informed nature of court support and unable to capture key intangible outcomes like trust, safety, dignity, and hope. Strengthening ongoing evaluation approaches to better reflect relational outcomes and the voices of tamariki, rangatahi and whānau was considered key to improving accountability, demonstrating value, and supporting sustained investment.
Scalability and flexibility	Resource adaptability Excelling	Court support demonstrates highly adaptable, relationship-based practice, with CSWs tailoring support in real time to meet the needs of tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. Approaches are grounded in dignity, safety, and choice, and shaped by developmental, cultural, and contextual factors. This flexibility, underpinned by whakawhanaungatanga and professional judgement rather than rigid models, enables responsive, trauma-informed care and is a key strength of the service.
	Uptake of court support services Embedding Excelling	Court support services are being accessed by eligible clients. However, providers highlighted that many vulnerable tamariki and rangatahi - including disabled children, very young children, and those from marginalised groups - never reach court at all, indicating that current services are likely to only be seeing the <i>tip of the iceberg</i> .
System-level recognition and support (connected but outside the	Justice system acknowledgement Emerging Establishing	System acknowledgement of court support is growing but not yet consistently embedded, relying heavily on established relationships rather than standardised practice. While strong partnerships enable effective integration in some court settings, ongoing role ambiguity, system complexity, and inconsistent recognition limit CSW involvement, increasing risks of inefficiency and retraumatising experiences for whānau.

direct scope of court support services)	Signs of systemic change Emerging	Although there are minor opportunities to influence systemic change, improved system alignment, accountability and commitment to tamariki, rangatahi and sexual violence is needed. Providers commonly emphasised the justice system remains predominantly adult-centric. This creates risks of system-induced harm, reduced voice, and unsafe outcomes, particularly where child development and trauma are not adequately understood or prioritised across the sector. Providers advocated for more child-centred, trauma-informed, and culturally grounded approaches, and emphasised that establishment of a specialist court that prioritises wellbeing over process is a safer, child-centred response to sexual harm.
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Table 3: Economy – Developing the infrastructure for sustainable service delivery

Criteria	Standard	Evaluative reasoning
Government support	Funding, contracts and oversight Embedding	Funding has strengthened and expanded court support services for tamariki and rangatahi; however, providers continue to bear significant unanticipated costs – particularly for out-of-region whānau - while unrecorded demand risks underestimating need resulting in insufficient funding and staffing levels. Findings identify clear levers to strengthen and sustain court support, noting that current contract funding is not well aligned with the realities of service delivery. While providers respond flexibly to meet need, it is critical to build sustainable funding structures that formally support this work, rather than leaving providers to rely on uncontracted effort and informal workarounds. Key opportunities to strengthen the court support service include shifting control of whānau participation funding to providers and rebalancing FTE resourcing to reflect actual complexity and demand rather than case volumes alone.

Table 4: Equity – Delivering inclusive practice

Criteria	Standard	Evaluative reasoning
Equity	Intersectionality and responsiveness to cultural and diverse needs Embedding	Court Support services demonstrate a strong commitment to equity and intersectional practice, with kaupapa Māori providers leading culturally grounded, values-driven approaches that enhance safety and engagement for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. Providers broadly have strong understanding for, and evidence of a Te Tiriti approach built into their service and respond to diverse and complex needs, including disability, neurodiversity, and mental health. Providers demonstrate a strong commitment to equity. Court support practices are tailored for different groups and underpinned by a strong Te Tiriti awareness and understanding. While providers strive to meet diverse needs, persistent issues remain - such as misgendering, limited specialist communication support, and rigid court processes. Significant gaps remain in access to culturally appropriate, Pacific-led court support.

4. The court support service is extensive, intensive, and highly relational.

The court support service spans crisis response, justice system navigation, emotional and cultural safety, advocacy, pre- and post-court healing, and walking alongside tamariki, rangatahi and whānau through complex and demanding legal processes. While court-based experience varies among providers, many recognise from years of practice that this journey often requires a sustained, multi-year commitment. The service offers:

Crisis and initial support, providing an immediate response after an incident, calming and stabilising the person in crisis, and supporting whānau to make informed decisions about accessing counselling, court support, or both.

Navigation of the justice process, guiding tamariki, rangatahi and/or whānau through all stages of the court system. This includes supporting reporting to Police, clearly explaining rights, options, roles, and processes in plain language, preparing everyone for what to expect before, during, and between hearings, and helping them to understand potential impacts on their lives so informed decisions can be made without putting life on hold. Navigating the system also includes:

- Court attendance and in-court support often across extended or multi-week trials – which focuses on stabilising clients in crisis, supporting emotional regulation so evidence can be given safely and clearly, and accompanying tamariki, rangatahi and whānau through waiting times, adjournments, and high-stress moments. CSWs provide consistent physical presence in court and AVL settings where permitted, coordinate with justice agencies, advocate when systems are unresponsive, and ensure access to safe, familiar spaces during interviews, trials, and sentencings, whether in person or remotely.
- Practical and logistical support includes confirming dates, organising AVL access and safe entry routes, and advocating for appropriate arrangements (such as video-link evidence for tamariki, accommodation, and safety needs).
- Victim impact statements and voice are a key part of supporting tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to be heard within the justice process. CSWs support all to prepare victim impact statements, even where this responsibility formally sits with Police, as in practice it often falls to court support to ensure statements are completed in a timely and trauma-informed way. CSWs emphasise the power of the tamariki, rangatahi, whānau voice, explaining that evidential video interviews and in-court statements are often the most impactful evidence for judges and juries, regardless of forensic material.

Where appropriate, CSWs support arrangements for someone else to read the statement in court if the tamariki, rangatahi, whānau do not feel able to do so, subject to judicial approval. The focus remains on preserving their voice and agency, actively advocating for opportunities for them to speak directly to the court rather than allowing statements to be read by Police or others by default. This approach supports validation and acknowledgement of harm, enabling tamariki, rangatahi, whānau to clearly express the impact of offending on themselves and their whānau.



Safety, emotional, and therapeutic support that is trauma-informed and child-centred and delivered through wraparound clinical and social work interventions. CSWs support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to prepare emotionally for court, manage distressing experiences such as giving evidence or hearing graphic details, and process verdict and sentencing outcomes. CSWs provide ongoing check-ins until tamariki, rangatahi and whānau feel stable and supported, manage safety planning, including witness separation and access to safe spaces and provide practical comfort and emotional-regulation tools - particularly for children and neurodiverse clients.

We're gearing them up for this process, and then you're also gearing them up that it might not be a positive outcome...you're constantly preparing them for all of these different things. (Provider)

We help prepare for the questions that come to them...just so they're ready and equipped to know what's coming and regulating them. Yeah, and I just say, stand in your truth. (Provider)

Talking about how this works, who you're going to meet, how it's going to look you are going to have to look at a video that you made with police two years ago, talking about something really horrible that happened, and you are going to be asked questions about that. So yes, for me, that's one of my things that I like to prepare them for. (Provider)

Some CSWs also noted delivering child therapeutic support and counselling using trauma-informed, play-based approaches to help tamariki and rangatahi feel grounded and safe during and after justice processes. In a court setting, this includes the use of practical regulation tools and calming supports (such as fidget tools, stress balls, snacks, kai, water bottles, and phone chargers) in AVL rooms and post-testimony spaces to reduce anxiety. Outside court settings, therapeutic methods such as sand tray and other play-based approaches are used to help tamariki explore thoughts, feelings, fears, and behaviours in developmentally appropriate ways. These practical supports are recognised as having a significant calming effect for tamariki and rangatahi experiencing high levels of stress and overwhelm.

I'm pretty open to saying, look, when that screen is off, this is your space. If you want me to just sit here in silence while you listen to Spotify – cool. If you want to do a puzzle on the ground - cool. It's preparing them for what they're probably going to feel from the questions that are brought up. The process can be quite brutal. (Provider)

Accessible and continuous care delivered through flexible and consistent support tailored to need. CSWs walk alongside tamariki, rangatahi and whānau from initial reporting through trial, sentencing - often over several years- and post-trial healing, maintaining regular, accessible contact that adjusts to risk, wellbeing, and where cases sit in the justice journey. CSWs establish trusting, accessible relationships and provide flexible, responsive support to tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. Services are delivered through home visits, community and hospital appointments, and are accessible outside of scheduled sessions. CSWs prioritise timely and sustained engagement through long court process and delays. While contracts cover the court process and up to six-months post-trial, providers frequently extend support beyond these boundaries - such as holding pre-charge cases which can take up to a year or more before charges are filed, and supporting long-term post-sentencing/parole events that exceed the six-month window - to reduce re-traumatisation and ensure continuity of care for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau (see section 7.1).

Whānau can ring me anytime, yeah, and we can talk through it and act on whatever they need. (Provider)



It's whānau led. So, we really work with wherever the whānau is, but also providing that sense of stability, like, yes, we are here...one [rangatahi] said she'd like to just leave it and talk closer to the court date, so we'll re-engage and just see what the need is there. And others are still engaged with youth mentoring and counselling [until a court date is confirmed].
(Provider)

It's hard to manage emotional regulation through very long delays... it's more around holding that with the anxiety that [tamariki/rangatahi] might have around what's coming up...
(Provider)

Holistic whānau support. Support is intentionally holistic rather than solely court-focused, and may involve providing or coordinating youth mentoring, counselling or therapy for tamariki/rangatahi and their whānau. CSWs work directly with whānau or refer them to appropriate services to address their own trauma response so they are better able to support their tamariki or rangatahi. CSWs recognise and respond to complex whānau dynamics, including situations where perpetrators may be whānau members, and provide particular attention to whānau experiencing heightened vulnerability, such as disability, neurodiversity, or multiple stressors. They support whānau to report to Police and/or make disclosures where necessary, understand the role of Oranga Tamariki, and access wider supports (such as ACC-funded therapy) so the whānau is strengthened, connected, and empowered to navigate the process together.

There was a disclosure, they reached out to us, and then we helped them through the reporting process, through the child interviewing process ...we were able to connect the family with the CSW very early on, so there wasn't a gap between crisis and court support...while the crisis social worker continued working with mum and she got her crisis counselling...the young person was held by the CSW, as in, testing how school was going, any immediate changes, any concerns managing change dynamics at home...we did an internal referral to counselling.
(Provider)

With the cultural needs applied...A lot of those meetings we have in the home with the family, which has involved the grandparents, parents and the grandchild, which is quite common. And we've had, I've had cases where all three generations have disclosed and so really leaning on our team to figure out who holds who but then coming together collectively to all be resourced enough to support the young person through trial. (Provider)

System advocacy, coordination, relationship management, and service improvement involves active advocacy with Police, victim support, and court staff when whānau encounter unequal treatment, communication breakdowns, or systemic barriers such as inconsistent support to attend court processes (see section 5.2.2). CSWs act as consistent advocates, connectors, and are often the “translator” between whānau and the justice system. They build and maintain strong cross-sector relationships and advocate for coordinated child- and whānau-centred responses. Many CSWs have established or are developing effective working relationships with Officers in Charge and often become the primary communication link between Police and whānau, proactively following up when communication breaks down, staff change, or delays escalate.

It's māmā to still talk about it...If [whānau] don't trust you, they're not going to tell you. They'll tell you what they want to tell you, yeah, and nothing more than the bare minimum or they will say yes when they mean no or no...you'll only get the surface. (Provider)

CSWs also work closely with court victim advisors and registry staff - who rely on CSWs to keep whānau informed, prepared, and in the right place at the right time - as well as with Crown



prosecutors, probation and corrections, court security, judges, and regional court teams. Through these relationships, CSWs contribute to improved consistency, and clarity for whānau navigating court processes. One provider has also liaised with court security and a court design team to provide practical insights on court layout and victim/witness spaces to reduce stress and improve safety.

The slightest little [thing] that some people think is nothing ends up being something massive. Sometimes the communication, which should be there with the courts, it's not there...we're ringing around, talking to the [external agency staff], like, hang on, you reached out and told the whānau this, but that's wrong, you know, the miscommunication...there's been a shift in someone working on it, so the information has gone out and caused a real upset, but that's not the case. We're not going to show the whānau that, we're going to make sure it's clear before. (Provider)

Managing referrals (internal and external) and integrated care across the full-service pathway.

Referrals are received from Police, Oranga Tamariki, and Court Victims Advisors as well as through internal teams following initial triage, self-referrals and walk-ins. Internal referrals between therapeutic and court support teams can occur when sexual harm is disclosed during counselling or social work engagement, enabling whānau needs to be identified early and addressed in a timely, integrated way, and reducing duplication or gaps in support. Cross-agency referrals may occur between court support providers, particularly where whānau are located across different regions or regional catchment areas. Although, it is not uncommon for whānau to request continued support from Kaupapa Māori or Pacific court support services outside of their designated region or catchment area.

Referrals are allocated to designated CSWs - or in the case of one provider, shared across court support partner providers (in this instance, referrals are considered by all partners and allocated to the most suitable provider). Where caseloads require intensive and/or extensive whānau support – cases are often shared across teams.

Most providers integrate court support into wider in-house services such as social work, counselling, mentoring, youth therapy, and school-based supports. Whānau are able to move flexibly between services as needs change, for example, re-engaging with crisis or counselling services following new disclosures or re-traumatisation - while social work support addresses broader needs such as entitlements, food, documentation, housing, education and employment support.



5. Effectiveness – Relational care drives emotional safety, system understanding, and long-term healing

5.1. Tamariki, rangatahi and whānau gain immediate emotional stability, trust and court system clarity

Outcome: Tamariki and rangatahi are emotionally supported

Rangatahi gained increased emotional safety, openness, and trust with their CSW and other support relationships. Many rangatahi described feeling seen as people rather than treated as problems, noting that CSWs took time to check in, created space without judgement, and prioritised connections before tasks. This helped them feel emotionally held, validated, and respected, rather than dismissed for being *too much*, and contributed to a stronger sense of safety and trust. Whānau also noted the positive emotional and mental health benefits of these relationships for their tamariki.

A big thing that [CSW] helped me with, I crave control... being in that situation where I know, like my control, there's no control... [CSW] had helped me realise that, like, I am in control... of what I say and how I say it... and that I matter. (Rangatahi)

[Tamariki] is looking forward every week to see [CSW], she's happy, and yeah, she's bubbly... she said, it's really good, it's helped her stay calm and helps her mental health. I was surprised that word mental health came from her, you know? (Whānau)

Rangatahi and whānau could rely on CSWs when there was no-one else: Many rangatahi and whānau emphasised that CSWs became the only stable, safe adult presence when they felt they had no-one. In line with these views, providers noted that whānau consistently reported feeling heard, supported, and validated. The shared emotional journey - sometimes including moments of collective grief or relief before and after court - reinforced that they were not alone.

I have no family...I had absolutely no one outside of my partner...[CSW] grabs you, not physically, like she mentally just grabs you and takes you under her wing. And she's like, you know, we can do this, yeah, we can do this. All I had was (CSW)... (CSW) was my strength for court... (Rangatahi)

Outcome: Tamariki and rangatahi are well informed

Rangatahi developed clear understanding of the court process and outcomes: They highlighted their CSW helped them understand, manage and prepare for lengthy, uncertain and complex court processes and outcomes. CSW guidance helped manage feelings of urgency, impatience and emotional distress by providing clarity, realism and reassurance about how the system works.

Court's not the easiest process to go through, because you never know when it's gonna, you know, come to the end of its days. You know, it can take years, if not more. You know, mine was only four years but there are others, like other cases and that take longer. (Rangatahi)

It was a lot to process. You know I knew beforehand from the support team...there's a chance that he won't go to jail or prison...I had to prepare myself for that...but what stayed with me



was, you know, I haven't made it easy on him, and his face has been shown...everyone knew who he was, and everyone knew to keep his kids away from him...now I look at it with fresh eyes. (Rangatahi)

She helped me understand the whole process of court, because I was such a very like, I really want to get this over and done with, you know. And she's just like, well, if he's just gotten into custody, there's a process... (Rangatahi)

Rangatahi and whānau felt supported and safe to participate in court: One whānau highlighted their tamariki's depth of trust in their CSW was evident in the tamariki's request for the CSW to read their Victim Impact Statement, entrusting their experience and voice to be held and voiced by someone they felt genuinely knew them. Some whānau noted that their rangatahi were initially avoidant and withdrawn from the court process but as trust with their CSW strengthened so too did their resilience. For example, rangatahi were more confident to use the offender's name, ask more direct questions, and participate more openly in the court process. Consistent support created a strong sense of not being alone and of having a steady presence during distressing court moments.

[CSW's] going to be reading out the victim impact statement, yeah, because my moko wanted her to read it out, you know, because he had a connection with [CSW]...[My] moko needs some, you know, needs some validation on what this fella's done. (Whānau)

For probably the first five weeks, he was always 'he'... and when [tamariki] would come to us after being with [CSW]... and used his name I was like, that's actually a huge thing for [tamariki] to refer to him by his name now...We can just tell when [tamariki] walks out [of sessions with CSW] they're just a lot lighter, yeah, because you get a smile... and that's very rare... (Whānau)

[CSW] knew me enough to know what would ground me...she ended up asking the court person if we could have just, like, a photo of my [tamariki] up right, just to ground me, because questioning, oh my gosh, man, I see why people don't do it. (Rangatahi)

Rangatahi and whānau felt equipped with increasing confidence to participate and remain engaged in lengthy court processes: Rangatahi and whānau developed increased confidence to participate in and remain engaged with lengthy and complex court processes. Central to this was the reliability of CSW support - knowing someone would always be there when needed - which they identified as one of the most valued aspects of the service. This steady presence helped reduce isolation and enabled rangatahi to stay connected through long delays, uncertainty, and life disruptions that might otherwise lead to disengagement. Providers similarly emphasised that sustained, flexible support - tailored to rangatahi and whānau needs and circumstances - ensured they were not left to navigate challenging processes alone. Whānau commonly expressed that they did not know how people managed the court process without this level of support.

Support from CSWs also strengthened rangatahi confidence to actively participate in court. Providers observed that over time, this support fostered growing autonomy, self-efficacy, and trust. This was reflected in behaviours such as rangatahi proactively re-engaging with support services as court dates approached, particularly in long-delayed cases. These actions signalled confidence that their realities would be understood and that support would be responsive.

In a courtroom when I feel so small because there's all these big people and all these, like, you know, fancy suits and all this shit even just opening my mouth was powerful. (Rangatahi)



Providers emphasised that consistent, relational support also helped rangatahi and whānau felt less isolated and distressed in processes that were often confusing, frightening, and at times re-traumatising - especially where historic harm was revisited. Regular, flexible, and preferred forms of contact, alongside outreach (in hospitals and/or the community) when health, transport, or other life circumstances created barriers, ensured rangatahi and whānau were not left to navigate prolonged uncertainty, health crises, or life changes alone. This sustained, responsive support helped strengthen rangatahi and whānau stability, safety, and capacity to stay engaged with the justice process on their own terms.

Whanau may be given a [court] date... and then on the date that's not happening, and when loads of things happen, whānau just want to shut down, not just from the court procedures, but from the helping agencies... We settle our tamaiti to get back into everyday living while we wait for a new date... we do a lot of home visits, we will go to the whānau... we take kai, so we can have that kōrero... we want hauora for them, so we're looking at everything around them, what's needed, so we can also hold them in that space. (Provider)

Outcome: Tamariki and rangatahi are supported by other services for current and ongoing needs

Rangatahi were better able to manage distressing emotions during and after court and seek help

when needed: Rangatahi expressed they felt less alone in carrying the emotional weight of their experiences. Knowing they did not have to manage everything independently helped reduce their distress, particularly during demanding court processes. They also described a shift from keeping things to themselves to recognising that support is available and acceptable to access. This growing openness enabled them to reach out during times of distress rather than internalising their experiences.

It's been a hard journey, but being able to have support around me, especially during that time made it a bit easier to work through it all, yeah, and to realise, you know, I'm not necessarily carrying this load by myself. (Rangatahi)

I used to be the type of person that wouldn't really share anything. And then, you know, stepping out of that and realising, you know, there are people there to help, there are people that work in that line of work, you know, it's okay to lean on others, especially when you need that support. (Rangatahi)

Providers validated the sentiments above and emphasised that effective court support does not end when proceedings conclude. Whānau value the ability to maintain contact, receive follow-up check-ins, and reconnect when issues resurface. CSWs for many whānau (who interact with multiple professionals across different agencies/sectors) became a stable, long-term, *safe base* and familiar presence who whānau were confident to return to with any question or concern.

Another marker is when they get out of jail, which can be couple of years down the track... real trigger for re-engaging. (Provider)

Outcome: Whānau are clear about their role in the court process

Whānau were supported to understand and engage in the court process: Whānau described gaining increased understanding and confidence in navigating the court process through the support of CSWs. Having someone to explain procedures, clarify outcomes, and answer questions helped reduce uncertainty and build capability to stay engaged. CSWs were seen as strong advocates who ensured whānau felt informed, supported, and included throughout.



If there's anything about the court system that we're not sure of or we don't feel comfortable... [CSW] is a big advocate for all of us, and that's huge. And if we finish court, we're like, what does that mean? We know, where do we go from here?... I'm very thankful for them, because, like I say, I wouldn't know what of anything the process, what happens? [CSW is] very good at explaining things to me... and it's just knowing that you've got that rock there, you know, to fall back on, and to get in touch with when and if you need it. (Whānau)

In line with this view, providers noted whānau were clearer about their role in the court process and experienced culturally safe and fairer engagement with the justice system when supported by a trusted CSW. Some noted that court settings can frequently misinterpret whānau communication styles, particularly in high-pressure, formal environments whereas noted above “*whānau may say yes when they mean no*”, increasing the risk of misunderstanding and unfair judgement. CSWs were described as playing a critical role in interpreting what whānau were genuinely expressing or needing and safeguarding them against misinterpretation. Providers observed increased whānau confidence and participation in court, with some feeling empowered to read their own Victim Impact Statements rather than stepping back when offered the option not to speak.

Outcome: Whānau are informed and cared for and valued for their support

Whānau gained increased emotional safety, trust, and empowerment to confidently engage in the court processes. Providers highlighted that when trust is absent, whānau are more likely to share only surface-level information; however, when support is relational, culturally grounded, and offers genuine choice, whānau feel safe to speak honestly about what is really happening for them. This can be transformative. For example, a provider described when a young mother who had never previously been invited to share her experience was, for the first time and with the support of her CSW, able to open up and feel genuinely heard in a court setting. As trust builds, providers commonly observe increased whānau confidence and sense of agency, including the confidence to engage meaningfully in the process and to speak in court when they choose to do so.

I appreciated someone up there, you know, coming into tautoko and it was really traumatising, you know, what [tamaiti] went through, yeah, and some of the whānau members, they couldn't take it, they couldn't handle it...this case has been going on for about three years. (Whānau)

Outcome: Whānau are reassured that the tamariki got support they needed

Whānau reported reassurance and security in knowing their tamariki were genuinely supported. Several whānau described CSWs as being “*like family*” and expressed confidence that their tamariki were held “*in the arms of whānau*”. They compared their tamaiti’s deep attachment to, and sense of safety with, their CSW to a trusted caregiver. Trust and a sense of being welcomed by their CSW enabled greater openness, even for whānau who typically found it difficult to trust adults or services.

[Tamariki] really relates to [CSW1] and after [their]...[CSW1] is a safe space for [tamariki]... After their sessions [tamariki] always comes away saying how much they love [CSW1] and how much they love [CSW2], and if they go through the trial process, they want either one of them to support them in court, to be their support person. So, yeah, that's huge. (Whānau)

[CSW] established trust with [tamariki] first... found common interest and then established the trust and built that relationship off that. And I think that's what [tamariki] needed, was to know that they could trust again, because that's all been taken away from [them]. (Whānau)



They feel like you're a family, you know...I trust them 100%...I don't trust easily, but with them, I feel like they care. (Whānau)

Outcome: Whānau have tools to support tamariki further

Whānau shifted from survival to navigating with confidence and emphasised that their CSWs relational support helped increase their confidence to seek help, trust others, cope with uncertainty, and engage with the court process. CSWs broke down overwhelming processes into manageable steps, explained what to expect, and stayed alongside them, their tamariki and/or rangatahi before, during and after court, transforming experiences that initially felt impossible into something survivable, one step at a time.

When you're in court, you hear all this blurry... and you walk out of court, you go, are they allowed to do this or not? ... The [CSWs] are pretty good on, you know, looking around for clarification...if you don't know, keep asking, keep asking, and they do. They're amazing. (Whānau)

Things were really stressful for me. I didn't know how to do a lot of things, and [CSWs] just talked me through, you know, just giving me advice and who else I can see and stuff like, you know, I can always go back to them. (Whānau)

Whānau also highlighted the stabilising impact of CSWs practical assistance, such as support with food, household items, and for some whānau requiring urgent uplift from residential/housing arrangements, the provision of essential belongings (e.g., furniture, utensils and bedding arrangements). This was particularly important for tamariki, who benefited from having familiar and comforting items during times of upheaval.

My honest feeling towards [CSWs] in the mahi, I honestly would not have been able to get through any of it without them. The support that we were getting from [region outside of CSW region] didn't follow through, so we were alone...They supported us right from the minute we got there for our emotional states, financially, physically, mentally. (Whānau)

CSW found us, [when she rang] I said, it's okay, we've got our own support here but thank you for your call. And then on our way up, she was ringing to make sure that we got there safely and if there was anything that they could help with. And I started crying on the phone, and I said, we don't have any support now. They didn't come. She said that we will meet up with you, you come and we will tautoko you. (Whānau)

Everything they provided it to me. But even I'm not asking, you know...like, food...and when we moved, you know, after that happened, we moved house in 14 days so's everything's provided, and we keep it. And, you know, my children, oh, really, this is ours now, like a, you know, comforter and everything. (Whānau)

Whānau are supported to address their own trauma to protect tamariki and rangatahi from emotional burden. Providers noted that whānau often carry their own unresolved trauma while trying to support their tamaiti. Many have felt safe enough to disclose sensitive histories, including intergenerational trauma, with their CSWs. Where this has occurred, CSWs carefully balance support so that tamariki and rangatahi are not burdened by whānau (parental) trauma, while also ensuring whānau are supported and linked to appropriate internal or external services and therapeutic supports.



5.2. Sustained support reduces re-traumatisation and lays the foundation for whānau resilience

Outcome: The stress for tamariki is minimised

Reduced whānau stress minimises impacts on tamariki and rangatahi. Providers highlighted that court support plays a critical role in de-escalating and stabilising heightened stress and anxiety for whānau (parents and caregivers), reducing the risk that adult distress spills over onto tamariki, rangatahi and wider whānau. CSWs help regulate emotions at key moments, creating calmer, safer environments for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau navigating an already traumatic justice process.

Outcome: The potential for tamariki to be re-traumatised by the court experience is reduced

Rangatahi developed clearer understandings of sexual violence and were supported to release self-blame. Rangatahi expressed that a consistent and powerful message from CSWs was that the harm was not their fault, with clear explanations reinforcing this understanding.

From the day that I made the statement, the report for the last day...there was just a lot of love around me. And you know, it was always, it's not your fault, you were young at that time. You didn't know the signs. You know, how could you, when that conversation around the family was never talked about? (Rangatahi)

Rangatahi and whānau have restored self-worth and outlooks on life and ongoing healing journeys. Rangatahi described regaining a sense of control over their story and how it was told. Court was reframed as “*your time - your inner child's time to be heard*”. This reframing supported a shift from feelings of worthlessness to empowerment. Ongoing support was described as life-preserving, helping rangatahi remain themselves, feel calmer, and maintain hope for the future. Whānau highlighted their CSW support helped them develop a more positive outlook on life, improved mental wellbeing, and increased awareness of safety for one's own children.

I feel like I've healed that part of my inner child, you know, where my body hid it from me for so long, and it took one thing to really bring it up for me to sort out. You know, it's, yeah, made my life bit easier. And, I mean, you know, now that I've got a child, I know what to do. (Rangatahi)

Court support strengthened whānau relationships, wellbeing and shared capacity to support their tamariki. Whānau highlighted that reduced stress for them as parents/caregivers enabled stronger, calmer relationships with their tamariki/rangatahi. CSW and provider support extended beyond the primary tamariki/rangatahi to siblings and wider whānau. This included counselling sessions for siblings and recognition of the roles older children played in supporting younger ones when parents/caregivers were working.

We started off not telling them too much... and then we realised... we're actually doing them a disservice by pussy footing around, right? So, we just tell them straight, yeah, now, which I think they respect a lot more, yeah, as well. (Whānau)

The biggest difference that they've made between my life is the relationship between me and my [tamariki]... it is a lot stronger and a lot calmer. (Whānau)

[Sibling] is the one that's with [tamariki], because I'm working so, yeah, she carries more confidence talking to [tamariki] than me... [Sibling] has also engaged in a few sessions. (Whānau)



6. Efficiency – The service bridges justice system gaps but strains provider capacity

6.1. A highly skilled, multidisciplinary workforce drives outcomes but requires protected capacity and training

Staffing levels

Court support FTE is typically distributed across teams rather than delivered through a single standalone role. Most providers maintain one primary CSW (recruited internally or externally), supported by staff who also hold broader social work and clinical responsibilities. Where recruitment challenges have emerged, services have been sustained by redistributing referrals across their wider social work team. Court support is delivered in a wrap-around manner, drawing on counselling, crisis response, leadership, and peer support, with internal flexibility enabling court support to be prioritised during trials and hearings.

Providers commonly highlighted the effectiveness of an intentional, team-based delivery model for court support services. This approach was described as enabling workload sharing, continuity during leave or vacancies, and reducing reliance on a single CSW holding complex, high-risk cases.

The work is difficult; it does impact on people's overall health and wellbeing. So we spend a lot of time as an agency making sure we've got the systems in place to support our people. Although it's one FTE, [CSW] is not alone with that, she sits as part of a wider team. There's always somebody who can support and, you know, we have structures where we've got [clinical management] role. But when [clinical manager] is not there, there's people who can support... We've all got each other's backs. (Provider)

Court support is strengthened by the skill, experience, passion and leadership of those delivering the service. CSWs are a highly skilled and experienced workforce with strong backgrounds in social work, sexual and family violence, corrections, and community-based practice. While some CSWs have extensive experience working in court settings, others are developing their expertise and although the setting may be new, work with tamariki, rangatahi and whānau is not, and provides a strong foundation for safe, confident practice in highly complex, multi-disclosure contexts.

CSWs bring extensive local knowledge of systems, services, and schools, including experience in Women's Refuge, helpline work, school-based programmes, and Oranga Tamariki caregiver contexts. This allows them to navigate complex external systems confidently, including lawyers, protection orders, respite services, and cross-agency interfaces.

They describe strong intrinsic motivation and passion for court work, consistently highlighting the need for a “*bloody proactive*” approach and deep commitment to supporting tamariki, rangatahi and whānau on their healing journey. High-level skills in de-escalation and emotional regulation enable CSWs to support highly distressed tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to remain in court and complete evidence. CSWs support and empower clients to “*stand in their truth*”, helping them anticipate difficult questioning and remain grounded.

Some CSWs also highlighted a strong commitment to working with, and engaging, other internal and external specialists to support diverse tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. This includes supporting



gender-diverse individuals and those with complex needs such as neurodiversity, disability, traumatic brain injury, mental health challenges, and suicide risk. Trauma-informed practice, safety planning, and risk assessment are recognised as core competencies.

Court support is strengthened by provider values, purpose and courage. Strong alignment between staff values and organisational purpose is a central enabler of effective practice. Staff consistently describe the work as deeply meaningful and values-aligned, viewing it as a long-term commitment driven by purpose and impact rather than financial motivation.

Leadership plays a critical role in enabling this work by prioritising and protecting court support delivery. Court commitments are treated as non-negotiable, with CSW caseloads adjusted and wider teams rallying to support and/or cover other responsibilities. Court support providers demonstrate courage and ethical commitment by consistently acting in the best interests of tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau, including when this requires extending beyond contractual scope.

Court support is further strengthened by strong provider culture and governance. Providers benefit from stable leadership and experienced governance structures with a strong focus on survivor-victim and whānau needs. Clear policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), accreditation requirements, and accountability frameworks support safe and consistent practice. Some providers noted SOPs are regularly reviewed with frontline input, and staff are supported to seek clarification when navigating new or complex situations.

There is an intentional emphasis on staff safety, supervision, wellbeing, and collegiality across providers. A team-based culture ensures no one works alone, and is supported by accessible leadership, shared debriefing, and rapid consultation when needed. Consistent communications support flexibility, transparency, and rapid referral management, enabling organisations to *make it work* even under high demand.

This culture is characterised by a strong sense of shared purpose and collective responsibility. Providers and CSWs consistently described their work as a privilege and their workplaces as supportive of going beyond minimum requirements to achieve the best outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau.

Court support is affected by workforce capacity constraints, court scheduling pressures, and long and intensive court activity. Although court support FTE is typically distributed across teams rather than as a dedicated standalone role, the sustainability of this model is limited. CSW capacity becomes particularly constrained during periods of peak court activity. For example, when managing multiple court appearances occurring at the same time, supporting the same or different whānau concurrently across different areas in a court setting over multiple days.

It's a simple phone call from whoever has gone in [to court that day]...Hey, this whānau is bigger than what I thought it would be, nau mau haere mai...sometimes it's because there may be another court happening too, same place, but different child, whānau... obviously we're going to have two workers... can't run from supporting one whānau into the next room...our support is dedicated to them, so we ensure that they have access. (Provider)

I'd say to [CSWs] I want one of you in that room. And they stuck to their guns, and they stayed in that room...my [tamariki] was not staying in that room without [CSWs]. They've made me feel like I could trust anyone, that I could lean on them when I needed that love and support. (Whānau)



Wider provider teams support CSWs by covering caseloads when they are required in court and, at times, by attending court themselves when tamariki, rangatahi, and, in many cases, multiple whānau members (including other affected tamariki and rangatahi – see section 6.4) require support. This is particularly critical during back-to-back or overlapping trials, or long and intensive proceedings (e.g. five-week trials requiring CSW presence from 8am–6pm days with limited opportunity for breaks). While this approach provides short-term flexibility, there is a risk this places additional pressure on non-court support functions.

I've just finished a five-week trial, every morning I was there at eight, and there till six. It was just back to back...I really leant on [my manager] just calling her, checking in, a check in with [manager of another team] and my team to debrief so I could go home and come back the next morning...There was no lunch breaks on those days...we're quite used to real quick snacks...It's hours and hours in court with the whole family...it's not just the child. (Provider)

Training and other learning opportunities

Training varied across providers. Experienced court support practitioners in long-established sexual harm providers developed and delivered in-house training that:

- Included multiple training modules (covering court processes, clarification of negotiable versus non-negotiable aspects of court practice, and the application of child development and trauma-informed approaches within the court context)
- Extended delivery to external stakeholders (e.g., Police, crown prosecutors, court staff, media and other providers) to strengthen understandings of the CSW role and developmentally appropriate approaches for children, and improve referral pathways
- Complemented CSW observation, mentoring and gradual skill development in a court room setting.

Providers and CSWs who were experienced in sexual harm support for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau but less familiar with court environments proactively sought and accessed training with established court support services and engaged with CVAs and Police to build their capability to effectively support tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau through court processes.

We had someone who was a very experienced court person who ran training for all of us, 20 odd people in the room...some [providers] for other areas...ended up, you know, zooming in because they couldn't get that information...We dug in...before we had a contract...we got going. (Provider)

Access to training and other learning opportunities was challenging for many providers. Most described the early development of their court support services as *being thrown in at the deep end*. This was driven largely by contracts requiring services to commence delivery before structured induction and training pathways were in place. Key training and other learning opportunity challenges included:

- **Training gaps and inconsistency:** As previously outlined, some long-established court support providers with experienced staff developed their own in-house training over time. In contrast, other providers relied on identifying and sourcing informal training and support from these providers alongside wider justice sector engagements and learning opportunities. While these opportunities were described as critical, they were also sporadic, limited to



short online sessions with few opportunities for follow-up and ongoing professional development.

- **Lack of system-wide alignment:** Most providers highlighted that training and learning opportunities across court support providers, and the wider justice system were fragmented despite a critical need for all parts of the system to work together (see section 6.6 for detail).
- **Access and participation barriers:** One provider noted national conferences and in-person learning opportunities are valued but are often costly and disruptive to service delivery. While technology-enabled learning (webinars and online resources) offers an alternative for sharing practice without travel, fully online training has been experienced as sub-optimal.

Training and other learning opportunities would benefit from provider-led development, coordination and delivery of a national court support training programme across the wider court ecosystem, supported by updated sexual violence and child- whānau-friendly specific resources.

Providers emphasised the need for a training programme to be shaped collaboratively by the sector and reflect local court, judicial, and regional variation. Coordination, content development and delivery could be provided through establishing a group of court support provider representatives or a reputable sector umbrella body such as TOAH-NNEST⁶. An optimal training programme would:

- **Be delivered in-person across the court ecosystem:** Providers highlighted the importance of in-person training (as opposed to, or supplemented with brief, online modules), structured follow-up and six-monthly refresher sessions. Most also emphasised the need to extend training across the wider court ecosystem, including Police, Court Victim Advisors, court registrars, Victim Support, and media. Proactive training for Police and Crown prosecutors was seen as critical to improving early referrals, reducing role confusion, and strengthening working relationships. Ongoing relationship-building was considered necessary due to regular turnover among court staff and supervisors. Local examples, such as joint training opportunities led by court staff in Auckland were described as critical to improving role clarity, collaboration and coordination.

The judicial world is not geared up to understand child development. You're going into the adult space, and so you're having to advocate all the time for what good child developmental responses look like. (Provider)

- **Include priority sessions and content:** Priority content was identified as child development and the use of developmentally appropriate language and messaging for tamariki and rangatahi; intentional and culturally responsive communication with whānau; and whanaungatanga-based approaches to clearly and compassionately explain court processes (including delays and adjournments). Training content would also cover practical planning to support court attendance, including considerations relating to siblings, schooling, safety, and accommodation.

Working with children and whānau is different...the court system is the same...but it's apples and oranges...if you're working with developmental stages...with the complexity of whānau systems...you have to have both those lenses, not only knowledge of trauma support but also that developmental aspect to it. (Provider)

⁶ <https://toah-nnest.org.nz/>



- **Provide up-to-date child- and whānau-friendly resources and tools:** Most providers identified a lack of up-to-date resources and information about sexual violence and courts for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau, although some noted the Manukau Court Support booklet was useful. In response, some have invested time and resource in developing their own tools such as step-by-step court journey flowcharts with plain-language explanations of the court process, child-friendly, Pacific responsive and bilingual resources.

I started to just develop my own resources...I'm translating it into the language of the family...that's an additional thing you just do to help the role you're trying to do...When I meet with families, I'll have a resource that's translated for the parent or the older person, and then a child friendly resource that's also in both languages...with visuals, because our Pacific people respond better to less words, more visuals and talanoa. Those are all things that we identify as gaps, and because we are passionate about [it], we just kind of do [them].
(Provider)

Supervision

Providers acknowledge the emotional intensity and sustained case complexity involved in court support. Court support work was commonly recognised as emotionally heavy, highly stressful, and complex, often requiring CSWs to operate within an unfamiliar and rigid legal system. Prolonged exposure to trauma, coupled with limited control over legal outcomes, can generate strong feelings of powerlessness and increase the risk of burnout and vicarious trauma. Long court timelines and frequent adjournments mean CSWs can carry cases for years, extending emotional and cognitive load well beyond initial engagement.

Long lead-in times also require extended engagement while CSWs support whānau to navigate significant life changes. During these periods, *life happens*, often compounding complexity, including intergenerational trauma, whānau with unresolved sexual harm, housing insecurity, poverty, disability, and mental health challenges. While CSWs remain highly flexible and operate as a “jack of all trades” there is increased risk of workload strain, uneven coverage, and burnout. In addition, post-court events - such as offender release or appeals - can re-trigger tamariki, rangatahi and whānau distress and extend emotional demands even after formal case closure. These risks are further heightened when caseloads gradually increase.

People's emotions and reactions to what has happened doesn't just [stop]... the journey of age and stage of emotion and all that comes... it's so complicated. (Provider)

Providers prioritise supervision and workforce wellbeing. Supervision structures place a strong emphasis on wellbeing and sustainability, recognising the intensity and emotional complexity of court support work. CSWs are encouraged to prioritise self-care practices - such as exercise, rest, time with friends and whānau, and engaging in hobbies - to maintain resilience and capacity to support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau effectively. This is complemented by regular clinical supervision, debriefing, and peer support to process emotional load and complex casework. Flexible working arrangements, including starting later or finishing earlier after demanding court days, support recovery and balance. High levels of trust within teams enable colleagues to temporarily take on other responsibilities when court work requires full focus, reflecting a shared understanding that court days are “all-in” and require near-exclusive attention.



We have really robust wellbeing policies to make sure that staff feel supported, acknowledged and valued... when you hear [a team member] saying that they are over capacity... it's dangerous and we can't burn out our staff like that. (Provider)

Provider supervision is embedded, but cross-provider collaboration remains an opportunity to strengthen court support. Providers embed supervision within everyday practice to support consistent CSW practice standards, build practitioner confidence, and strengthen sustainability in high-risk, emotionally demanding court support work. However, some identified a need to further strengthen collaboration across organisations, including establishing intentional shared spaces and forums for reflective practice, shared problem-solving, and collective accountability. These mechanisms were seen as important for normalising complexity and reducing the risk of CSWs and providers working in isolation.

6.2. Providers navigate barriers to ensure timely, wraparound support

Access to complementary services

Providers engage in active advocacy and system navigation to ensure practical and financial barriers do not prevent whānau participation in court processes. CSWs work with Police and Victim Support to secure travel, accommodation, kai funding, victim support grants, and other financial entitlements. However, obtaining this support is often administratively burdensome, requiring significant time to chase up approvals and following up on missed or incomplete arrangements to minimise harm or disruption for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau.

Just trying to follow up, [Police have] got a big load themselves...I've become a stalker...the family look at me like what's happening? ...That's not our pātai, that belongs to the Police...the last email I got back [was] I need to realise that [they've] got over 700 cases, and I thought - every individual is valid for what they want to know. (Provider)

CSWs also act as a conduit between whānau and multiple agencies to ensure equitable access to entitlements. While the contracted service rate includes a small provision for immediate needs/whānau costs, most providers respond directly when systemic supports are unavailable or delayed, including meeting basic needs such as providing kai on arrival. Consequently, providers often absorb costs or actions to protect tamariki, rangatahi and whānau dignity, safety, and participation until underlying systemic issues are resolved, if at all. One provider described protecting whānau dignity by reframing victim support grants as *wellbeing allowances* - to cover costs such as replacement clothing taken for forensic purposes or damaged phones, as well as court attendance allowances related to time off work, police interviews, and court-related commitments.

We had one [rangatahi] and her support person who came with no money and were told when they got here, oh, we'll reimburse you [for food] ...we're only going to pay for one...They had no money to buy food to be reimbursed...We harassed [the Police] ...did end up getting them funding for kai while they were here...but they went hungry that first day. (Provider)

They have really come down on what sort of verification is required. And again, you understand, because it's important to pay the right bank account. But not everyone has access to their bank details and a verified copy so that can sometimes be that a really big barrier to getting the support because they don't have a phone, or they don't have internet access, and



now they've got to go to the bank...It's extra stressful for them, and they're already going through a lot. (Provider)

Access to wraparound services

Referrals received from Police, Oranga Tamariki, internal teams, and self-referrals are managed efficiently and responded to in a timely manner. Providers ensure prompt access to CSWs and appropriate services ensuring that support is well-timed, connected, and aligned across the justice and social service systems.

Providers actively link clients to a wide range of internal and external supports. This may include counselling and long-term therapy (such as ACC Sensitive Claims), child sexual harm crisis services, family harm teams, and crisis advocacy for housing, income, safety planning, and agency liaison. Where clients do not meet court support criteria, providers flexibly reallocate them to other service streams to ensure support continues without disruption.

Court support is embedded within a broader continuum of care. Providers deliver an integrated, end-to-end service model spanning forensic medical services, crisis response, social work, counselling, group programmes, and prevention initiatives. Delivery is supported by a mixed and experienced workforce - including social workers, counsellors, psychologists, and therapists - whose complementary skills strengthen engagement with both rangatahi and whānau.

We had wraparound support with one of our rangatahi, so she was also having youth mentoring and counselling, and in the early stages, we had already done whanaungatanga with her whānau, so mum and dad were present, and it was more around wrapping around them and awhi-ing them through the court system. We had enough skills of a variety of services and abilities to be able to spread the load for whatever whānau needed. (Provider)

Managing late referrals, timing pressures and unpredictable court demand is a challenge. Late referrals - often received shortly before hearings or trials - limit opportunities for whakawhanaungatanga and relationship-building and undermine kaupapa-driven practice centred on trust, safety, and meaningful engagement. This creates ongoing tension between urgent court timelines and the time required to establish effective, whānau-centred support. The challenge is compounded by unpredictable demand, including last-minute hearing date changes, adjournments, and cases shifting across regions, all which place pressure on providers to remain flexible and responsive while maintaining quality, relational practice.

I've been called into court last minute by a police officer while the young person was halfway giving evidence. She was at breaking point, and she was having a break and she was just crying hysterically. No support in the room...De-escalate, that's the first thing...get them back to calm when they're threatening to leave and not want to finish this with the police officers...Just take a moment, let's talk about it, breathe is the first thing. It's so simple, but in that moment they forget. She was able to finish it. (Provider)

6.3. Court support workers provide vital system coordination

Collaboration across agencies

Court support provides a single, knowledgeable point of contact - often the CSW – who coordinates care across services and agencies. CSWs actively coordinate with Police, Officers in Charge, crown prosecutors, Court Victim Advisors, sexual assault teams, and court registry staff and



security, including informal coordination during court breaks to share updates on client wellbeing and case progress. This coordination reduces confusion for whānau, minimises duplication, and promotes clear communication. It also strengthens system efficiency by easing workload pressures for Officers in Charge and Court Victim Advisors, allowing them to concentrate on evidence gathering and legal process.

[One of] our social workers went into court last week and she said, I felt like I was the expert - the Officer in Charge hadn't told the crown prosecutor that I was going to be the support person...they should have done that beforehand. Part of our role is going to the Officer in Charge, going, have you done this? have you done that? While they should do it and it shouldn't be our job, the client doesn't need to feel like, what is going on? Sometimes [Police] come to us and go, have you got the funding for it? Or have you applied? It's not our job. (Provider)

I just had a case where from the beginning right through to the end of that case...there was buy-in from everybody, from the Police, from Victim Support, from Crown, from the CVAs, everyone respected everybody's role and saw value in everybody's role. And we had professional meetings, you know, constantly, communication...And the outcome for that family... they're financially funded throughout the whole process. Immigration [was] brought into it and supported...That case really showed me it is possible that everyone sees value in everybody, yeah, and that hierarchy, because sometimes it feels like that." (Provider)

Court support strengthens system coordination and accountability and offsets system

fragmentation. Court support plays a critical role in strengthening coordination and accountability within a justice system experiencing sustained pressure, including high police caseloads and systemic fragmentation. Providers described these pressures as potentially increasing the risk that young wāhine and complex cases are unintentionally deprioritised. Delayed updates and inconsistent communication can leave whānau feeling unseen and treated as *a number*. Challenges are further compounded by rural and cross-regional cases, uneven access to specialist sexual violence services, and dispersed courts, witnesses, and whānau.

To address these challenges, CSWs expend substantial effort obtaining basic information in addition to their core court support role. They do so through proactive relationship-building, clear advocacy, and collaboration with justice sector partners and other providers, helping to simplify communication, reduce system friction, and support a safer and more coherent court experience for whānau.

Sometimes whānau have other services involved with them, which can impact and confuse them about what the direction is, because they're given some information, and then now they're just confused and then overwhelmed. That's why we have to take their direction, on how much we give, how little, how fast, you know. (Provider)

Court support requires strong, trusted cross-system relationships. Some providers have well-established, and others are continuing to build relationships with key justice sector stakeholders. Some also maintain established referral pathways and working relationships with Oranga Tamariki through panels, triage processes, and referral mechanisms. Staff turnover in a court setting requires providers to continuously build and re-build relationships.

Some providers also have well-established, and others are continuing to build, trusted relationships with other court support providers. These relationships - sometimes formalised through Memoranda



of Understanding - enable warm referrals. Regional and national connections further support effective cross-regional collaboration when cases span multiple locations.

In one region, a collaborative, multi-provider and high-trust model enables whānau to be matched with the most appropriate CSW or provider. This flexibility strengthens continuity and responsiveness across the multi-provider collective.

Timely information sharing and stakeholder role clarity

Initial awareness of the new court support service across the justice sector was limited, constraining effective information sharing. Many providers reported that the service rollout “*slid in under the radar*”, resulting in low visibility among Court Victim Advisors and other key stakeholders. These early gaps have been compounded by ongoing information-sharing barriers, including consent loops, slow court and Police processes, regional silos, and incompatible systems, all of which continue to constrain timely and coordinated communication.

If we know who else is working with them, we can have a hui but sometimes that information is not forthcoming. (Provider)

Initial rollout of the new court support service was impacted by confusion across the sector about accountabilities, roles and responsibilities. One region facilitated court staff-led training to support shared and clear understandings. This lack of clarity extended to practical tasks such as AVL or video-link evidence, witness logistics and courtroom arrangements, and as noted above, travel and accommodation. Also noted above, in practice, CSWs frequently step in informally to fill gaps, escalating issues and advocating on behalf of whānau. While effective in the moment, this approach relies heavily on personal relationships and local knowledge rather than consistent, system-wide pathways. In response, Oranga Tamariki staff in one region supported court staff-led training with local court support providers to establish shared understandings of court settings, roles, and responsibilities, and to strengthen working relationships.

Setting up court support services would benefit from clearer structures and shared expectations across the justice system. Some providers highlighted service rollout could be strengthened by:

- **Clarifying roles boundaries and responsibilities** including what sits with Court Victim Advisors, Police, Court Support services, and therapists, and who owns specific tasks in each case.
- **Defining escalation and accountability pathways** and a clear *chain of command* identifying who to approach when practical and logistical issues arise, how and when matters should be escalated and addressed.

6.4. Data practices must evolve to capture true volume and relational impacts of the service

Monitoring reached and unreached clients

Providers’ report quarterly to Oranga tamariki on the number of referrals; tamariki actively receiving support; whānau/family actively receiving support; tamariki who left the service with a mutually agreed exit plan in place; tamariki who exited from the service, evidenced by disengagement of six months or more (allowing for timings of the criminal justice proceedings) (see section 6.5 for further detail).



Court support services are being accessed by eligible clients. However, reported uptake may understate true whānau reach and need. Some providers noted that reported service uptake may understate actual reach, as whānau are often recorded as a single unit despite support extending to many individual whānau members - sometimes up to 20 people within a whānau. Data captured for the number of tamariki receiving support, may reflect only those immediately identified and could exclude other tamariki who subsequently disclose or are indirectly supported. Without access to provider-level reports, there is uncertainty about the consistency of data entry across services. This suggests a need to further explore and strengthen shared understanding, alignment, and clarity around data definitions, reporting standards, and data capture practices to ensure reliability and comparability of information across providers.

One whānau is just not like four people. Do you know what I mean? For us, we've had some where we've had about 20 people...workshops with the whanaus to explain the court system and all those processes, it doesn't actually show the mahi that we're doing, because we actually run these and sometimes have to split them because there's too many. (Provider)

Waitlist demand and visibility

Court support providers manage fluctuating demand through adaptive, integrated service design. Visibility of waitlists highlights an ongoing and fluctuating demand for counselling and court support. For some providers, many tamariki and rangatahi enter the service at the forensic stage, providing early insight into future needs across crisis response, therapeutic counselling, and court support. These providers address waitlist demand through flexible and adaptive service scope and refer to other in-house or external services and/or “hold space” for clients while they wait for ACC counselling support – this helps to reduce the risk of disengagement and drop-off, and ensure continuity of care for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau.

Data-informed planning

As exemplified above, providers use data gathered to guide service design and resource allocation. With a future lens in mind, it is important to note some providers perceptions that:

What works is evident. Measuring it consistently is the next step. Many providers highlighted that tamariki, rangatahi and whānau frequently express their gratitude for the support they received and provide extensive anecdotal feedback about the impact this support has had on their livelihoods and wellbeing.

Although some providers described having efficient CRM systems with a single client ID code across several in-house services in place, all commonly expressed a clear desire to systematically capture whether clients received what they came for, whether the court support processes worked well for them, and what could be done differently to improve service delivery.

What matters most is hardest to measure. One provider noted a shift toward greater emphasis placed on evaluation and funding frameworks such as Return on Investment (ROI) and Social Investment, and the use of Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI). While these approaches were acknowledged as useful, they were also perceived as poorly suited to capturing the relational aspects of service delivery and impacts that underpin effective court support. Critical intangible outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau such as feelings of safety, trust, dignity, and hope were highlighted as rarely visible within such frameworks.



This misalignment was seen to create a risk of compliance-driven or “data-hoarding” practices, where emphasis is placed on what is easily quantified rather than what is most meaningful. Consequently, long-term, intensive, and highly impactful case studies can become obscured within aggregated metrics, diminishing recognition of true value and weakening the case for sustained investment in relational, whānau-centred support.

6.5. High practice adaptability meets complex needs

Uptake of court support services

Eligible clients access available court support services: Data provided by Oranga Tamariki on court support service volumes to the end of March 2026 show service use and reach (Table 5).

Table 5: Court Support Service utilisation data

	Referrals (Volume)	Active Tamariki (Support)	Active Whānau (Support)	Agreed Exit Plan (Outcomes)	Disengaged Tamariki 6+ Months (Outcomes)
P1	22	18	17	5	0
P2	103	39	39	11	68
P3	9	8	8	0	0
P4	14	31	21	15	0
P5	11	11	8	0	0
P6	15	26	23	7	1
P7	12	6	4	2	3
P8	N/A	89	N/A	N/A	N/A
P9	9	19	13	7	0
P10	19	18	18	3	N/A
P11	7	7	3	1	1

There are gaps in service reach for vulnerable tamariki and rangatahi. It is important to note that many providers highlighted that many vulnerable tamariki and rangatahi - including disabled children, very young children, and those from marginalised groups - never reach court at all, indicating that current services are likely to only be seeing the “*tip of the iceberg*”.



Resource adaptability

Court support resource adaptability is demonstrated through practice approaches that prioritise dignity, safety, and choice. CSWs adjust pace, communication style, and types of support in response to individual and whānau needs, including tamaiti age and developmental stage, trauma history, cultural context, and whānau dynamics and readiness. Rather than relying on predetermined scripts, CSWs *“get on their feet and do it”*, responding in real time to what is unfolding and enabling support that is flexible, tamariki- and whānau-centric, and contextually appropriate.

Resource adaptability is underpinned by flexible, relationship-based practice that explicitly rejects *“one-size-fits-all”* or highly scripted models of service and support. CSWs emphasised starting where the individual and whānau are, tailoring their approach to each person’s context and needs. A strong focus on whakawhanaungatanga and early relationship-building - particularly with tamaiti - creates the foundation for engagement, safety, and trust. Practice is guided by professional judgement, experience, and real-time responsiveness, rather than rigid checklists or predetermined pathways.

6.6. The justice system remains adult-centric, requiring structural shifts to prevent system-induced harm

Justice system acknowledgement and systemic buy-in

System acknowledgement of court support is being built through relationships but is not yet embedded as business as usual. Most providers expressed having to actively establish, articulate and justify their role within the justice sector. Providers with strong, long-standing relationships across the justice ecosystem were able to integrate court support into court room practice at a faster pace than those required to establish new relationships. One provider described how established trust and recognition of the CSW role enabled swift judicial intervention to address assessed risks to whānau safety. However, system-wide acknowledgement of court support for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau remains inconsistent, with many providers noting that it is not yet regarded as *“business as usual”* across all courts and stakeholders.

Providers, all or the majority...have had to establish their place in the wider justice sector, promote their own services to ensure mutual respect across different stakeholder groups within a courtroom setting... (Provider)

[Court staff] didn't get any information at the beginning. I know [Manager] had to do a lot of work with her existing relationships. They've been told nothing. So once again, it landed, and they're kind of like, what is this? (Provider)

Court support is challenged by system complexity, unclear authority and compounding harm for whānau. Court support operates within a complex system where - as noted above – roles and responsibilities remain unclear. Some providers noted this is compounded in some instances by inconsistent information from court staff and frequently changing rules, forms, permissions, and processes. These shifting *“goalposts”* often mean boundaries are only clarified once issues arise, increasing stress, uncertainty, and inefficiency for both CSWs, legal professionals and whānau.

Some providers noted that while court support for tamariki and rangatahi and for adults is led by different government agencies, court staff do not always understand the scope of the CSW role. This can result in courts asserting control over in-court activity in ways that limit CSW involvement within formal court spaces and create grey areas, such as victim impact statements at risk of falling between



agencies and without clear accountability. Providers highlighted that constraints on CSW involvement increase the risk of unsafe or retraumatising court experiences for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. These risks were perceived to be further exacerbated by frequent delays and adjournments, often with minimal notice and extending over months or, in some cases, years, leaving tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau in prolonged states of uncertainty and “living in limbo”. Many providers also observed that court timetables frequently take precedence over wellbeing considerations, contributing to system-induced trauma, erosion of trust, and disengagement among whānau.

Someone can be sitting there waiting for court for years, and so there's a lot of life that can happen in that time. Yes, and we don't want whatever's happening in their life to mean that they drop out of that process. If we can support them through those things, then hopefully they stay engaged in that process. (Provider)

Signs of systemic change

The justice system remains fundamentally adult-centric. Significant change is needed to reduce system-induced harm and prioritise tamariki and rangatahi safety, voices, and wellbeing. Providers noted:

- **The adult-centric system within which court support operates does not meet tamariki and rangatahi needs:** Most providers commonly described court and justice processes as primarily designed for adults, and creating significant challenges for tamariki and rangatahi. Some characterised courtrooms as adversarial and unsafe for tamariki and rangatahi voices, noting instances where contact orders for alleged offending adults were made despite disclosures and identified safety concern, and where rangatahi whose developmental age is lower than their chronological age are treated as adults.

[Perpetrator] was put on the register...but where they had put him was on a marae. So, you know, we were asking questions...kids are gonna be there! (Provider)

We've had cases where the person experiencing harm is now in their early 20s but have the mental capacity of 11 or 12...but the courts treat them like adults. (Provider)

- **Providers emphasise a critical need for judiciary and legal professionals to:**
 - Demonstrate stronger understanding of child development and trauma, and how adult-focused explanations, ongoing delays and adjournments can leave tamariki and rangatahi in prolonged uncertainty and inadvertently cause harm
 - Use developmentally appropriate, plain language, avoiding unnecessary detail that may distress or retraumatise tamariki and rangatahi
 - Prioritise tamariki and rangatahi safety and wellbeing alongside legal clarity, particularly in decisions affecting contact and exposure to harm
 - Engage meaningfully with CSWs and specialist advocates to inform child-centred decision-making.

I have to hold [my whānau] down because it is hard for them to hear what's going on...different Judge's do different things, like, some judges just do an outline of the charges, some go into details... It was so detailed...how they worded things is disgusting...these kids are having to listen to [male genitalia] and [female genitalia] ...and you've got to deal with it afterwards. (Provider)



- **A specialist court that prioritises wellbeing over process is a safer, child-centred response to sexual harm:** Providers consistently advocated for specialist courts to address sexual harm experienced by tamariki and rangatahi, noting that adult court processes are not designed to respond safely or appropriately to these cases. Youth and marae-based courts were highlighted as more respectful, culturally grounded, and trauma-informed court room that better support participation, dignity, and wellbeing.

Alongside this, providers and CSWs emphasised the need for active advocacy across the justice system, including engagement with Police and the Family Court through affidavits outlining therapeutic needs, and promoting safer Police engagement in familiar, non-threatening environments outside the courtroom for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau.

*The focus is the perpetrator. We need to flip it. It needs to be focused on the tamariki.
(Provider)*

- **Although there are minor opportunities to influence systemic change, improved system alignment, accountability and commitment to tamariki, rangatahi and sexual violence is needed:** As noted previously, some providers identified opportunities to contribute to the design of a new court building and victim waiting rooms, as well as involvement in training initiatives and efforts to shape media reporting practices. However, many providers also identified ongoing siloing across government responses to family and sexual violence. While national strategies and funding frameworks exist, these were described as lacking high-level and practical mandate at the implementation level, limiting coordination, responsiveness, and aligned action across justice, health, housing and social services and other sectors. Providers emphasised a need to strengthen cross-government coordination on family and sexual violence through joint accountability structures, pooled funding arrangements, and clearly defined, measurable local outcomes that translate national strategy into practice.

What is the strategy for young people? ... all [government agencies] working together on family violence and sexual violence in particular...so housing policies fit in, corrections, everything...I can't say that I've seen much progress on that. (Provider)

*[Some cross-agency strategies don't] really ever have any teeth, right?...[They can say] this is what's great, and then [agencies] have the ability to make a decision to ignore that...
(Provider)*



7. Economy – Funding models must align with the complex realities of service delivery

7.1. Funding addresses a critical service gap, and can be strengthened by reflecting case complexity and streamlining court participation entitlements

Funding has enabled providers to formalise previously unfunded court support for tamariki and rangatahi and expanded regional coverage. Government investment in the new court support service was highly valued. Some providers already delivering court support for tamariki and whānau to address a significant service gap, no longer had to absorb all associated costs in the absence of funding.

However, as outlined above many providers frequently deliver uncontracted practical assistance associated with supporting:

- Tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau who travel from other regions and frequently arrive without adequate accommodation, food, or transport to support participation in court processes (see section 6.2). Providers in large regions also support whānau required to travel to courts in different districts, including covering parking and transport expenses.
- Extensive numbers of whānau who may not be captured in reporting (see section 5.2.4). This creates a risk that funding formulas underestimate demand and underfund court support FTE.

A small number of providers also identified some contractual ambiguities for Oranga Tamariki to consider – specifically noting:

- Contracts do not technically or explicitly specify the inclusion of support for young people acting as witnesses in others' cases and may experience secondary trauma. While such support may be implied in the court support service specification document "*Recognising that tamariki and rangatahi exist within the context of their whānau, the service actively supports whānau...*"⁷ this could be made more explicit, consistent with the approach taken in ACC sensitive claims contracts.
- Contracts specify the provision of support only after charges are laid, despite the reality that there is often a year or more between an initial report and the laying of charges.

While providers reported that inclusive support is routinely offered if charges have been drawn up (but not served), there may be a need to review and clarify the following text within the court specification document:

*"The service supports tamariki who are under 18 years of age at the time of referral, where there is a current charge filed in the criminal justice system and they are the victim-survivor of sexual violence."*⁸

⁷ From the court support service specification document.

⁸ *ibid.*



“Tamariki may be referred to the service at any point after Police have filed charges against the defendant.”⁹

Key insights identify clear levers to strengthen and sustain court support. Provider insights indicate that aspects of current contract funding may be misaligned with the realities of court support service delivery for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. While providers continue to respond flexibly and ethically to need, it is critical to build sustainable funding structures that formally support this work rather than leaving providers to rely on uncontracted effort and informal workarounds. Key considerations to ensure safe, consistent, and sustainable service delivery include:

- **Streamline the allocation of whānau court participation funding and entitlements:** The current management of funding and entitlements to support whānau participation requires review and simplification. Given the central coordination role CSWs play between whānau, agencies, and the courts - and the strong, trusted relationships they hold - there is a case for shifting administration of these funds from Police to court support providers. This would better align funding access with service delivery in practice, particularly as providers often absorb these costs or spend significant time navigating access to them. However, this approach carries a risk that tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau not engaged with a provider may face barriers to accessing support. As an alternative, introducing a flexible contingency fund could ensure urgent costs are met when entitlements fail in practice, reducing financial pressure on providers while maintaining equitable access.
- **Rebalance court support FTE resourcing to reflect actual demand by funding based on complexity and need, not just case numbers:** Allocate FTE based on case complexity and need rather than case count, recognising that a single case may involve multiple tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. Consider introducing surge-capacity funding to manage referral spikes and maintain service continuity during periods of exceptional demand.

⁹ *Ibid.*



8. Equity – Culturally grounded, intersectional practice drives outcomes

8.1. Providers deliver highly responsive care

Court Support services generally apply an equity and intersectional lens to ensure court support is responsive to the diverse identities, needs, and lived experiences of tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau.

Kaupapa Māori providers offer culturally grounded support that recognises colonisation, intergenerational trauma, and the fear associated with navigating a Western justice system. Te Ao Māori and CSW practice is actively lived through priority placed on mana motuhake and values such as manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and kotahitanga, rather than treated as symbolic. Providers described several practices they implement to support healing, dignity and whānau wellbeing. These include, but are not limited to, providing cultural advisory support in court spaces; gifting taonga to tamariki as a symbol of strength for giving evidence, regardless of the verdict; and sharing kai and moments of celebration (e.g. shared food after court) to close difficult days and acknowledge courage and effort.

Tangata Te Tiriti providers often support a high proportion of Māori and ethnically diverse tamariki, rangatahi and whānau and embed dedicated cultural support within their service models.

All providers intentionally support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau with learning disabilities, neurodiversity, traumatic brain injury, mental health challenges, and multiple, compounding disadvantages. These groups face heightened vulnerability within the justice system and are proactively identified and supported to reduce exclusion, misunderstanding, and retraumatisation.

One-size-fits-all court processes continue to exclude some tamariki and rangatahi: Providers identified ongoing challenges related to misgendering and the use of incorrect names within court settings and by some whānau, creating distress and undermining dignity. Inconsistent access to specialist communication support - particularly for neurodiverse tamariki, rangatahi and whānau - further compounds these issues, with support often contingent on whether a communication specialist is available. Providers emphasised that a “*one-size-fits-all*” model is ineffective; effective court support reflects the diversity of communities, cultures, identities, and geographies. This requires strong partnerships with local services that understand regional and population-specific needs, with responsiveness varying significantly depending on local demographics and service availability.

Despite high demand for Pacific court support services, there is limited provider capacity and structural undersupply: Significant gaps remain in access to culturally appropriate, Pacific-led court support. Currently, only one Pacific provider is resourced with a portion of an FTE to serve the entire Auckland region. Demand is high, capacity is constrained, and referrals frequently extend beyond the funded catchment area. This creates sustained pressure on a very small workforce and highlights a systemic inequity in access to culturally grounded support for Pacific children, young people, and their families.



Appendix 1: Court support logic model (refined)

Rangatahi court support service in sexual violence proceedings

VALUE PROPOSITION:

The court support service creates social value for tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau by delivering inclusive trauma-informed care that empowers dignified, informed, and healing engagement with the court system, while establishing sustainable infrastructure that advances equity, cultural responsiveness, and long-term service viability across the justice and social sectors.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

- Tamariki and whānau in sexual violence criminal justice proceedings are being potentially re-traumatised by the stressful court process experience
- Stress and potential re-traumatisation is caused by: Interrogation techniques; complexity of the process, process not being youth friendly, having to talk about the traumatic event, process not being Māori centric,
- Whānau are not enabled with skills and knowledge to support either tamariki or themselves, in a situation where they are already dealing with trauma

Connection to Te Aorerekura strategy outcomes:

8. People, whānau and families impacted by family violence and sexual violence get help early and are safe and supported

11. People, whānau and families are free from shame, stigma, silencing and discrimination

INPUTS RESOURCES

COURT SUPPORT PERSON:

- Specialist knowledge of sexual trauma
- Specialist knowledge of developmental needs of children and young people
- Understanding of court processes

THE SERVICE

With:

- Flexibility in length of support built in

Oranga Tamariki

- Offers long term funding security

ASSUMPTIONS:

- Provider contracting arrangements finalised
- Adequate provider capacity and capability in place
- Adequate and consistent provider training developed and delivered



- Provider network set up to share learnings and experiences to set up and deliver optimal court support services across different locations

STRATEGIES: What we plan on doing to address the issue

ACTIVITIES

PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL (HOLISTIC) SUPPORT IN WHANAU-CENTRIC WAY:

PREPARE/SUPPORT/GUIDE:

- Listening, validating, comforting, emotional support
- Assessment of needs and safety with tamariki and whānau responding to needs
- Being alongside tamariki during trial

INFORM/EMPOWER:

- Informing and communicating
- Enable tamariki participate in decision making

CONNECT/ADVOCATE:

- Refer to appropriate services to address current and future ongoing needs and support healing
- Provide tools and referrals for whānau to help them to support Tamariki
- Build connections with other court professionals

EDUCATE:

- Skills and techniques to manage emotions/stress for tamariki and whānau

OUTPUTS

PREPARE/SUPPORT/GUIDE

- Court support worker is connecting with tamariki and whānau and providing emotional support
- Tamariki and whānau needs and safety needs are assessed
- Support plan for distinctive needs of tamariki and whānau recorded
- Hearings attended with tamariki and whānau

INFORM/EMPOWER:

- Court support person communicates with and informs tamariki/whānau
- Tamariki are participating in decision making

CONNECT/ADVOCATE

- Tamariki are referred to services for current and ongoing support into the future
- Court support person is connecting/liasing with court and other professionals

EDUCATE

- Education sessions are happening



RESULTS: What we will see as a result

OUTCOMES

(Short-term)

Tamariki and rangatahi

- Are emotionally supported
 - Feel heard, believed, validated, comforted, respected, safe
 - Their needs are understood and responded to (including cultural, disability, rainbow)
- Are well-informed
 - Understand the process and outcomes, what happened and next steps
 - Prepared with realistic expectations for various court processes
 - Can better participate in the court process
- Are supported by other services for current and ongoing needs
 - Are supported in dealing with court officials and other professionals
 - Learn strategies to manage distressing emotions during court and later in life

Whānau

- Are clear about their role in the court process
- Are informed and cared for and valued for their support
- Are reassured that the tamariki got support they needed
- Have tools to support tamariki further
- Are connected to whānau and support network

OUTCOMES

(Medium- and long-term)

MEDIUM

- **The stress for tamariki is minimised**
- **The potential for tamariki to be re-traumatised by the court experience is reduced**
 - Tamariki and whānau understand the basics of sexual violence and common misconceptions
 - Whānau and tamariki are better equipped to keep on with life and continue to heal
 - Tamariki wellbeing improves
 - Tamariki and whānau can process and manage the outcome of their court process
 - The whānau are mobilised to support the child
 - Whānau relationships are restored

LONG TERM

- Effects of intergenerational sexual violence are reduced
- Lessen impact of sexual violence on victims/survivors
- Recovery is improved
- Reducing secondary victimisation from participating in the criminal justice system
- Reducing risk of sexual revictimization (being victims later in life)



VALUE CREATION

Creating social value for tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and providers

- Tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau feel safe, supported, and emotionally ready to engage with providers and courts, laying the foundation for healing and long-term wellbeing.
- Service impact. Workforce wellbeing and sustainability

Building multi-capital value by connecting systems and empowering communities

- Providers and service models: Provider roles and workforce capacity; Workforce Capacity & Capability; Seamless Service Delivery and referrals
- Systems: Strong interagency relationships and communication; Systems level recognition and support
- Efficient resource use: Understanding and tracking needs; Scalability and flexibility

Developing the infrastructure for sustainable service delivery

- Government support: funding, contracts and oversight
- Provider capacity and workforce development
- Adequate and sustainable funding

Delivering inclusive practice

- Emphasis on equity and intersectionality, actively recognising and responding to the diverse needs of Māori, Pacific, disabled, rainbow, migrant, and neurodiverse communities.



Appendix 1: Court support logic model (refined) – image version

Rangatahi court support service in sexual violence proceedings

VALUE PROPOSITION:

The court support service creates social value for tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau by delivering inclusive trauma-informed care that empowers dignified, informed, and healing engagement with the court system, while establishing sustainable infrastructure that advances equity, cultural responsiveness, and long-term service viability across the justice and social sectors.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

- Tamariki and whānau in sexual violence criminal justice proceedings are being potentially re-traumatised by the stressful court process experience
- Stress and potential re-traumatisation is caused by: Interrogation techniques; complexity of the process, Process not being youth friendly, having to talk about the traumatic event, process not being Māori centric
- Whānau are not enabled with skills and knowledge to support either tamariki or themselves, in a situation where they are already dealing with trauma

Connection to Te Aorerekura strategy outcomes:

- 8. People, whānau and families impacted by family violence and sexual violence get help early and are safe and supported
- 11. People, whānau and families are free from shame, stigma, silencing and discrimination

VALUE CREATION

Creating social value for tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and providers

- Tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau feel safe, supported, and emotionally ready to engage with providers and courts, laying the foundation for healing and long-term wellbeing.
- Service impact, Workforce wellbeing and sustainability

Building multi-capital value by connecting systems and empowering communities

- Providers and service models: Provider roles and workforce capacity; Workforce Capacity & Capability; Seamless Service Delivery and referrals
- Systems: Strong interagency relationships and communication; Systems level recognition and support
- Efficient resource use: Understanding and tracking needs; Scalability and flexibility

Developing the infrastructure for sustainable service delivery

- Government support: funding, contracts and oversight
- Provider capacity and workforce development
- Adequate and sustainable funding

Delivering inclusive practice

- Emphasis on equity and intersectionality, actively recognising and responding to the diverse needs of Māori, Pacific, disabled, rainbow, migrant, and neurodiverse communities.

Resource

STRATEGIES: What we plan on doing to address the issue

RESULTS: What we will see as a result

INPUTS/RESOURCES

ACTIVITIES

OUTPUTS

OUTCOMES (Short-term)

OUTCOMES (Medium- and long-term)

COURT SUPPORT PERSON

- With:
- Specialist knowledge of sexual trauma
 - Specialist knowledge of developmental needs of children and young people
 - Understanding of court processes

THE SERVICE

- With:
- Flexibility in length of support built in

Oranga Tamariki

- Offers long term funding security

ASSUMPTIONS

- Provider contracting arrangements finalised
- Adequate provider capacity and capability in place
- Adequate and consistent provider training developed and delivered
- Provider network set up to share learnings and experiences to set up and deliver optimal court support services across different locations

PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL (HOLISTIC) SUPPORT IN WHĀNAU-CENTRIC WAY

PREPARE/SUPPORT/GUIDE:

- Listening, validating, comforting emotional support
- Assessment of needs and safety with tamariki and whānau responding to needs
- Being alongside tamariki during trial

INFORM/EMPOWER:

- Informing and communicating
- Enable tamariki to participate in decision making

CONNECT/ADVOCATE:

- Refer to appropriate services to address current and future ongoing needs and support healing
- Provide tools and referrals for whānau to help them to support tamariki
- Build connections with other court professionals

EDUCATE:

- Skills and techniques to manage emotions/stress for tamariki and whānau

PREPARE/SUPPORT/GUIDE:

- Court support worker is connecting with tamariki and whānau and providing emotional support
- Tamariki and whānau needs and safety needs are assessed
- Support plan for distinctive needs of tamariki and whānau recorded
- Hearings attended with tamariki and whānau

INFORM/EMPOWER:

- Court support person communicates with and informs tamariki/whānau
- Tamariki are participating in decision making

CONNECT/ADVOCATE:

- Tamariki are referred to services for current and ongoing support into the future
- Court support person is connecting/liasing with court and other professionals

EDUCATE:

- Education sessions are happening

Tamariki and Rangatahi:

- Are emotionally supported
 - Feel heard, believed, validated, comforted, respected, safe
 - Their needs are understood and responded to (including cultural, disability, rainbow)
- Are well-informed
 - Understand the process and outcomes, what happened and next steps
 - Prepared with realistic expectations for various court processes
 - Can better participate in the court process
- Are supported by other services for current and ongoing needs
 - Are supported in dealing with court officials and other professionals
 - Learn strategies to manage distressing emotions during court and later in life

Whānau:

- Are clear about their role in the court process
- Are informed and cared for and valued for their support
- Are reassured that the tamariki got support they needed
- Have tools to support tamariki further
- Are connected to whānau and support network

MEDIUM

- The stress for tamariki is minimised
- The potential for tamariki to be re-traumatised by the court experience is reduced

- Tamariki and whānau understand the basics of sexual violence and common misconceptions
- Whānau and tamariki are better equipped to keep on with life and continue to heal
- Tamariki wellbeing improves
- Tamariki and whānau can process and manage the outcome of their court process
- The whānau are mobilised to support the child
- Whānau relationships are restored

LONG TERM

- Effects of intergenerational sexual violence are reduced
- Lessen impact of sexual violence on victims/survivors
- Recovery is improved
- Reducing secondary victimisation from participating in the criminal justice system
- Reducing risk of sexual revictimization (being victims later in life)

Appendix 2: Monitoring and evaluation framework

PROCESS evaluation questions	PROCESS evaluation measures and indicators	Information sources
Do the inputs for the court support service provide the foundation needed to achieve the outcomes? - What governance and management structures are in place? - What are the roles and responsibilities of providers, justice sector stakeholders, Oranga tamariki and/or cross-agency national and regional teams? - How and how well do stakeholders partner to set up and deliver the court support service? - Have provider services been set-up as intended? - How has Oranga tamariki supported the set up of local providers to achieve their intended outcomes? What does the court support service deliver? - What do provider services deliver and what are the different service components? - How is the service implemented in different sites/courts/jurisdictions? - How is the service integrated with the criminal justice system, other providers and agencies? - What relationships have been developed and how well are they working? - How effectively are data being collected, reported and used for continuous improvement? How effectively is the court support service being delivered? - Is there an sufficient workforce capacity/capability? What roles are in place? - What are good practice principles and how do they take into account local and community contexts, and the knowledge and skills relevant to the purpose and focus of court support for clients from different cultural and/or other groups? - How is client safety ensured? - To what extent are clients satisfied with the support they receive? - Do clients feel adequately supported? If so, how and by whom? Who has been reached? - Who is using the service? How are they referred? - Are any client groups missing? How accessible is the service?	- Provider and agencies consider: - Governance and management are effective - Partnerships are in place to set-up and implement the court support service - Shared understandings and expectations of the court support service across providers, judiciary and justice sector stakeholders - Number of court support sites matches intended number of sites - Opportunities to enhance delivery are identified and actioned - Potential future risks are identified, and mitigation plans are in place # and types of supports provided (internal/external) (physical health, mental health, housing, education, employment other) (Data not available) # tamariki, rangatahi and whānau accessed and/or completed intervention/programme(s) # and type of engagements (formal and informal) and follow-ups with whānau (home, phone, text, email, other) (Data not available) - Average time spent supporting tamariki, rangatahi and whānau (Data not available) - Providers, tamariki, rangatahi and whānau holistic and immediate needs are addressed # of people supported by iwi/providers (tamariki, rangatahi and whānau) # referrals received - Referral source # referred potential participants who agreed to participate in service (Data not available) # start and/or complete service # referrals to other local community providers (and type of service) (Data not available)	Agency admin data Document review Planning workshops with Oranga tamariki, government agencies and providers In-depth online interviews with Oranga tamariki staff In-depth online interviews with provider managers Online focus groups with provider kaimahi Site visits: - Focus groups with providers - Interviews with tamariki, rangatahi and whānau

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- What type of support do clients need? What support do they receive from the Courts pilot? What other types of support have the potential to benefit clients? - How long is each client engaged with the service? - What are the barriers to supporting clients? Does capacity meet demand?	- Demographic profile of people supported by providers (tamariki, rangatahi and whānau) (Data not available) - Tamariki, rangatahi and whānau self-report timely access/referral to supports they need	
OUTCOMES evaluation questions	OUTCOMES measures and indicators	Information sources
To what extent have the intended outcomes been achieved and are they attributable to the court support service? - What changes can be seen for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau? - Do tamariki, rangatahi and whānau feel seen, heard, understood and meaningfully participate in the court process? - What wellbeing changes have been observed? - What are any unexpected outcomes across the justice system (positive or negative)? Do the court support service objectives and design reach and respond to the needs of tamariki, rangatahi and whānau? What key learnings and insights have been gained to inform: - Continuous improvement - Extension of the court support service to other sites?	Tamariki, rangatahi and whānau self-report: - Feeling heard, believed, validated, comforted, respected, safe and supported before/during/after court proceedings - Their needs are understood and responded to - Feeling well informed - Increased confidence to participate in the court process - Increased participation in the court process - Support and advocacy from provider to participate in the court process - Reduced stress and harm in/out of the courtroom - Change in taha tinana, taha wairua, taha whānau, taha hinengaro - Improved whānau relationships Whānau self-report feeling able to: - Support their tamariki/rangatahi through the court process - Meet the needs of their tamariki/rangatahi	Data collection methods as above

Appendix 3: Vfl criteria and standards

8.1.1. Rubric 1: Building multi-capital value by connecting systems and empowering communities

Efficiency Domains	Criteria	Emerging <i>Below the level outlined in the criterion for 'Establishing'</i>	Establishing	Embedding <i>Between the level outlined in the criterion for 'Establishing' and 'Excelling'</i>	Excelling
Workforce capacity and capability	Staffing levels		Understaffed; demand exceeds capacity		Fully staffed with appropriate specialists to meet demand
	Training and other learning opportunities and supervision		Infrequent or informal training opportunities		Ongoing, standardised specialist training other learning opportunities
	Supervision		Supervision is infrequent or not at a specialist level		Regular supervision, mentoring and other forms of support in place
Seamless service delivery and referrals	Access to complementary services		Limited access: referrals delayed		Easy, timely access to wraparound services (e.g., counselling, kaiawhina)
	Access to wraparound services		Limited access; few partnerships		Seamless access to internal or external complementary services
Strong interagency relationships and communication	Collaboration across agencies		Limited or ad hoc collaboration		Strong, consistent collaboration with courts, NZ Police, Court Victim Advisors, etc.
	Timely information sharing		Delays or gaps in communication		Information is shared promptly within legal parameters and clearly to support providers and whānau
	Stakeholder role clarity		Role confusion or overlap		All stakeholders understand and respect each other's roles
Understanding and tracking need	Monitoring reached and unreached clients		Limited tracking; data gaps		Providers track both engaged and unengaged clients
	Waitlist demand and visibility		Waitlists exist but are not monitored		Waitlists and unmet needs are documented and inform planning
	Data-informed planning		Data is sporadic or anecdotal		Data is used to guide service design and resource allocation
Scalability and flexibility	Resource adaptability		Resources stretched; limited adaptability		Staffing and resources adjust to meet complex needs

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	Uptake of court support services		Court support services underutilised		Eligible clients consistently access available Court Support
System-level recognition and support (connected but outside the direct scope of court support services)	Justice system acknowledgement		Limited awareness or support by the justice system		Court support role is recognised and supported across the system
	Systemic buy-in		Minimal engagement or support		Agencies actively support and integrate court support services in the courtroom
	Signs of systemic change		Change is slow or inconsistent		Evidence of trauma-informed practices and engagement with court support services, rangatahi, tamariki and whānau and improved outcomes

8.1.2. Rubric 2: Creating social value for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau

Effectiveness Domains	Criteria	Emerging <i>Below the level outlined in the criterion for 'Establishing'</i>	Establishing	Embedding <i>Between the level outlined in the criterion for 'Establishing' and 'Excelling'</i>	Excelling
Short-term outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau	Sense of safety and support		Mixed feedback; some clients feel unsupported		Clients consistently report feeling safe, supported, and less overwhelmed
	Confidence to engage		Engagement is inconsistent or hesitant		Clients feel equipped and confident to participate meaningfully in the court process
	Mental health and holistic wellbeing		Limited impact; holistic wellbeing concerns persist		Noticeable improvements in anxiety, trauma, and emotional and holistic wellbeing

8.1.3. Rubric 3: Developing the infrastructure for sustainable service delivery

Economy Domains	Criteria	Emerging <i>Below the level outlined in the criterion for 'Establishing'</i>	Establishing	Embedding <i>Between the level outlined in the criterion for 'Establishing' and 'Excelling'</i>	Excelling
Government support: funding, contracts and oversight	Funding commitment		Short-term or uncertain funding		Multi-year, stable funding with clear alignment to service needs
	Contract management and procurement		Limited transparency; procurement issues		Transparent, timely processes with provider input
	Contract flexibility		Contracts are rigid and limit innovation		Contracts allow for adaptive, responsive service delivery

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	Contract alignment with service provision realities		Specifications underestimate workload		Specifications reflect actual scope and complexity of provider work
Provider capacity and workforce development	Training consistency across sector		Training varies widely between providers		Sector-wide standards and shared training resources
	Access to holistic services		Limited access or referral pathways		Providers offer or refer to wraparound services seamlessly or have a plan in place if no other services are available

8.1.4. Rubric 4: Delivering inclusive practice

Equity Domains	Criteria	Emerging <i>Below the level outlined in the criterion for 'Establishing'</i>	Establishing	Embedding <i>Between the level outlined in the criterion for 'Establishing' and 'Excelling'</i>	Excelling
Equity and intersectionality	Explicit acknowledgement of intersectionality and responsiveness to diverse needs		No recognition of intersectional identities and experiences.		Practice demonstrates responsiveness to intersectional identities and impacts
	Equitable access		Assumes one-size-fits-all access		Access considerations are tailored to specific groups
Cultural responsiveness	Cultural safety and relevance		Cultural elements are present but not community-led.		Practices are co-designed with Māori, Pacific, and other communities; tikanga and cultural protocols are embedded
	Staff competency		Staff are generally competent; some gaps		Staff consistently deliver culturally safe and intersectional support
	Te Tiriti approach embedded in the service		Awareness of the need for a Te Tiriti approach		Strong understanding for and evidence of a Te Tiriti approach built into the service