CAREGIVER HANDBOOK
For Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children caregivers
There’s no harder job or greater reward.
Our caregivers are the heart and home of Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children. You welcome children and young people into your homes and help turn young lives around.

Children and young people have told us they need caregivers who make them feel loved and part of a family, and help them to learn, grow and heal. Together, we can help provide a safe, stable, nurturing and loving home where children and young people can be the best they can be.

Contact us on
0508 227 377
Kia ora
Hello
To new caregivers

Your care matters
Welcome to caregiving and thank you for opening up your home to a child, young person or whānau member who needs you.

Every day, caregivers just like you help turn young lives around. We see many young people flourish because of caregivers who care for them, believe in them, and give them the grounding they need to succeed in life. You can be proud of the difference you are making.

There are many types of caregiving families. Wherever possible we try to work with children’s families so they can stay at home safely, or find extended family to care for them, this helps children understand their whakapapa and where they belong. Over half of our caregivers are whānau to the children they care for.

Other caregivers may not be related, but have opened up their homes to a child for a short time, or are welcoming a child into their family for life.

Even if you are related to the child in your care, or are already raising children of your own, being a caregiver is a bit different and has special challenges and unique rewards. You’ll need skills to support you with the things that the child needs, the impact of abuse and neglect, as well as the effects of grief, loss and separation. This handbook will introduce you to your role as a carer and tell you what you need to know as you start off.

Just as you can’t learn how to be a parent from a manual, there are many things about being a caregiver you will learn as you go – that’s why we want you to pick up the phone and talk to us if you have any questions, worries or you need a helping hand.

“I find it very enriching. You are able to give to the child, but you learn from the child as well.”
Caregiver

“I’ll tell you what, these kids just fill my life now. They’re my passion.”
Caregiver
"When you are taking on the grandchildren you think about how it is going to affect you, but once you get the children, they are such a blessing that you wouldn’t be without them.”

Grandparent raising her teenage grandson

“It’s a blessing to be given the chance to be a dad again. I don’t view him any differently than my other babies.”

Whāngai dad

How we work with families

We believe that children belong in their own families, where they can be safe, strong and thrive. That’s why our first goal is always to work with families, to help them protect and care for their children at home. We will:

- support a child who may be unsafe at home, we’ll see if they have whānau they can stay with, or we’ll find caregivers for them who can provide a safe place to stay while things get sorted out
- put families and whānau in touch with community groups that can support them and their children
- work with families and whānau on their worries and strengths, so that their children can be safe.

When a child can’t be at home, people like you who will welcome a child into your family for as long as they need your care, are vital.

He taonga tino nui te mokopuna

Our children are our greatest treasure

"When you are taking on the grandchildren you think about how it is going to affect you, but once you get the children, they are such a blessing that you wouldn’t be without them.”

Grandparent raising her teenage grandson

“It’s a blessing to be given the chance to be a dad again. I don’t view him any differently than my other babies.”

Whāngai dad

JUST A NOTE: Children and young people, or tamariki and rangatahi, in care can be aged up to 18. Throughout this handbook we’ve mainly used the terms ‘children’ and ‘tamariki’ interchangeably, but we are referring to children and young people of all ages. For reference, tamariki refers to children, while tamaiti refers to child.

We have many types of caregivers as well, including people caring for children in their own whānau, hapū, iwi, or extended family. People have different terms for their role, but we’ve mainly used ‘caregiver’ or ‘carer’ in this book. Whatever term you prefer, we value your role in fostering, nurturing and caring for children and young people.
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Your care team

You are one of our team and we’re here to help you. Our team is made up of all the people who surround the child to provide care, and all the significant people in the child’s life. This may include the child’s extended family members, teacher, doctor, psychologist, lawyer or other professionals. Social workers are part of your team.

Your caregiver social worker

The caregiver social worker is available to give you support when you need it. They will work with you to best match the child’s needs with what you can offer as a caregiver. They will work with you to develop your support plan, review this regularly with you and assist you with development opportunities. Any time you have questions about caregiving, talk to your caregiver social worker. They will visit you regularly.

The child’s social worker

Every child placed in your care will have their own social worker. You should expect to have a lot of contact with them. They will work with you and the child to prepare for their stay with you. They’ll discuss the child’s All About Me Plan with you, will continue to make sure it’s working and that the child’s goals are being met. They will also visit the child on a regular basis. You can talk to this social worker about things relating to the child’s care such as their health, education, behaviour or contact visits with family.

Your caregiver social worker and the child’s social worker will work closely with each other to make sure both you and the child are getting the right support.

24/7 Caregiver Guidance and Advice line

We want you to be able to get through to us any time of the day or night. If your social worker is unavailable, you can call 0508 227 377 – this is a 24-hour, 7 day a week phone line where you can get advice.

“Our foster parents are wonderful, we couldn't manage without them. They have a huge responsibility to care for and keep children safe and secure. I feel that my job is to empower and help them to do that better.”

Caregiver social worker
When a child comes into your care

When a child or young person needs care, your social worker will get in touch with you. You can get as much information as you need to decide whether you can care for this child. Welcoming a child or young person into your home is always your choice. The length of time a child stays with you will depend on their circumstances and the goals for the child, as well as the type of care you are able to provide.

Knowing what the child needs

Each child coming into care will have their immediate and long term needs assessed and identified. The child's social worker starts gathering information for this as soon as it is known they will be in care, and continues over a time until a complete picture is built. The child's social worker will talk to you as part of this process, as well as the child, their family/whānau, hapū, iwi, and other people who can contribute.

The All About Me Plan

After a full in-depth assessment of the needs of tamariki in care, the All About Me Plan is developed. It provides information about the tamaiti that will help you get to know them, and outlines what the team needs to do to achieve the goals for the tamaiti. It aligns with the overarching goals and objectives of the Family Group Conference or Court Plan, and it provides more details about how those goals and objectives will be supported and achieved by everyone who is part of the team around the child.

There may be tasks in this plan for you as a caregiver to support the child. The child's social worker will talk to you and work these out with you.

Your caregiver social worker will work with you to develop your support plan, so that we can help you to have all the skills and learning you might need.

We'll get the All About Me Plan to you as soon as the child is placed with you. It may not be complete (particularly in emergency situations), but it tells you the things you need to know about the tamaiti, such as any special health needs, including likes, dislikes and things that make them feel safe, medications or allergies, cultural or religious beliefs, schooling arrangements and things about their circumstances that will help you understand them and provide the right care.

The Plan will have information about contact or visiting arrangements with the child's family. It will also include details about the child's social worker visiting arrangements.

Keeping information private

Please respect the privacy of children in your care.

The All About Me Plan given to you will contain personal information about the child and their family. Please keep these in a secure place and only share information about the child's circumstances and family background with people who need to know in order to help with the child's care. It's a good idea to check with the child's social worker if you are not sure what can be shared.

We'll ask you to return any confidential paperwork when a placement ends. You'll find more information about privacy, including when dealing with the media, on page 35.

Welcome to Our Home booklet/ Haere Mai ki Tō Tātau Kāinga

To help the child in your care move smoothly into your home, wherever possible they will be given the opportunity to visit you, or at least receive information about your home first. Your caregiver social worker helps you to make a ‘Welcome to Our Home’ / Haere Mai ki Tō Tātau Kāinga booklet about your whare. It is a chance to share information about you and your household that a child may like to know, such as who lives there and who visits, meal times, pets, local parks, etc. This booklet, and the chance to visit your home, can make all the difference in reducing any anxiety the child may be feeling before they come to live with you.
Moving between carers

At times, tamariki in care will move to another caregiving family. It could be they are moving to family or whānau care, that their current caregiver can no longer care for them for some reason, or that the current arrangements aren’t working.

Moving can be a difficult experience in the child’s life and how we manage it can make all the difference to a child continuing to feel loved and supported even during a change in circumstances.

The child’s social worker will work with the child and you to plan the transition (where possible). You can help by talking to the child about why they are changing homes and caregivers, taking them to visit their new carers or taking time to get to know a child moving to your home, and by being involved in events to farewell from or welcome to your home.

Rights of tamariki and rangatahi

Oranga Tamariki must provide every child and young person in care with child-friendly information about what they are entitled to under the new National Care Standards regulations, and how they can be supported to speak up if they feel they are not getting the care they are entitled to. This will include their social worker taking them through their rights in a way that is understandable for their age, development, language, or any disability. The social worker will tell them where they can get further support.

The tamaiti will be given a copy of their rights. Caregivers play an important part in the promotion and protection of the rights of tamariki in care, so your caregiver social worker will make sure you also have a copy of the child’s rights.

VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai is the key connection and advocacy service for tamariki in care (www.voyce.org.nz, 0800 486 923).

Belongings

When a tamaiti comes into your care they will have their belongings with them. If they did not have a bag to use during this move, their social worker will have given them one to use and keep.

It is important to respect and look after the child’s belongings, as they are part of their identity. Please make sure there is somewhere appropriate for them to keep their things, making sure they are safe and the tamaiti can access them whenever they want. When the tamaiti leaves your care, it is important they take their belongings with them. This will include items purchased for them whilst in your care.

Insurance for you

It’s really important that you have insurance for your home, contents and vehicle in case something gets damaged by the child in your care. Some companies don’t insure families if they have a child or young person in care living with them, and some will cover for accidental but not intentional damage. We recommend that you check with your insurance provider to make sure you’re covered.

Oranga Tamariki has a policy to cover caregivers for deliberate damage to their property. We’ll consider all requests for reimbursement if a child in your care has deliberately caused damage.
Helping a child become part of your family

Here are some practical tips for building your relationship with your child in care and helping them feel part of your home.

Life Event Books and memory boxes

Tamariki who spend time in care sometimes have gaps in their childhood memories, because of the disruptions in their life. By helping them to build a picture of their whakapapa and cultural identity it will help them understand more about who they are and where they belong. This supports and helps build their mana, experiences, achievements, attachments and relationships.

You, alongside the child’s social worker and the child in your care, must consider how you can save their memories for the future so they have a record of their life journey. Depending on the child’s age and development you may be more, or less involved. It will depend on the child’s wishes and needs too. The child’s social worker will provide you and the child in your care with a Life Event Book and memory box so that they can keep the things that are important to them. You might have some good ideas about how you can do this too – talk to the child’s social worker about this.

Encourage the child in your care to tell you about the things that are important to them – they might be small things like a shell found at the beach – put them in their memory box or book.

Make sure you gather photos, cards, certificates from school, school reports or their own drawings and add them to the Life Event Book or memory box.

Keeping a diary

We ask that all our caregivers keep a diary, as this is a great way to record how things are going.

It’s a good idea to note any significant changes in your child’s behaviour or moods, record great moments, or jot down things you want to talk about with their social worker.

As well as helping to keep track of how things change over time, diary entries are a good way of keeping everyone safe if there is an incident, accident or disagreement over something. They may also prove to be a helpful resource to reflect on when you are meeting with the child’s social worker about their plan, or your caregiver social worker about your own support plan.

We recommend you keep a separate diary for each child in your care so it can form part of their record. At the end of the placement we’ll put the diary on the child’s file.

If you want to keep a personal diary reflecting on your feelings and experiences as a caregiver, we recommend you keep this separate.

“I have always made it my mission to gather photos of our foster children’s family whenever the opportunity has come up. In one situation we sent along a disposable camera to a family group conference and asked the social worker to take photos of all the family present. We pieced the information together on each family member (grandparents, aunties and uncles) and put them all in a photo album. When this child got very sad about not being with her family, we suggested that she look over her family photo album. This always made her feel so much better.”

Caregiver
Talk time

Spending one-to-one time each day with the child in your care can really help you get to know them and help you build a good relationship. Here are just a few ideas.

- **Bedtime:** Once you’ve tucked the child into bed, spend a few quiet minutes together or read them a story, or ask them about their day. Be reassuring, this will help them settle down and relax.

- **Highs and lows:** At dinner time, ask each child to pick their high and low point of the day. Even if they are reluctant at first, it usually ends up sparking good discussion and can help children express their feelings.

- **Eating together:** This is a chance to sit down together for uninterrupted time as a family each day. It’s a great way to bond and help children feel included in family time.

Celebrating identity

Children have their own special identity and things from their family, whānau and background that are unique and important to them, like their religious or spiritual beliefs, their culture, where they come from and how they look.

Acknowledging and celebrating these things will help a child retain their identity and builds their mana and self-esteem. Most aspects of the child’s identity will be reflected in their All About Me Plan.

Make sure you use the child’s correct name, and pronounce it properly, it’s a simple but important way your whole family can respect their identity.

Talk to them about the kind of food they like to eat, respect their language if it’s different from your own.

If the child you are caring for is Māori, knowing their iwi affiliation will help you celebrate their identity.

If you need help with this, please ask your child’s social worker so they can help you understand the child’s cultural needs.

If you attend church regularly and you would like to include the child you are caring for, please let their social worker know so they can discuss this with the child’s parents.

Helping children fit into your family

By being sensitive to cultural differences, you help the child feel valued, respected and at home in your family. Talk with them about what they were used to in their previous home, and about anything they may be finding uncomfortable or strange. By being aware of these things, you can make small changes that can help a child feel at home.

The child you’re caring for will know a little bit about your home from their visit or the Welcome to Our Home booklet you prepared. Once they are living with you, it is a good idea to explain things like:

- set times for meals, bathroom routines and bedtimes
- what time everyone gets home from school and work
- your family habits like shoes off at the door, knocking before entering bedrooms, use of technology
- you should encourage the child in your care to ask as many questions as they like. It’s also respectful to consider any new ideas they have about things the family might like to do.

You might also want to get them helping out with everyday household chores that are appropriate for their age.

Remember that if a child has been exposed to abuse or neglect this often results in some developmental delays, so you will need to set tasks that are appropriate to their developmental age rather than actual age.

Helping with small chores around the house will help encourage children to feel part of the family and learn about responsibility.

Boundaries and routines

It’s important for all families to have clear boundaries - things like the way you treat each other and how you want your family to be.

It can take children in care a while to get used to different sorts of boundaries. You might want to talk them through as a family, help them understand why they are important, and help them stick to your boundaries and family rules.

Sometimes children who have been harmed or neglected have difficulty with their own boundaries, and you may need to help them
develop new behaviour. Some extra things you might need to think about are:

- whether children play in the lounge, rather than unsupervised in the bedrooms, until you feel confident the children can play together well
- ‘no hitting’ rules for children and adults
- knocking when a door is closed, so that everyone knows their privacy is respected
- telling all children in the family they have a right to say ‘no’ to hugs, tickling or cuddles.

Safe sleeping

Babies and children who need to come into care often haven't had the best start in life and can be particularly susceptible to health problems. Sadly, babies and toddlers in care can have an increased risk of sudden unexpected death (SUDI).

Below are some things to consider when thinking about safe sleeping.

The child needs a cot or bed that is appropriate to their age.

Face up – it’s best for babies to sleep face up (on their back). Their drive to breathe works best in this position and their airway is clear. A built-in alarm reminds them to breathe and a strong gag and swallow reflex protects their airway if they are sick.

Face clear – babies need to sleep with their face clear. This helps them breathe freely and not get too hot.

It’s important to keep pillows and toys out of bassinets and cots. Keep bedding light – if you’re worried about your baby getting cold, dress them in an extra layer rather than adding another blanket.

Babies need their own space for sleeping. Don’t sleep with a baby in your bed, but by all means put their cot or bassinet near you.

Over the age of one, children in care shouldn’t share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex.

If you have any questions or worries, please don’t hesitate to talk to the child’s social worker.

You can also talk to a health professional via Healthline – 0800 611 116, or PlunketLine – 0800 933 922.

Smoke-free

Providing a healthy environment for the child in your care to thrive in is really important.

It’s important for you and other members of your family too.

We’re asking all caregivers to keep their homes and cars smoke-free and not to smoke when babies and young children are around.

All smoking harms babies as it reduces the level of oxygen available. Babies exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to develop illnesses like chest infections, glue ear and asthma.

That doesn’t mean you can’t smoke, we just ask that you do this outside and not when your child is around.

Taking care of your own children

Hei whāngai i te harakeke to nurture the flaxbush

If you have your own children, they might need help adjusting to a new person in the family and what that means in terms of sharing your time and attention, and maybe their own toys and space.

It’s a good idea to schedule some one-on-one time with each of your children, so they continue to know they are special and important, and have a chance to talk through anything that might be bothering them.

Your own family and whānau play a big role in making the child or young person feel welcomed and loved, so it’s important they’re included.

“I had a boy come into care aged seven and he could hardly read and write. He’s now 15 and has got a part time job and he got honours in his study. I remember when we had a party to welcome him into the family, and after that he got quite stroppy – ‘It’s because I know you’re not going to get rid of me’ he said. I thought that was funny.”

Caregiver and respite carer
Becoming a permanent caregiver

What children in care need the most is a safe and stable home, where they feel they belong. You may be whānau carers, be providing short term care, or a child may be staying with you for some time while we work with their birth family. All the ways you care are valuable.

There are times when children or young people can’t go back to their own family, and you may want to offer them a permanent home. Giving a child a home where they grow up as part of your family sends them an important message throughout their life that they are loved, valued and belong.

They will still maintain contact with their birth family, but giving children a permanent home gives them the best chance to develop trust and attachment, and helps them grow up into secure adults.

If you decide you would like to offer a child your permanent care, we’ll support you all the way. Even after they are permanently placed with you we will work together to offer you the right support.

This includes Work and Income and Working for Families assistance to help with the costs of raising a child, and a referral to the Permanent Caregiver Support Service (PCSS).

PCSS is the service responsible for supporting you once you become a permanent caregiver. To find out more about what it all means and how it works, talk to your caregiver social worker.

Real life story

When Trisha embarked on a nursing career, she thought she had discovered her passion. Little did she know that her world was about to be turned upside down, and she would soon find her “real love” – four children whom she has given a permanent home.

“I’ll tell you what, these kids just fill my life,” says Trisha. “I was really passionate about becoming a nurse but that’s nothing compared to the kids, they’re my passion now.” The whole family recently welcomed the two youngest children into their home for life.

As a single woman who had already raised a son, Trisha was just embarking on her new career as a nursing student when she got the call that would change her life. It was an extended family member, ringing to say that she was about to go into hospital to have a baby, and was in deep trouble. Trisha was already raising two teenage boys from her extended family, as well as her own son, and was about to welcome in another young boy and a baby girl.

"At one stage I was going to step away from studying, but I got the support I needed so that I could finish my studies," says Trisha, who is now fully qualified and working as a registered nurse.

When she began to dream about having the children permanently, Trisha said it was a daunting idea. "At the start I felt frightened. But then I thought, ‘You’ve raised these children. The Ministry are just the mediators and financial support, it’s time to stand in your own shoes. So I had a yak to my fantastic social worker, who helped me through the process.”

"Since the kids got a home for life it’s been fantastic.”

Today Trisha loves having a big, happy family. “Just getting a kiss and a hug every morning. Or just hearing them say, ‘Aunty, aunty look at me!’ Seeing their joy just makes you feel so great.”

Names have been changed
Supporting you to care

You are part of the care team for the child in your care. We will give you financial and practical support, along with the trust and flexibility you need to focus on the job of providing quality care, love, and a sense of belonging to the child or children and young people you care for.

Financial support for you and the child in your care

Care allowance
You will receive a non-taxable foster care allowance (also known as board payment) from the time a child or young person comes into your care. This is to help you cover the everyday care costs of having a child in your home, such as their food, household costs, general transport and all the other opportunities and experiences you’ll give them as part of your family. How much you receive is based on the age of the child and is adjusted each year. This will be paid directly into your bank account each fortnight.

You will also receive a fortnightly payment of $20 per child to cover small cost items like extra school stationery, school outings, presents for a friend’s birthday party or a koha. Larger costs can be met by discretionary payments - talk to your caregiver social worker about these.

Pocket money
The care allowance includes pocket money for the child in your care, and this needs to be paid to them on a regular basis as it’s part of their entitlement. The amount of pocket money depends on the age of the child.

Clothing allowance
You will also receive a clothing allowance so you can buy the child in your care the clothes and shoes they need. You’ll receive payments every four weeks.

The amount is based on the age of the child and is paid directly into your bank account. The clothing allowance covers:
— a reasonable range of appropriate clothing
— a bag
— replacement of school uniform items.

Christmas and birthdays
An extra allowance is paid to cover birthdays and Christmas. This will be paid automatically into your account in December and in the month of the child’s birthday. The money is to help you buy a gift for the child, and is half the standard weekly board rate. Have fun buying presents that will make them smile!

Current board rates, pocket money, clothing, Christmas and birthday rates are on our website www.orangatamariki.govt.nz or call 0508 227 377.

Health and education costs
We’ll make sure the health and education costs of the child in your care are covered, including doctor’s visits, prescription costs, dental work, and school costs like compulsory fees, voluntary donations, camps, and stationery.

If you go to the doctor or chemist, or need school fees paid, please contact the child’s social worker ahead of time and tell them:
— what needs to be paid (for example, a doctor’s appointment or a medical prescription)
— who needs to be paid (for example, the name of the doctor’s surgery, or the school)
— the child’s name.

In an emergency: If the child in your care needs to make an emergency visit to the doctor, we understand that you may not be able to let your social worker know first. In this case, the doctor’s surgery may ask you for an ‘order number’ or ‘purchase order’. Please tell them the social worker will send this on the next working day and contact your social worker as soon as you can, so they can send an order number to the doctor.
Variations on your allowances

If the child in your care is going to be away for a period of time, usually a few days or more, your board payments will temporarily reduce or stop while the child is away.

We will talk to you beforehand about any changes to your board payments, but if you are ever unsure about what is happening, please feel free to call the child’s social worker.

Other ways we can help

You might also have other costs related to the child in your care. Talk to your social worker before committing to any expenses so they can make sure that these costs can be covered and you can be reimbursed if appropriate. New caregivers qualify for a $350 set-up grant. This money helps you prepare to care for a child.

School uniforms

You can receive additional money for school uniforms for children starting at a new school, or for their first year of intermediate or college where they need a uniform for the first time. Assistance for replacement uniforms is included in the clothing allowance payments you receive.

Transport and travel

The foster care allowance covers the cost of reasonable travel involved in providing for the day-to-day care of the child or young person in your care. When the travel need cannot reasonably be met, with prior approval a reimbursement can be paid. Please talk to your social worker if you believe you need extra help with travel costs.

We can help with car restraints, so if you have a child in your care under the age of seven and your social worker hasn’t sorted out a car restraint for you, give us a call.

Sports, recreation and cultural activity

Being involved in sport, recreational and cultural activities (e.g. kapa haka) helps young people to develop and feel proud of themselves. It can help them to learn new skills, build confidence and make friends with others in their community.

If your child wants to play sport or be part of cultural activities, we will pay the reasonable costs for their chosen activities. Talk to your social worker to ensure that the costs you are seeking are covered, and can be considered as a part of the child’s All About Me Plan.

Talk to your child about what their interests are. We’ll then help you to make it possible.

Nappies

If the child in your care is wearing nappies, you may be entitled to the nappy allowance, on top of board payments.

Higher foster care allowance

If there are special costs associated with looking after the child in your care you might be eligible for extra help through the higher foster care allowance. This is generally for children with very complex needs, like severe behaviour problems, special dietary needs or children with a disability that requires special treatment. How much you receive is based on the child’s needs, and we review this payment every six months.

Financial assistance from Inland Revenue

Best Start

If the baby in your care is born on or after 1 July 2018, you will be eligible for this payment.

The payment is $60 each week (maximum $3,120 each year) for the first year of a child’s life, no matter what your household income is.

If your household income is less than $79,000, you will continue to receive $60 per week until your child turns three.

If you receive paid parental leave, your Best Start payments will start once your paid parental leave ends. To apply for Best Start you will need to know the child’s IRD number. If the child you are receiving Best Start payments for leaves your care, you need to let Inland Revenue know as soon as possible to avoid getting paid too much.

To find out more, check out www.ird.govt.nz/families-package
In-work Tax Credit

You might be able to get the in-work tax credit if you:

– are receiving the foster care allowance (board payments), and are working a certain number of hours per week (20 if you are single or 30 if you have a partner)
– are the foster child’s main caregiver
– are not receiving a main benefit from Work and Income, a Student Allowance or Children’s Pension.

Payments vary depending on your income and the number of children you have living with you.

Check out www.ird.govt.nz/wff-tax-credits for more information.

You can also phone Inland Revenue on 0800 227 773 to see if you qualify. You will need your child’s IRD number, so talk to your child’s social worker first.

*Please note: If you are caring for a child you may be eligible for Best Start payments and/ or In-work tax credits, but you are not able to claim any other Working for Families Tax Credits for the foster child e.g. Family Tax Credit.

Caregiver Support

Caregiver Support Plan

It’s our job to help make sure you and the tamaiti in your care are doing well and achieving the goals we will have talked about with you.

As part of this, your caregiver social worker will develop a support plan with you and this will be reviewed regularly. This is where you’ll have the opportunity to talk about your strengths and your needs, the joys and challenges of the children in your care, any changes to your circumstances and any further support you may need. When tamariki come into your care, your social worker will work with you to ensure your support plan reflects the particular support you will need to help meet the needs the child in your care.

Every two years we’ll also update the Police and medical checks for you and others living in your household, as part of our review.

This is a great opportunity for us to keep up to date, but any time you have a change of circumstances in your household, please let us know so we can ensure that all the required checks are done and any necessary changes are made to the All About Me Plan and Welcome to Our Home / Haere Mai ki Tō Tātau Kāinga Booklet.

Other ways we’ll support you

There is support available to you so you know what to do and who to talk to when you need help.

Your caregiver social worker and the social worker for the tamaiti must visit you as agreed in the caregiver support plan. The frequency of visiting must reflect the needs of the caregiver and the caregiving household.

If you need extra support or are having problems, please call your social worker - they are there to help. Some of the things the social worker can assist with include:

– challenging behaviour
– linking you with support groups, iwi groups, agencies and other professionals
– accessing learning, including first-aid, trauma informed training and specialist training
– planning for when the child returns home or moves to a permanent placement
– helping young people move into independence as they get older.

You’ll also receive our caregiver publications which include a range of tips and stories from other caregivers as well as general updates from Oranga Tamariki.

There are many other support groups you can join, and you may be able to get the support of people like kuia/kaumātua. See the back of this book for a list of support groups, or talk to your caregiver social worker about the support available in your area.

Helping you get connected

Connecting with other caregivers is invaluable in providing you with support from others who know first-hand the challenges and rewards.

Recognised caregiver organisations include Fostering Kids NZ and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Both of these organisations hold regular peer support coffee group meetings throughout New Zealand. Membership is free.

If you’d like to know more about these groups, their contact details are at the back of the handbook. Or talk to your caregiver social worker about joining a different support network. If there is a membership fee, we’re able to pay for your first two years.
Preparation and learning for caregivers

You may already know a lot about raising children, but being a caregiver will come with extra challenges to normal family life. Even if you are looking after a child in your extended family, there may be unexpected challenges. We want you to be well prepared, understand the issues and have the right skills to make a positive difference to the child's life. We provide free training for all caregivers, and can help with the costs of babysitting and transport.

Online modules
We have a range of online modules that can help you become a more confident caregiver:

- Child development
- Attachment and resilience
- Understanding and managing behaviour
- Achieving independence
- Family Group Conference
- Securing permanency
- Bicultural competency.

You can also find helpful fact sheets on some of these topics at www.orangatamariki.govt.nz

National Care Standards for caregivers
The new National Care Standards set out the standard of care every child and young person needs to do well and be well, and the support caregivers can expect to receive when they open their hearts and homes.

For Oranga Tamariki, implementing the National Care Standards will be a process of continuous improvement over the next 4-5 years. The information in this handbook includes new ways of working for us as a result of the Care Standards, for example – more holistic needs assessments of tamariki; and better support for you, our caregivers.

If you have any questions about the Care Standards please talk to your caregiver social worker.

Preparing and learning for caregivers

The National Caregiver Training Programme
This is a partnership between Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children and Fostering Kids NZ. This is a suite of short workshops designed to build carers’ knowledge and skill base. The emphasis is on learning practical skills, as well as sharing ideas and experience with other carers. The free workshops include:

- Building Secure Attachments
- Understanding and Supporting Behaviour: “Connection before Correction”
- Health and Wellbeing
- Safety and Prevention
- Maltreatment and Family Violence
- Identity and Belonging
- Legal Issues
- Carer Families
- Working with Adolescents
- Teamwork
- Child Development.

For more information about these workshops, visit the Fostering Kids NZ website: www.fosteringkids.org.nz

“Get to this training!”
...and other comments from people who have attended our training programme for foster parents:

“The content was awesome and practical.”

“I have learnt a lot and feel more confident with the group work.”

“It was an awesome day. It’s good to have reassurance you are doing okay or that perhaps you may want to make some changes.”

“All caregivers should do the course, it is so helpful and gives you more confidence. I found the course wonderful from start to finish.”

“I found it very good, informative and it really opened my eyes. It made me a lot more confident in myself.”

“Get to this training – your foster child needs this.”
Entitlement to remain or return to living with a caregiver (ETRR)

For young people a safe and stable living arrangement will give them a more graduated move to independent living. As of 1 July 2019, young people in the care or custody of Oranga Tamariki can remain living with their caregiver, or return to living with a caregiver, after they turn 18 until they turn 21. This is a voluntary living arrangement that must be agreed by both yourself (the caregiver) and the young person – with the approval of Oranga Tamariki.

If the young person expresses an interest to remain or return living with you, their social worker will advise your caregiver social worker of this. Your caregiver social worker will then discuss this with you, including informing you of the legal and financial implications.

If all parties are in agreement, you will be supported to negotiate the terms through a ‘Living Arrangement Agreement’.

ETRR – Legal and financial implications

If you agree to have a young person live with you over the age of 18 your social worker will explain to you the following:

- Oranga Tamariki will no longer have custody of the young person, but does have an obligation to maintain contact with them either directly or through an approved service provider.
- You will cease receiving a Foster Care Allowance and will instead be paid directly by the young person. Agreed financial payments will be documented in the Living Arrangement Agreement.
- The young person will require a different type of oversight than you have previously been providing; more of a mentoring/coaching role to support them to become increasingly independent.
- The young person is an adult and ultimately has the choice about whether and how long they might stay - in agreement with you.

It is expected the young person will contribute up to 60% of their total net income towards the weekly board cost. Oranga Tamariki will top up this contribution to the level of the Foster Care Allowance you were previously receiving for them.

If the social worker and/or transition worker have concerns about the young person’s ability to manage their money and agree this is in the young person’s best interests, we can pay you directly at the request of the young person.

Where appropriate, you can receive a recognition payment for your additional time, effort or costs connected to the needs of the young person. The amount paid will be equivalent to the higher foster care allowance (HFCA). This amount will be reviewed regularly to reflect the changing needs of the young person.

ETRR – Living Arrangement Agreement

The Living Arrangement Agreement is an agreement between yourself and the young person. It will detail:

- Financial costs and responsibilities: what the young person will contribute to the household and what happens if payment is missed or late
- The duration of the living arrangement and the review date
- The support you will provide to help the young person become increasingly independent and continue building life-skills
- The house rules; such as chores, rights to privacy and conflict management.

Your caregiver social worker will support you in this living arrangement and be a signatory to the document.

A transition worker will also help the young person negotiate the Living Arrangement Agreement.
Maintaining Contact

From the age of 16, eligible young people will be referred to an approved transition provider (such as partner organisations, including Māori and iwi partners) and be allocated a transition worker. Transition workers will work alongside the young person’s social worker before becoming the young person’s key contact when they turn 18 years or when they leave care.

Transition workers will support eligible rangatahi as they transition from care or a youth justice residential facility to adulthood, and will proactively maintain contact with their young people. They will also help support the young person to meet their obligations under the Living Arrangement Agreement. If you have an 18-21 year old living with you under the entitlement to remain or return to living with a caregiver, it is likely you’ll also develop a relationship with their transition worker.

It’s a good idea to make sure you have the contact details of the transition worker in case you need to discuss anything with them.
Day-to-day care

As a caregiver your role is to meet the day-to-day needs of the child in your care, and provide encouragement, love and nurture. This includes encouraging the child at school, in sports or arts, and helping them be the best they can be. There could also be specific tasks related to things like schooling or therapy, which may be assigned to you as part of the child’s case, court or FGC plan.

Here are some extra things you’ll also need to know about, or talk through with us, when you are looking after a child in care.

Children on the move

**Taking a break**
Let us know if you’re going on holiday and give us advanced notice if you’re planning an overseas trip. You might want to take the child with you. If so we will talk this through with their birth family. Or perhaps you’re planning a break on your own, in which case we will work out alternative care for the child. Either way, please give us plenty of notice so we can make plans for the child in your care.

**Additional care arrangements**
Talk to us if you need additional or different care arrangements – like daycare or an after school programme. If you need regular respite care or time-out, talk with us so we can work something out for you and the child.

We encourage caregivers to talk to their family and close networks to find a ‘natural’ respite carer who is known to the child.

We will need to assess this person to be approved as a respite carer.

**Children going away**
Just like children everywhere, the child in your care needs friends, fun, play and sleepovers. Decisions about short term arrangements like babysitting and sleepovers with friends are usually up to you.

As with usual parenting decisions, please check on the arrangements so you know who will be looking after the kids, what they will be doing, and what the arrangements are for the next day.

Let us know if the child in your care is going to be away for more than a night, as we need to know where our children are. We also need to know about things like school camps, so we can sort out consent and help with any other arrangements.

**Babysitting**
As part of your caregiver role, you can choose a babysitter you trust, and who has the skills and maturity to care for the child in your care.

Sometimes caregivers like their own older teenagers to babysit, and this is usually fine, but please check with the child’s social worker to make sure it’s appropriate.

Sometimes a young person in your care may want to do babysitting. It’s a good idea for you, the young person and their social worker to discuss their skills, experience and how appropriate it would be.

Legally, any young person has to be 14 years of age before they are able to be a babysitter.

**People living in your home**
You may have changes to your home life, such as a partner moving in, or moving out, or new people living at your house like a flatmate or boarder. Let us know beforehand about any changes to people in your house or your circumstances, as this will help us plan for the child in your care.

We need to do checks on every adult over the age of 17 living in the household, so we need to know when new people come and live with you.
Children’s finances

Bank accounts for children in care generally need to be jointly operated by an adult. Please discuss this with your child’s social worker.

The child in your care will also receive regular pocket money. This is outlined in the ‘Supporting you to care’ section on page 20.

Health matters

Information to help you in caring for the child’s health needs will be in their All About Me Plan, including contact details for their regular GP if they have one, plus any medical history and treatment.

If the child doesn’t have a GP, their social worker will help find a suitable health professional and ensure the child is enrolled in a Primary Health Organisation.

If a child in your care has significant health concerns, their needs will be addressed in their All About Me Plan. There is a range of assistance available and the child’s social worker can help you find up-to-date information, resources and supports.

If the child is on medication of any kind, please make sure they take the right dose at the right time, and the course of medication is completed.

You’re the one who cares for the child every day, so please let us know if you think they are having trouble with their sight, hearing or you notice any other health issues. We’ll help get the child any healthcare or checks they might need.

Going to the doctor

If the tamaiti in your care is sick, please take them to the doctor. Children who come into the care of Oranga Tamariki often have undiagnosed health needs, so it’s important to get help early if they are unwell.

If a child who has just come into your care appears unwell, it’s best to err on the side of caution and seek medical advice.

It’s best to take the child in your care to their usual doctor, but if this isn’t possible, you can take them to your own doctor. Please keep notes from doctors’ visits so you can talk about these with your child’s social worker.

Health and education assessments

When a child enters care, we will refer them for a Gateway Assessment. This is where we find out if the child has any health or education needs that we can help with, so they can feel well and be at their best. We can then make sure they get all the right help. This might be anything from a dental or hearing check to getting extra support at school or specialist mental health or behavioural support.

You’re the person who gives your care every day, so we’ll ask you lots of questions and keep you involved all the way through the assessment process.

We’ll ask for consent from the parent/guardian of the child in your care before seeking information about their health and education or taking them through a health check. A young person over the age of 16, or deemed competent to consent, can consent to have a Gateway Assessment.

You can find out more by asking the child’s social worker for a copy of our brochure ‘Keeping kids healthy and well’. If you are caring for a child or young person who has health or behavioural needs, you can ask your social worker to arrange a Gateway Assessment.

Four-year-old Sonny

Sonny was seen at the Gateway Assessment clinic with his father and his caregiver, Mary.

Mary reported that Sonny had little energy in the afternoons, often had a cold and had discharge from his ears. A previous hearing check had indicated some hearing loss. Mary was also worried that Sonny’s hands and feet often seemed tinged blue.

The Gateway Assessment found a systolic heart murmur. Blood tests were ordered and Sonny was referred for an ECG and echocardiogram.

Sonny was also referred to the Ear Nose and Throat clinic and it was found that he may need grommets. Sonny will have follow up appointments for this and also repeat hearing tests.

The Gateway Assessment found that Sonny was small for his age, so this information was noted for Sonny’s GP to check in six months’ time. As Sonny was four years old, he was referred for a B4 School Check with a Well Child provider.
**Age of consent for medical treatment**

If the child in your care is under 16, please talk to their social worker about any medical treatments that may require guardians’ consent. Only routine day-to-day health issues can be handled without a guardian’s consent. More major interventions like immunisations, surgery and counselling will need guardians’ consent.

A young person over the age of 16 years is able to give their own consent to medical, dental or surgical treatment and procedures.

**Accidents and illness**

If the tamaiti in your care gets a serious illness or an injury, please let us know straight away. We’ll need to inform their parents, and work with you to make sure the right consents for treatment are in place. If you’re having trouble getting hold of your child’s social worker at short notice, call the 24/7 Caregiver Guidance and Advice line 0508 227 377.

**In an emergency:** Take the child to the doctor or the hospital immediately. Emergency treatment can be given by doctors without consent, where delays could put the child’s safety at risk. Let the social worker know as soon as you can, so they can talk to the child’s parents about what’s happening.

If you are ever unsure about whether a child needs medical help, you can call the free Healthline on 0800 611 116. They have health professionals on-call 24 hours a day.

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**Dental treatment**

If your child is at school, they’ll go along for regular dental checks just like normal.

All tamariki and rangatahi should receive regular dental care.

If your child needs fillings or you think they need more intensive dental care, talk to their social worker or give us a call and we’ll organise the right consents and help with arrangements.

**Immunisation and vaccinations**

Oranga Tamariki encourages children and young people to be immunised. Your child’s immunisation record should be in their All About Me Plan, and we’ll let you know what needs to happen when.

Decisions about immunising children lie with the guardians, so the child’s social worker will need to get their consent first.

“*She gives so much to everything she does and achieves. We’re extremely proud of her.*”

Caregiver of a young person with disabilities
Early childhood education

We know that children who get a good start in life are more likely to do well later on. For children from disadvantaged families, the earlier help can be given the better.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) provides a strong foundation for a child’s ongoing learning, development and socialisation. These things can help a child develop into a positive, confident and capable person.

At an ECE service children learn how to:

- interact with new people and form relationships
- trust adults and other children
- play and learn with people outside their immediate family
- take turns and negotiate
- take part in learning experiences in a group
- ask questions and find out more.

If the child you’re caring for is aged between 18 months and three years, Oranga Tamariki will help fund ECE. Our subsidy covers up to 20 hours of ECE per week for each child, to a maximum of $600 per month.

Our ECE funding continues if a child moves from care to permanent care, until they are three years old, as long as ECE starts before permanency orders are made. All children in care over three years of age are eligible for 20 hours free ECE from the Ministry of Education.

You’ll be in the best position to know about local childcare options and, with the social worker, can choose an ECE service that best suits you and the child in your care.

The Ministry of Education’s website has a very helpful page: parents.education.govt.nz/early-learning

“…”

Caregiver
“...we’re mighty proud to be whānau.”

Anna
“It just kinda happened. She used to come to us for the weekend, just sometimes. A break. We got on fine. Then Kiri started spending more time with us. My sister and her partner were splitting up. Things were stressful. So we arranged to look after her more often. Help out, you know. One weekend, Billy found these letters that spelt her name and he brought them back and put them on Kiri’s door. Kiri came in, saw them and beamed from ear to ear. She said “Is this my home now?” And Billy said “Course it’s your home. See, there’s even a room with your name on it. Then he added, “Can’t be your parents Kiri. We can never be that. But we’re mighty proud to be whānau.”

Kiri
One day, there they were, stuck to my door. Five letters that told the world this was my space ~ ‘Kiri’s’. After all the hassle and the yelling with mum and dad, there was now a place for me. I looked at Billy, tears streaming down my face, and he just said, “We’re whānau.”

I couldn’t get over that they cared enough to put my name on a door. Mum and Dad did separate and I’m living back with mum again now but I still see a lot of my aunty and Billy, and those letters are still on my door.
Permission forms

Guardian permission: If the school sends out permission forms which require a guardian’s permission, please talk to your social worker so they can arrange consent. These are typically things like medical permission forms.

Parent or caregiver permission: As a rule of thumb, if the form asks for parent or caregiver consent, you can give your permission as part of your day-to-day care. These are typically things like school activities or daytrips.

Keeping children connected with their family and whānau

I kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea

I will never be lost, for I am the seed which was sown from Rangiātea

While tamariki are in care, it is important that we support them to establish, maintain and strengthen their connections to the family, whānau – including siblings, hapū and iwi and others they or their family identify as important. Connecting the child with important people in their life, like kuia/kaumātua, helps the child build their self-image and understand their place in the whānau and gain a sense of belonging.

For tamariki Māori, whānau connections are established through whakapapa. This refers to the genealogy and bloodlines that tie tamariki Māori to their ancestors, past, present and future in their whānau, hapū and iwi. Whakapapa also includes significant ancestral places.

Ideally, we want tamariki to establish mana enhancing relationships across the breadth of their whānau connections. Creating meaningful engagements with people, places and events will promote a sense of belonging, wellbeing and identity.

Whether you are a whānau or non-kin caregiver, we will help children in your care stay connected with their birth family and other important people in their lives, and we will support them to do this in a way that is safe and healthy for them.

The best way for family visits to happen is worked out between the child, their family, you and the social worker. Agreed visiting arrangements are set out in the All About Me Plan and their social worker will talk these through with you. They will also keep the family involved in key decisions and up to date with how they’re doing.

Helping children with family visits

Family visits can be a big deal for children, and sometimes come with a mixture of anxiety and anticipation, so we’ve included a few tips here to help:

— The child could be worried or excited, and you might be able to help by encouraging them to talk about how they’re feeling. Remind them that you’re there to help.
— It’s likely there may be changes in the child’s behaviour before and after the visit, which can
be due to many different reasons. Be patient and consistent, it may just take some time for the child to adjust. If you're concerned, take note of the behaviours you are seeing and discuss this with the child’s social worker.

— Stay neutral and supportive – it’s upsetting for a young person to hear negative things about their family.

**Culture, belonging and identity**

A sound and positive sense of culture, belonging and identity is central to the wellbeing of tamariki. Belonging and identity can cover faith, sexuality, gender, age, disability and more.

Tamariki can be supported to learn about languages, customs, ceremonies and rituals by gaining a greater awareness of beliefs, values, and practices. For tamariki Māori, identity and belonging is embedded in te Reo, and Māori beliefs, values, practices, whakapapa and tikanga.

You have a key role in encouraging tamariki to build their sense of culture, identity and belonging. We will help you with this too. Talk with your child’s social worker about the types of events, activities, knowledge and connections that can be supported.

**Keeping personal information private**

**In the media**

Children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki are vulnerable, and as a caregiver you play an important role in protecting them.

Under the Privacy Act, we are legally bound to make sure information about a child or young person in care remains confidential and is only shared with family, caregivers and professionals working alongside us.

Breaching their privacy can also put the child and you at risk.

Sometimes media might be interested in your story, or that of the child in your care. In these cases it’s important you know about the legal and wellbeing issues that could arise.

We do sometimes support tamariki or young people to share their story in the media, and this is done very carefully in consultation with legal guardians, social workers, and you – caregivers.

**How to deal with media interest**

If a child or young person in care is part of a high profile case, a journalist might contact you. Please don’t share information with them. Contact your social worker or the site manager to let them know this has happened and they will consult with the Oranga Tamariki media team.

If you want to talk to media about being a caregiver, please talk to your social worker; they will organise support for you. In an interview you can’t give details which may identify a child or young person you have cared for and they can’t be included in a photograph which identifies them.

If you do a media interview about another part of your life, it’s fine to say that you are a caregiver, but privacy conditions apply.

Tamariki and rangatahi in care will sometimes be involved in other activities, like sporting and cultural events, which the media is interested in. In these cases it’s okay for the child to be photographed and their name included (consent usually needs to be given by the child and their guardian/s) as long as the article does not mention Oranga Tamariki care or the child’s background. If you think a journalist has received this information, please contact your child’s social worker.

If a young person wants to share their story about being in care, we can help with this. Please contact their social worker.

**Consent to publish identifying information**

When a child or young person in care is being identified in the media, consent usually needs to be given by the child and their guardian/s.

Permanent caregivers (if they are also guardians) help make important decisions affecting their child or young person, but they still need to communicate and act jointly with the other guardians.
Social Media Guidance

Social media
Similar to media, social media has the potential to reach a large and public audience. As a caregiver using social media you should always consider the privacy of the child in your care.

Photos on social media
As a proud caregiver you may like to share photos, however it’s important not to post photos that identify a child or young person as being in care, or any information about their care status.

It’s also important to consider what the post could signify or imply for the child’s family culture of origin.

Before you post, stop and think - ‘could this put you or the child in your care at risk, or jeopardise your role as a caregiver?’

If you are unsure, or if you are approached, via social media, by a birth family member, call your caregiver social worker and they can help.

Caregiver social media groups
Social media is a great way to connect with caregiver peers and although these groups are often closed it’s still important not to post photos or information that might identify a child in your care.

Young people using social media
At times a young person in your care may have a social media account. This can be difficult to navigate as a caregiver. What’s important is to have a conversation with them to make sure they understand the dangers of social media and how to manage situations they don’t feel comfortable with.

If you would like more help in this area check out the website www.netsafe.org.nz or speak with your caregiver social worker.

“...he’s like a son to us.”

Jordan doesn’t like to boast, instead he casually mentions that he writes his own songs as he gets out the guitar. But when he begins to pick out an intricate melody that is both gentle and haunting, it’s immediately obvious there is nothing modest about his talent.

Jordan’s achievements range from a passion for guitar, to woodwork and Māori art – a coffee table detailed with Māori design that he has fashioned takes pride of place in the lounge.

“He’s got a gift for anything. No matter what he got his hands on, he’d be good at it,” says foster dad James, who along with Heather has cared for Jordan since he was 12 years old.

“He’s like a son to us. It’s a pleasure to have him as part of the family,” adds Heather.

“Every young person needs the chance to develop their gifts,” says James.
Issues for tamariki in care

When you provide your love and care as a caregiver, you are helping to heal hurt children. This section gives you information on some of the important or common issues for children in care, and tips on how you can deal with the challenges. Your social worker can also give you more in-depth advice if you need it. We highly recommend you take up the learning and training opportunities that are available.

About attachment

An important part of all children’s development is ‘attachment’, which is the natural bonding that occurs between a child and their parent or caregiver. Children need to build healthy and close bonds with many adults. In te reo Māori the word ‘matua’ means father or uncle, and ‘whaea’ can mean mother, or be a term of respect for anyone of ‘aunty’ age. This creates a village of people, who surround the child to make sure they are safe and nurtured.

Many children in care are lacking this important part of their development, and it affects them as they grow, learn and build relationships. When a child has not experienced secure attachment their ability to trust can be severely limited. Their past experience may mean they are wary of adults and may expect the worst from them.

As a result, they develop strategies to protect themselves. Some children do this by withdrawing, becoming silent, watchful and anxious. Months or even years later they may still retreat into this state when they are stressed or insecure.

Others test every limit, are loud and volatile and constantly on the move. Some children experience a wide range of emotions that they are unable to sort out and may not be able to talk about.

This behaviour can be very confusing and often stressful for caregivers. However, we know that building a secure and safe attachment with adults they can trust, makes the single greatest difference to children in care.

How do I help a child in care with attachment problems?

The good news is that by being sensitive to the child’s needs you can help develop good attachment, as well as helping them feel secure and gain a sense of who they are. Some things you can do are:

- Notice things about the child and give them feedback about this so they become more aware of themselves. Children in care may have little idea of who they are and their own preferences, especially if they have often been overridden by others. Comments such as: “You’re really good at reading but I’ve noticed you don’t like drawing much,” help the child build up a picture of who they are.

- Show that you remember and think about your child when they’re away from you. Cook their favourite meal occasionally, or ask them about something they have mentioned earlier.

- Accept the child’s feelings for their birth parents. This allows the child to be able to accept their new caregiver without the dilemma of having to give up their birth parents.

- Allow the child to talk about the past rather than expecting it to no longer concern them.

- Find small ways to help the child feel part of your family. This may be subtle such as having them in family photos and helping relatives include them as part of the family.

- Provide the right level of discipline. While a behaviour might be very unusual for their actual age, it may not be so unusual for their ‘emotional age’. Being able to treat some issues more lightly than you would with another child of the same age may help the child get through this behaviour more quickly.

“It’s when you’re doing the dishes together and having a chat that their guards come down. I see foster parents perform a thousand miracles for these kids every single day.”

Psychologist Nigel Latta
How you can help children in care attach:

- have realistic expectations of the child based on their developmental level, rather than their chronological age
- be consistent, predictable and repetitive
- offer physical nurture, care and love
- consider if the child is ready to accept physical nurture and if not, find ways to be alongside the child, for example reading to them and being with them while they play
- listen to and talk with the child
- model and teach good social behaviour
- when possible, ignore the negative and praise the positive
- remember that behaviour is a form of communication and try to understand the message
- be patient with the progress of the child and with yourself
- take care of yourself and ask for help.

Trauma

Many children in care are likely to have experienced significant trauma.

Trauma is defined as an event that is out of the ordinary and experienced as life threatening, causing significant fear and distress, overwhelming the ability of the child to cope. It may be described as ‘simple’ (such as a one off event) or more ‘complex’ and enduring.

The impacts of trauma in childhood can be life-long for both children and their parents, with increased risk of ongoing physical, emotional and social problems.

A child’s response to trauma will depend on the nature, duration and pattern of trauma along with characteristics of the child, their family and their social situation.

“My own personal development has been amazing, my understanding of life, of people and of personalities.”
Caregiver to two teenagers

Many of the challenging and concerning behaviours we see in children in care are their attempts to cope with trauma. Some signs are more apparent than others. Traumatic experiences can have a profound impact on the child, altering their physical, emotional cognitive and social development.

Experiences of being in care can be experienced as traumatic or can perpetuate trauma symptoms.

As a caregiver, you need to understand and recognise the impacts of trauma on your child. Work with the child’s social worker to respond effectively to prevent further trauma and provide the resources needed for healing.

If a child talks about abuse

If the child in your care talks to you about abuse, or wants to share very sensitive information with you, there are some guidelines to follow:

- listen and believe what they say
- reassure them that it’s good they told you about it
- let them know it’s not their fault
- let them know it’s not okay for things like this to happen to kids
- tell them you will get help.

It’s best not to question them about their experience, just listen and be reassuring.

The best response might be “thank you for telling me about that, now I need to talk to your social worker so we can make sure you’re safe”.

When a child talks about abuse we take it seriously and want to support them, so please follow these steps:

- write down what the child tells you (and how you responded) as soon as possible, using the same words they say
- tell their social worker straight away so they can take steps to ensure the child’s ongoing safety.

If this ever happens, it’s natural to feel a bit anxious, but don’t worry — we’ll be there to support the child and you.
Managing difficult behaviour

Managing behaviour can be hard work for all families, and sometimes children in care bring extra challenges because of things that have happened to them. It can take time for their behaviour to change, and their deeper issues may continue to surface for some time. What the child needs is for you to stick by them and not give up, be consistent and clear about your boundaries, and provide appropriate and loving guidance.

It’s important to gain an understanding of why children develop behaviours in reaction to their upbringing, as this will help you be patient and empathetic in dealing with their behaviour.

Behaviour management is about the adult clearly explaining what is required and why, in a way that is appropriate for their age and development. The child may need lots of gentle reminders before they can remember routines for themselves.

Some techniques for managing behaviour

— be clear about the behaviour that’s not okay and why — “slamming the door is not okay because it could hurt you or someone else”
— notice the child being good in small ways, and praise them for it. Aim to say more positive things about their behaviour than negative things
— wherever possible, provide alternatives — “I don’t want you teasing the cat, but it likes being stroked... like that”
— use positive statements — so “don’t spill the drink” becomes “hold onto your cup carefully”. This puts a positive picture in the child’s mind
— recognise and sympathise with the child’s feelings — “I can see you are feeling really angry”
— give reassurance that you are concerned about them. Let them know they are worthwhile and that you’re confident that they will learn better ways to deal with their feelings
— differentiate between feelings and behaviour “it is okay to be angry, but it’s not okay to hit your brother”
— plan incentives and rewards for good behaviour as this will encourage them to be good
— arrange fun activities that stimulate them and keep them occupied
— if things get heated, walk away until things cool down.

“...I guess what I didn’t realise was how much I would be changed.”

**Linda:** I knew, or should I say, I hoped I could change his life. He had it tough, and we thought we could help. I guess what I didn’t realise was how much I would be changed. There have been times when I’ve cried with joy over him, and days when I’ve stormed into the garden, shaking with rage. But what counts in the end is how the kids turn out. John was one of my successes. And I think that’s because we never gave up — even when John wanted us to. Lord knows he tried hard enough!

There’s a photo on my mantelpiece of him with us at Taupō. I won’t repeat what he said when we first got there, but let’s just say he let us know he thought the lake was very big! My girls were only little at the time, and they kept repeating what he said for days on end. People were staring at me with that ‘what-kind-of-parent-are-you?’ look.

**John:** I was so angry. About everything. Things weren’t that good with my folks. I guess I just expected to be hurt, and my attitude was get in first. Linda was a rock. Something would set me off and I’d yell, swear, storm out. Then I’d ring, and she’d say “Tea’s at 6.” Calm as anything. It was always home, and it was always there for me. I knew that. One Christmas, we all went to Lake Taupō for a holiday. I’ve still got this photo of all of us by the water. I’d never seen a lake before. Actually, no one except Linda and Brent had even taken a photo of me before that.
Some techniques for disciplining

Part of providing good boundaries is disciplining the child so they understand right and wrong. This shows the child where they went wrong, and helps them learn the right behaviour.

If you need to discipline a child, provide consequences that are immediate, right for their age and if possible, relevant to what they did wrong. The consequence should have a definite end time and be relatively short-lived, as it will seem much longer to a child or young person. Talk with the child about their behaviour, the reasons it was wrong and what the right behaviour would be.

Children cannot be smacked or hit as a form of discipline. Physical restraint should only ever be used if they are at risk of hurting themselves or others.

If you need to discipline the child, here are some good techniques:

- negotiate a consequence – “you were late, so you choose, no television or early to bed”
- use curfews or grounding
- remove the use of a favourite toy, cell phone, computer or Xbox
- be honest with your own emotions, and let them know how you feel
- criticise the behaviour, not the child or young person.

You don’t need to manage difficult behaviour on your own, we’re here to support you.

Talk to the child’s social worker if you are worried or need support with managing behaviour.

Also, if you are ever worried that a child is sad, withdrawn, hurting or threatening to harm themselves, please let us know.

We can get specialised help for the child or young person, and the right support for you.
When a child or young person goes missing

If a child or young person in your care is missing and you are worried about their safety or welfare, ring 111 immediately and report this to the Police. Then ring your social worker.

If the social worker is unavailable, please call the Oranga Tamariki site and ask for the supervisor or duty social worker, or call the Contact Centre: 0508 326 459.

Do not leave a voicemail message about a missing child or young person. There’s a risk the message won’t be picked up immediately and it’s vital for us to know if a child or young person is missing.

If there are no immediate concerns for their safety or welfare, there are some things you can do with your social worker to help decide if a ‘missing persons’ alert to Police is needed.

These might include:
- calling or texting the young person
- talking to friends, parents, whānau or others who might know where they are
- if there is any risk involved in doing this, please ask the Police for help
- checking emails and Facebook.

If you know where they are

Some rangatahi run away from their home for a short period and then return. Often you’ll know where they are, or can find out by speaking with them or their family or friends.

Even when you believe the child or young person is not at risk, these situations should still be discussed with us.

Careful monitoring of an unauthorised absence is important, as the child may later be considered a missing person, i.e., their whereabouts are ‘unknown’.

Addiction and substance abuse

Volatile substance abuse is when someone deliberately breathes in the gas or vapours of a substance to get ‘high’. It is sometimes called ‘bagging’, ‘huffing’ or ‘sniffing’. Most substances are everyday household items such as fly spray, spray deodorants, petrol, paint – particularly spray paint – lighter fuel, liquid petroleum gas (LPG), glue and nail polish remover. These products are often easy to get and cheap to buy.

Most users of volatile substances are young people, with a peak between the ages of 13-15 years. Use of volatile substances seems to decline by the time a person reaches 19 years of age (Office of the Chief Coroner, 2012).

Possible signs of abuse:
- spots and sores around the mouth and nose
- chemical smell on breath or clothing
- hidden empty spray paint or solvent cans
- paint stains on hands, face or clothes
- child is anxious, moody, irritable, withdrawn or angry
- drop in school attendance
- alterations to sleep or eating patterns
- persistently runny nose or eye irritation
- mixing with new friends and hanging out in secluded places
- hangover-type symptoms.

The effects

The substance enters the bloodstream quickly and the effects on behaviour are similar to being drunk. People may experience euphoria, dizziness, hallucinations and disorientation. The ‘high’ comes on very quickly but will only last for seconds or minutes.

These substances can’t be inhaled safely. The biggest risk from using volatile substances is sudden death. Solvent abuse can cause the heart to become sensitive to adrenaline and a sudden shock or exertion can result in a fatal heart attack. Death can occur the first time someone huffs or after repeated huffing episodes. Using volatile substances can also damage the lungs, kidneys, brain and nervous system.

Although it may be worrying to find a child or young person under the influence of a solvent, it is important to stay calm and get medical help quickly.

Many tamariki and rangatahi are unaware of the effects of substance abuse and the risks they are taking. Talk them through this information and if you need more help, talk to your young person’s doctor or social worker.

Suicide risk

If a child or young person is talking about suicide, or if you think they are at risk, please ring their social worker immediately. If you can’t reach them, please call our contact centre: 0508 326 459

Do not leave a voicemail message for your child’s social worker as it might not be picked up immediately.
Coping with loss and grief

When a child or young person moves from their own family into care, they may feel a deep sense of loss and grief. They have been separated from their parents, are likely to feel confused and may feel angry that they have no control over what is happening to them. They'll also be impacted by the things that have happened in their past, and the events leading up to them going into care.

Every child will follow their own unique cycle of grief. The length of time it lasts and the way they express their grief, will be different for everyone.

Children are often not able to express themselves verbally, so they tend to show their feelings and thoughts by their behaviour. A child who may have been very cooperative at first but who is now rebellious and angry, can be experiencing different stages in the grief cycle rather than being ‘out of control’.

The following table outlines some of the stages of grief, along with ways you can help the child or young person in your care cope as they go through their grief process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grief stage</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honeymoon</td>
<td>The child can be overly cooperative and extremely well-behaved, or indifferent and anxious.</td>
<td>Use this time to introduce good boundaries and develop trust and a sense of security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting out</td>
<td>The child is testing the limits, and can be rebellious, demanding, hostile and aggressive.</td>
<td>Be consistent when setting boundaries and your expectations of the child.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The child may also blame themselves, reject you and try to negotiate a return home.</td>
<td>Listen to why they are crying or angry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is usually a sign of progress, and means they are beginning to trust you.</td>
<td>Try to build up their self-esteem and confidence by telling them what they are good at.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Try to teach them anger management strategies, and try to take the guilt that they feel for coming into care off their shoulders.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persevere and be honest.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledge openly what they might be feeling, for example, &quot;You are feeling angry about what is happening to you. It’s okay to feel that way. We can work it out together.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>The child can become sad, depressed, distrustful or indifferent.</td>
<td>Don’t try to constantly cheer them up, or ignore their feelings. Instead help them to accept and express their feelings. Your support and reassurance is very important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment</td>
<td>The child shows signs of self-confidence, is again able to form relationships and begins to show emotions appropriately.</td>
<td>Remember the previous stages of grief are not constant. There may be periods of anger and depression after this apparent adjustment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If faced with another separation or the potential for separation, the child may regress and exhibit behaviour from another stage.</td>
<td>Explain the situation to the child as honestly and in as much depth as appropriate. Listen to and acknowledge their feelings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the people who care for children, you can make a huge difference during this time of uncertainty and loss. Keep letting the child know that you are there for them, that they can trust you and that they have a home with you for as long as they need it.

**Resolving concerns**

We want you to feel included and supported by us. If you ever feel that you’ve not been properly involved or informed about a decision affecting you or the child in your care, please talk with your child’s social worker or your caregiver social worker if things can’t easily be fixed, the best thing to do is:

- discuss your concerns with the social worker’s supervisor
- talk to their manager
- or call our 24/7 Caregiver Guidance and Advice line 0508 227 377.

You’re most welcome to seek support from your caregiver social worker, or someone like Fostering Kids NZ, who might be able to help you sort things out.

**Supporting children to have their say**

If the child in your care has concerns or ideas about the service they receive from Oranga Tamariki, you can help them by listening and helping them tell us what they think. Information to guide you on how to support a child to have their say can be found on our website. This includes a child-friendly form they can fill out, with your help if needed, and submit online.

**Allegations against caregivers**

Sometimes children in care or their families make complaints or allegations of harm against their caregivers. This isn’t necessarily a reflection of what’s happening in your family, but whatever the circumstances, we have a responsibility to look into the complaint or allegation. We will make sure the child is safe and support you during the process. We will complete our enquiry within 20 working days. You can expect us to:

- address the issues, while showing you and your family respect at all times
- be transparent about the allegation process and provide clear information about the allegation, as soon as possible
- keep the child or young person at the centre of all considerations
- maintain the dignity, integrity and wellbeing of your whānau
- gather all relevant information before making any decisions or coming to any conclusions
- provide a written report for you, giving you an opportunity to comment on the report before it is completed.

Many allegations are found to be unsubstantiated, but we know it is a distressing and stressful time. You can always have a support person with you while we work with you to investigate the complaint.

We’ll also put you in touch with Fostering Kids NZ who will provide advocacy and a trained support worker to help you throughout the enquiry.

You can contact the Allegation Support Service on 0800 693 278 or email: criticalsupport@fosteringkids.org.nz
What should the child call me?
There are no real rules about what a child in your care should call you – just go with what you both feel more comfortable with. Lots of caregivers prefer to be called by their first name.

In Māori culture, whaea for a woman and matua for a man is often used.

Some children naturally prefer to call their caregivers mum and dad after a while. This is okay as long as it’s initiated by the child, and you are sensitive to the fact that they also have their own mum and dad.

As a rule of thumb, start off with using your first name or something else appropriate to your culture, and let the child initiate any change to that – they’ll do what they feel comfortable with.

I know I can organise regular haircuts and clothes, but what if the child wants to do something different – like getting dreads or dyeing their hair?
Your child has their own identity, which includes how they will want to dress and look like. This is okay and it’s good to encourage the child’s identity, but if they are planning a change in their appearance, it is a guardianship issue. Let your social worker know and chat this through – they will contact the parents if necessary.

What do I do if I think my child could benefit from counselling, or I think they have a health condition that needs looking into?
When it’s needed, things like counselling, specialised help and medical treatment are part of our role in caring for children. Please talk to the child’s social worker about getting further support. They will look into this and work with you to make decisions about what would help the child. Things like this often require guardianship consent, so we will also work with the child’s birth parents to make these decisions.

Can I give the tamaiti prescription medication, or non-prescription medication like paracetamol?
You can give medication prescribed by the child’s doctor when it is for a routine medical issue, such as an ear infection. It’s also okay to give some non-prescribed medications, like Pamol, but please check with us if this is becoming a regular occurrence.

You can’t consent to medication that is not considered ‘routine’. For example, medication for ADHD or other special needs your child might have. It is important that you let the doctor know you are not the child’s guardian, and can’t give consent to non-routine medication.

Please keep a record of health issues for the child in your care, and go over it with your social worker. However, unless you are worried about the health issue, you can look after their health as part of your day-to-day care.

What are the things I need to get special permission for?
Consent or permission for big decisions about the child in your care can generally only be given by their legal guardians – their parents. These would be about things like their education or changing schools, major medical decisions, religion, and going on holidays – especially if you are thinking about going overseas.

You can give permission for day-to-day things like school day trips. Talk to us if you have questions or need permission for something.

When should I ask for help?
Anytime you want to. Call us if there is something worrying you or you just want another point of view on a problem or idea. We’re here to help you if your own family is having trouble adjusting to a new person in the house too, and to make sure you have the support and information you need.
If you have any trouble getting through to your child’s social worker, call our 24/7 Caregiver Guidance and Advice line 0508 227 377. We’ll make sure you have someone to talk to.

**Looking after yourself**
Being a caregiver has lots of rewards, but we know it can be stressful and challenging. It’s important to take time out now and then, and do things you find relaxing and enjoyable. If things get tough we suggest you:

— talk with someone – us, a friend or another caregiver or a family member. It really helps to talk things through with someone who understands
— plan for a regular break, whether it’s a weekend away or afternoon coffee
— make sure you have support people – put the phone numbers of key friends and family on your fridge, so you can call them if you are feeling stressed
— join one of the support groups listed. It really helps to share your experiences with other caregivers
— connect with an iwi group, and get the support of a kuia/kaumātua
— join a parenting group or play group appropriate to the child’s age – especially if children are younger, it really helps to get out of the house and interact with other adults.

The main thing is to make sure you have a good support network and are not isolated, give yourself regular breaks and make sure you call us if you need help.

**Want more info?**
Talk to your caregiver social worker or other caregivers for ideas about books, DVDs or web resources.

There is more information on our website about different aspects of caregiving including:

— roles and responsibilities – defining guardianship, caregiving and giving a child a permanent home
— caring for babies
— caring for young people
— health matters
— claiming for deliberate damage
— current foster care allowance rates.

To find out more about who we are and what we do, ask us or go to [www.orangatamariki.govt.nz](http://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz)
Finding the right support

There are lots of other organisations and resources that are there to support you and your family. Here are a few contacts you might want to check out:

**Fostering Kids NZ**
*Whāngai Whakatairangi*
Fostering Kids NZ offers information, training, networking, advocacy and a whole range of services to foster parents. Membership is free.

Phone: 0800 693 323
or visit: www.fosteringkids.org.nz

**Plunket and Healthline**
Plunket offer parenting advice and support. They know about the challenges of caring for a new baby and have lots of tips to help with sleeping, feeding and child behaviour.

Phone PlunketLine on: 0800 933 922
or visit: www.plunket.org.nz

Healthline provides health advice for the whole family. The 0800 line is staffed by registered nurses who can give information and advice to help you decide on the best level of care.

Phone Healthline on: 0800 611 116
or visit: www.health.govt.nz

**Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren provide support and advice to family/whānau carers. They produce resource packs and a monthly newsletter, assist with advice and information, run local support groups and activities you can take part in. Membership is free.

Phone: 0800 472 637
or visit: www.grg.org.nz

**The Parenting Place**
The Parenting Place is a nationwide organisation offering support to all families. For approved caregivers and adoptive applicants, the Parenting Place will provide a free six-session Toolbox course on practical skills and strategies.

You can read more about Toolbox on: www.theparentingplace.com
or Phone: 0800 535 659.

**Family Services Directory**
A searchable online database that lists information about family support organisations and the services/programmes they offer to support New Zealand families. The purpose of the Family Services Directory is to connect people with providers who can help them to cope with common issues and problems.

Visit: www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory

**Local caregiver networks**
Ask your caregiver social worker for information about caregiver support groups in your area, or contact Fostering Kids NZ.
Checklist

Make sure you have:

☐ the contact details for the child’s social worker, and your own social worker
☐ been set up with your foster care allowances
☐ received the child's All About Me Plan and the rights booklet
☐ received a record of the child’s belongings
☐ talked through any specific health or education needs with your child’s social worker
☐ called your insurance company to make sure you’ve got the right insurance cover for your circumstances
☐ started a Life Events Book and memory box with the child in your care
☐ started a Caregiver Support Plan
☐ filled out a Welcome to Our Home booklet/Haere Mai ki Tō Tātau Kāinga.

“I don’t know where I’d be without the support of other caregivers. You become like a big extended family.”
Caregiver for over 20 years

“It’s really good to just get together and listen to what other people are up to. Just talking everything out is so helpful.”
Caregiver and grandmother

“Foster parents need to be respected for their knowledge of the child and have regular opportunities to share this information.”
Caregiver social worker

You can call your social worker or our 24/7 Caregiver Guidance and Advice line 0508 0508 227 377 anytime. We’re here to help.