



**DEPARTMENT OF THE
PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET**
TE TARI O TE PIRIMIA ME TE KOMITI MATUA



Have Your Say: Summary Report

**NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT ON TAMARIKI TŪ, TAMARIKI ORA:
NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST CHILD AND YOUTH WELLBEING STRATEGY**

March 2019

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A message from the Prime Minister

A huge thank you to everyone who took the opportunity to share their ideas, experience and perspectives about what will help achieve our Government's goal of making New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people.

Around 10,000 people made time to send in a submission, share ideas at the numerous meetings and hui, complete the online survey or send me a postcard outlining how we could make things better for our kids – and that included children themselves.

Reading through the hundreds of 'Postcards to the Prime Minister' had a huge impact on me. I read every single one and was really impressed by how deeply young New Zealanders care about each other and about ensuring everyone has more opportunities for a better life.

The feedback summarised in this report, I believe, reflects a strong Kiwi sense of fairness and equality and a belief that everyone deserves decent opportunities. And that starts with children. Every child deserves to have the best start in life; now it's our chance to make that a reality together.



Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern

Prime Minister

Minister for Child Poverty Reduction

A message from the Minister for Children

For the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy to be successful, it has to reflect what children and their families want. They are the people this strategy is for and it has to work for them. As a Government, we have aspirations about making peoples' lives – especially children's lives – better. So we simply had to listen to the children and their families.

That's why this public engagement process was so important and there is no question that what young people have told us has greatly helped our thinking. Reaching those whose voices are less often heard was a particular focus of the engagement and I'd like to acknowledge the support of the Office of the Children's Commissioner, Oranga Tamariki, Te Puni Kōkiri and the Ministry of Health in achieving this. The rich feedback outlined in this report builds on insights from previous research and engagement and is helping to shape the direction and content of the first Strategy, due to be published later this year.

Many of the issues we need to tackle are complex, stubborn and intergenerational, so we know change will take time. That's why the Strategy will be reviewed and updated regularly, to ensure it continues to meet the changing needs of New Zealand's children and young people.

While Government needs to lead this work by setting the future direction as well as the immediate actions it will take, it cannot bring about change by itself – collective action is needed. I encourage all New Zealanders to help ensure that we improve the wellbeing of our children and young people.

They deserve the best.



Hon Tracey Martin

Minister for Children

A snapshot of what we heard

This report has been prepared by the Child Wellbeing Unit, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Child Wellbeing Unit was established to support the Prime Minister, in her role as the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction, and the Minister for Children in the development of New Zealand's first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy).

We asked children, young people and adults to tell us what good wellbeing means to them, to identify the things that get in the way, and tell us what we should do about it. We are grateful to the more than 10,000 New Zealanders, including over 6,000 children and young people, who contributed to this report by sharing their thoughts, knowledge and expertise with us. The Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamaraki led the engagement with children and young people, and many of the views and voices of children and young people presented in this report have been drawn from their joint report: *What makes a good life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing*¹.

This report is a summary of what we heard during our engagement and brings together the key themes from a range of meetings, interviews, written submissions, postcards to the Prime Minister and responses to surveys. A combination of methods was used to analyse and summarise this information, but we have tried to use the words and voices of the people we spoke with as much as possible.

There were a number of key themes that emerged throughout the engagement. These themes have been summarised below.

Change is needed, and it's needed now

The majority of children and young people are doing well, but some are facing significant challenges. Almost everyone who shared their views, including those who said that they were doing well, could point to something that needed to change if children and young people are to have a good life. People want to see some clear and immediate actions as a first step in a process of thorough ongoing, systemic change. They want government to take some actions to make this happen, but government alone can't achieve the vision for the Strategy. Every New Zealander has a role to play in making New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people.

The Strategy needs to be bigger than the government of the day

Adults told us they had high hopes that something real and tangible will come from the Strategy, but worried it may end up being discarded with any change in government. Adults told us that child wellbeing is too important to be a 'fad' and that this Strategy shouldn't be about short term solutions and 'easy

¹ Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki. (2019). *What makes a good life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing*. Retrieved from: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/What-makes-a-good-life-report-OCC-OT-2019-WEB2.pdf>

wins'. They emphasised the need for long-term commitment to actions that would lift the wellbeing of all children and young people and change some of the major systemic issues that have typically been considered "too hard" or "too big" to address.

Local communities are integral to the success of the Strategy

Local communities have an important role to play in the Strategy. Children and young people told us about the importance of the different communities in their lives. Services must accept children and young people for who they are and respect their critical relationships with their family, whānau and communities. Adults told us that without the local level insights, involvement, and their support, any nationally driven strategy would fail. A one-size-fits-all strategy won't work. Adults told us that the Strategy needs to support locally-led solutions and to empower and enable communities to make changes themselves.

The Strategy needs to have a focus on family and whānau wellbeing

Children, young people, and adults told us that families and whānau must be well in order for children to be well, and families must be involved in making things better. A major theme from adults and children alike was putting families and whānau at the centre of solutions – children, young people, and adults told us that parents, caregivers, family and whānau often need support too, and that children's wellbeing is impacted by their families' wellbeing. Many adults felt that there needs to be an explicit focus on families and whānau at all levels of the Strategy.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi should be a clear and empowering dimension of the Strategy

Adults told us that the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) should be a clear and empowering dimension of the Strategy. This includes getting serious about services and solutions for Māori being designed and delivered by Māori. People told us that recognising and giving practical commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is essential to achieving wellbeing for tamariki and rangatahi Māori. Institutional racism against Māori was often raised as a significant barrier to personal and intergenerational wellbeing.

The Strategy needs to focus on reducing inequity

The issue of equity/inequity was also a strong theme across the engagement. Adults talked about equity in terms of outcomes, and children and young people talked about fairness. We heard a lot from children, young people and adults about the importance of ensuring all children had the basics. While most children and young people are doing well, many face major challenges. Poverty, material hardship, and the high cost of living were identified as significant barriers for many children and families and whānau. Some communities and families are living in entrenched poverty and really struggling. When asked where government should prioritise its focus, ensuring all children "have what they need" (e.g. housing, meeting material needs, addressing poverty etc.) received the strongest support from children, young people and adults alike.

A good life is more than the bare basics

Children and young people told us they want to be accepted, valued and respected. They want to feel safe in their homes and communities. They want to be with people who care about them. The children and young people we spoke with recognised their need for basic things, but they were hopeful that their future would include more than that. A minimum standard of living is not enough. Adults also wanted more for children and young people than the absence of risk, deprivation or harm. They emphasised the importance of a positive framing of wellbeing, and told us that reducing poverty is an admirable and important goal, but that it shouldn't set the tone and aspirations for a wellbeing strategy.

Children and young people have a right to be included in the decision-making process

There was a lot of advocacy by adults for the inclusion and consideration of children and young people's voice in the Strategy and in any decisions that impact on children more widely. "Being listened to" was mentioned by children and young people as one of the things that could help them have a good life. Many of the children and young people who contributed their ideas, stories and opinions were grateful for being asked, and for many it was the first time they had been asked or felt they were being heard.

Invest in ensuring all kids get a great education

Children and young people spend a lot of time at school and the ones we spoke with told us how important their education is to future opportunities. Schools can have a major impact on children and young people's wellbeing, for better or for worse. Children, young people and adults all said we need to invest more in education to make it more accessible and a quality experience for everyone.

Focus on early intervention and specifically on the first 1,000 days

There was significant support for placing a greater emphasis on providing support earlier. This meant providing services to children, and their families and whanau, at younger ages; providing services before things reached crisis point; and providing more services that took a preventative approach.

Government agencies and community services need to work together better

Adults told us that government agencies are not collaborating, and services competing against each other for funding was identified as a major barrier. We were told some new initiatives will be needed but a lot could be achieved if government agencies and community services were able to communicate and collaborate more effectively. Children and young people talked about their lives as a whole. Their needs do not exist within neatly-defined categories. The development of the Strategy is an opportunity to respond to children's and young people's needs using holistic and comprehensive approaches to wellbeing.

Background

A Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is required by legislation

Amendments to the Children's Act 2014 require successive governments to adopt a strategy to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people. There'll be a particular focus on reducing child poverty and on those with greater needs, including children of interest or concern to Oranga Tamariki. The Government is required to develop and publish the first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy by 21 December 2019.

The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy will set the direction for government policy and action

The Strategy will provide a framework to drive government policy and action on child wellbeing. It will commit Government to set and report on outcomes and actions to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people.

The Strategy will set out the Government's desired outcomes for our children and young people and make concrete commitments for change. It will also clearly outline how progress will be measured and reported on so that we can see the difference being made and where more work might be needed.

For the Strategy to work, it must be shaped by the interests and aspirations of children, young people and their families, and by those who work directly with them.

Reaching Māori and children and young people

The new legislation requires consultation with representatives of Māori and with children and young people, as part of developing the Strategy.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki formed a project team that led most of the engagement with children and young people as an input into the Strategy. Over 6,000 children and young people shared their views on what wellbeing means to them; 423 through face-to-face engagement through the focus groups and interviews, and 5,607 children and young people through an online survey. These engagements have been summarised in their report, *What makes a good life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing*². The report's key findings and some direct quotes have also been incorporated into this report. Where direct quotes have been used, we have indicated this with an asterisk, and page number.

²Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki. (2019). What makes a good life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing. Retrieved from: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/What-makes-a-good-life-report-OCC-OT-2019-WEB2.pdf>

Additionally, the Child Wellbeing Unit also engaged with children and young people as opportunities presented themselves during the engagement period. We heard directly from over 500 children and young people. More information about this is included in Appendix One. The key findings and some direct quotes from these children and young people have also been incorporated into this report.

Te Puni Kōkiri supported the engagement process by hosting a series of regional hui across New Zealand. Invitations to the hui were sent to a wide range of iwi and Māori organisations, including many non-government service providers operating in the children and youth sector and other social sectors. In addition, Te Puni Kōkiri utilised its local networks to extend invitations to relevant groups and individuals with an interest in this kaupapa. In total there were 11 regional hui with approximately 175 attendees. More information about these are provided in Appendix One. Note, the hui were just one of the ways we engaged with Māori. In total, across all forms of engagements, over a quarter (at least 2,500) of the children, young people and adults who provided feedback identified as Māori.

A wide range of New Zealanders shared their views

In addition to engagement with children and young people and with Māori, we also engaged with a range of other individuals, families and whānau, and population and sector groups. The design of the engagement, and lines of enquiry with children and young people, led by the *What Makes a Good Life* team, helped to inform the wider engagement with adults. We provided a range of different ways that other groups could 'have their say', including:

- **Ministry of Health workshops.** The Child Wellbeing Unit attended ten workshops hosted by the Ministry of Health, in partnership with their local District Health Boards. There were approximately 700 participants across the ten workshops. More information about these are provided in Appendix One.
- **Meetings, hui and other face-to-face engagements.** In total we spoke with approximately 1,500 adults through the face-to-face engagements (including the Ministry of Health workshops and the Māori engagement hui). More information about these are provided in Appendix One.
- **A survey for adults.** The Survey was available online through the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website and promoted by other Government agencies. A paper copy of the survey was also made available to a women's prison and a men's prison. In total 1,738 people provided feedback through the adult's survey.
- **A written submission process.** This was open to anyone who wanted to provide written feedback, either as an individual or on behalf of their organisation. In total, we received submissions from 58 individuals and 153 groups or organisations
- **A "Postcard to the Prime Minister".** The "Postcard to the Prime Minister" was a way for children, young people and adults to express their "big ideas" directly with the Prime Minister. Over 1,000 people sent the Prime Minister a postcard.

A proposed Outcomes Framework to guide discussion

In September 2018, Cabinet approved a draft Outcomes Framework as the basis of the engagement process (see Appendix Two). It was made publically available and presented at (or provided in advance of) the face-to-face engagements. We asked for specific feedback on the proposed Outcomes Framework, including on the vision statement, principles, broad framing of child wellbeing, a set of outcome statements of what 'good wellbeing' would look like, and an indicative list of 16 potential focus areas to inform the initial Strategy. We also had a set of open questions to prompt and guide discussion, including:

- What is good wellbeing in your own words? / What does 'the good life' look like to you?
- What are the barriers or things that 'get in the way'?
- What can we do to help children and young people have a good life?
- What is the one thing you want to tell the Prime Minister about what children need to have good lives, now and in the future?

Recording and analysing what people told us

We used a range of different methods to collect and record feedback, in order to be responsive to the people we spoke with and the environments we were engaging in. At some of the face-to-face engagements, participants wrote notes and comments on cards which were collected and electronically transcribed for analysis. At others we had scribes taking notes on big pieces of paper (which participants could see) and these were transcribed for analysis. At some engagements we ended up just having a conversation and writing up notes afterwards. Wherever practical, we sent our transcripts of feedback to the participants for review.

Sometimes a single response represented many people (i.e. some submissions were written by a group of people, or organisations on behalf of their members), while individual people contributed varying levels - from single comments to pages of very specific and detailed feedback.

In total, we received around 600,000 words within submissions, notes, transcripts and responses to the survey in addition to the *What makes a good life* report. A mixed methods approach was used to analyse this information as accurately and systematically as possible. We identified common themes based on how often people talked about particular things (e.g. "food", "family & whānau", "safety" etc.) using a combination of computer automated text analysis techniques and manual coding techniques. We then took those themes and investigated them to provide more detail and context, and supplemented them with direct quotes that were reflective of comments people made. Finally, we asked people participating in the engagement process to peer review the analysis to ensure the main themes have been captured.

Happiness, fun and the freedom to be a kid was one of the key themes identified in the adults' responses to the survey. About 15% of adults used the word happy or happiness to describe "good wellbeing" or what they hoped for the children and young people in their lives. They wanted the children in their lives to have opportunities to have fun, and just "be children". However, some people cautioned against focusing too strongly on happiness.

...we have all sorts of emotions all the time, sometimes happy, but not always, and what matters is resilience, the ability to bounce back when life inevitably is difficult.

Adult

...I am working with a very anxious 11 year old girl at the moment, and her mum keeps saying to me "I just want my happy little girl back". This is making things so much worse for the girl because she feels like her worried feelings are wrong and she is unloved unless she's feeling happy. The pressure to always be "happy" is doing damage to our young people.

Adult

The children and young people in the face-to-face engagements (those likely to have faced, or be facing challenges in their lives) talked about their hopes and dreams for the future. Some spoke about the importance of being hopeful and aspirational. Some mentioned looking forward to the future and being able to be more independent. Others mentioned specific things they were looking forward to in their future, such as getting married, having a job or having kids.

I think that an important step to having a good life is to do things that you like, with people that you like and that you take time to care about people and to feel cared for. I enjoy making decisions, taking responsibility and doing jobs because it makes me feel good because I have helped someone and that I have independence.

Young person

Having a loving family and good friends

Having supportive family and friends was the second most common theme identified in the children and young people's responses to the survey question about what a good life means to them. In the face-to-face conversations, children and young people also talked a lot about the important role family and friends play in having a good life. Children and young people's relationships with their family and whānau are usually the most important, while the importance of friendships was emphasised more by young people than children.

Being with your family, even if they are annoying the heck out of you. They are immediate speed dial no.1.

Young person (pg.4*)

Being surrounded by positivity and supportive family and friends.

Young person

Children and young people wanted to be able to spend more time with their family and whānau. This included children and young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki. Children told us about how they want

to be able to cook and have kai with their whānau, play with their cousins, see their grandparents and just be with their families and whānau.

Spend more time with family and if they are poor they still get to do all the cool and fun activities that we get to do.

Child

One in five adults used the word love³ to describe “good wellbeing”, and about 18% of adults used words relating to family and whānau⁴. Many people thought it was important for children to feel love and acceptance with a range of people, as well as learning how to love themselves and other people. Some people went further to emphasise the importance of unconditional and constant love. People also commented on the difference between ‘being loved’ and ‘feeling loved’ and the importance of having both. Adults talked also about the importance of children and young people having good role models and ‘good friends’. One young mum had specific hopes that her daughter would have a small number of really close friends. She talked about how important it was to have strong relationships with people who will accept and forgive you.

Someone that loves them and thinks they are important, doesn't need to be a parent but all kids need a special someone around that makes them feel loved

Adult

A child that is surrounded by love, in their family, friends and community. A child that can build resilience and has access to, and feel confident gaining, tools that can help them in life. A child that is confident and has knowledge to make informed decisions. A child that doesn't have race barriers because of society's expectations.

Adult

The material things

Ensuring children and young people have their basic material needs met to a reasonable standard was the third most common theme raised by children and young people in the children’s survey question “What does having a good life mean to you?” It was also in the top five themes from the adult’s survey. Responses often mentioned having a warm safe place to sleep, enough (healthy) food for a full belly, and enough money for other things, like clothes and school trips.

Being able to afford the basics and sometimes the luxury things.

Young person

We were told that it’s important that children, young people and their families not only have what they need today, but also have the security of knowing they will always be able to provide their children with at least the basics, and not have to live day-to-day.

³ Includes similar words like loving, loved, or aroha

⁴ Includes words like mum, dad, families, whānau etc.

A warm home, food on the table, adequate clothing, access to opportunity and the financial means to live without fear of being hungry, cold, and tired.

Adult

Being physically, mentally and spiritually healthy

“Healthy” was the most common response from adults when asked to describe good wellbeing in their own words. One out of every four adults talked about health. Adults described health as a balance of mental, physical and spiritual health. *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, the model of Māori health developed by Mason Durie, was commonly referenced as a good model for thinking about wellbeing.

To wake up in the morning and be excited that it is another day. To have all my needs met - mental, physical and spiritual. To be loved and to love.

Adult

Te Whare Tapa Whā is a good representation of holistic wellbeing, so as long as relationships (whānau), physical health (tinana), mental/emotional health (hinengaro) and spiritual (wairua) are being attending to from the individual level to the political/wider social context, then it should cover it.

Adult

Physical and mental health also featured strongly in responses from children and young people about what having a good life means. They highlighted that health is a combination of both physical and mental health. Mental health was a stronger focus for young people (rather than children) who wrote about the need for accessible and affordable mental health treatment options.

A good life also means living mentally and physically healthy, or if not, having access to medical help (that you can afford).

Young person (pg.18*)

Feeling safe

Safe (or Safety) was the second most common word that adults used when asked to describe good wellbeing in their own words. Adults talked a lot about children and young people needing safe environments- safe homes, safe schools, and safe communities. Safe was often used in the context of protection from harm, victimisation and bullying or abuse. However a very small number of adults cautioned against kids being “too safe”.

Safe. Being able to play outside with other kids or on their own and parents not having to worry about their safety.

Adult

They need to be challenged and put outside their comfort zone. Being safe and nurtured can be the opposite of this.

Adult

In their responses about what a good life means, children and young people also highlighted the importance of feeling safe at home, at school and out in public. Safety meant not only physical safety but also feeling safe to express their individuality without fear of judgement, rejection or harassment.

Children and young people's sense of safety was affected by their own unique circumstances. For example young people who identified as part of the LGBTQI+ community also spoke about the need for safe spaces where they could explore their identity. Another young person with a physical disability said that stairs without railings are what makes him feel unsafe. Younger children were more likely than older children to mention their safety, particularly in regards to bullying.

Feeling safe in their company and being able to fully open up around them, without being scared of them judging you.

Young person (pg.35*)

Feeling accepted, valued and respected

Feeling accepted was one of the strongest themes that came through the face-to-face engagements. It was mentioned by almost all children and young people. They mentioned acceptance in relation to culture, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, disability, mental health and being in state care. Feeling valued and respected was one of the key themes identified in responses to the 'what does having a good life mean to you?' question in the survey from children and young people. They mentioned religion, culture, belonging and acceptance as important aspects of this. Children and young people with a disability, as well as those who indicated their gender was other than male or female, were more likely to say that identity and belonging were important for a good life. Acceptance was mentioned by almost all of the children and young people in the face-to-face engagements. Children and young people wanted to be accepted by their family, their friends and their communities.

Teach acceptance more... Just so that people can learn to accept other cultures, because I feel like what's happened in the past is that people have been taught it's okay to just think within your one culture, and that's it for your whole life. But then the thing is the world is such a vast place.

Young person (pg.26*)

Children and young people talked about how they want to be accepted for who they are, supported in their identity, respected, listened to and believed in. They want choices and freedom. They want the important adults in their lives to help them build their confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, so they can realise their hopes and dreams.

To me a good life means that I can talk anytime I need the help. I want to be able to feel safe and confident with who I am... I want to be able to help people and ensure that everybody knows how amazing and loved they are. All I want is for others, and me, to be happy. You are beautiful. You are loved.

Young person

'Valuing and listening to children' and 'Acceptance and belonging' were also key themes identified in the responses to the adult's survey. "Valued" was one of the top five words that adults used to describe what good wellbeing means to them, but they were less likely to talk about children being "respected". Less than 5% of responses talked about respect, and many of these did so in reference to children learning to respect others.

That children are responsible, respectful, resourceful, and trust that adults will guide them responsibly.

Adult

Knowing who they are, in regards to their cultural identity and language development. Being able to connect with people like them, so as to bond with each other, to prevent social isolation and stigma for being 'different'. Being accepted for their diversity and not to be bullied or demeaned. All diversity normalised.

Adult

Learning and education

"Learning", "growing", "educated", and "developing" were all common words that adults used to describe good wellbeing. When asked what they wanted or hoped for the children in their life, some adults talked about a good education so that they would be able to get a good job and have financial security later in life. Education came through as a strong theme, particularly for Pacific families.

I always talk to my children about how I want a better life for them - I'm a labourer and its good work, but I want them to get a better job than me and to do better in life than I did.

Adult

Children and young people highlighted the importance of feeling like they belong at school, and having teachers who are kind and care about them. They also talked about the importance of learning and education for future wellbeing. They saw this as an important part of helping them to become an adult and get a job. Young people were more likely to mention the importance of employment than younger children. The majority of children and young people spoke enthusiastically about learning. Even children and young people who spoke of past negative experiences with the education system, still expressed a desire to learn.

The most important things for children and young people to have a good life

Children and young people were also asked to choose the top six most important things for children and young people to have a good life (from two lists of seven items). The items are presented below - from most commonly identified as important, to least commonly identified as important:

List 1

- 65% - Children and young people have good relationships with family and friends
- 57% - Children and young people are valued and respected for who they are
- 51% - Children and young people with health conditions are supported to live good lives
- 46% - Children and young people enjoy school and build skills and knowledge for life
- 43% - Young people have job opportunities when they leave school
- 37% - The environment is looked after
- 21% - Children and young people know their family's history (whakapapa) and their culture

List 2

- 71% - Parents/caregivers have enough money for basic stuff like food, clothes and a good house to live in
- 59% - Children and young people are kept safe from bullying, violence or accidents
- 47% - Children and young people have family, whānau, and people in their community and school they can trust and rely on
- 44% - Babies get a good start to life, so they grow up happy and healthy
- 42% - Parents have time to spend with and help their children
- 30% - Children and young people are able to share their views on important issues
- 26% - Children and young people have opportunities to do fun activities in their spare time

The children, young people and adults in financial hardship talked about their experiences. Adults told us that they are in “survival mode”, while one young person described it as “living hard”. They told us about not having enough money for food, bills and petrol, about not being able to afford healthcare, and about living in overcrowded housing. Girls spoke about ‘period poverty’ (a lack of access to sanitary products because of cost). Some young people told us about their experiences of being homeless, or how not having enough money can lead them to committing crimes. Many talked about being stuck in a cycle that won’t get better.

Money may not be the key to happiness but it is the key to living and I know many people who struggle.

Young person (pg.31*)

Sometimes you can’t afford what you need. Can’t afford experiences - camps and school trips, education, food - like if you have bad health because you can only afford the bad stuff, you’re never gonna get healthy.

Young person (pg.31*)

Children and young people told us about their parents being in insecure work, which can mean going from work to the benefit (and having times with no money in between). They also talked about missing out on opportunities because they didn’t have the money to pay for them. They talked about their parents being stressed about money a lot and being embarrassed when they can’t pay for stuff.

Not being able to afford things - like sports or activities. People try to help us to make it easier but it’s shameful.

Child (pg.31*)

I have to save all year for Christmas, it isn’t something you can do a month in advance, it takes all year. You can’t go to WINZ and ask for money for a birthday but the kids expect and want birthday presents and to have their friends over and so you need to save for that.

Adult

Young people with disabilities sometimes spoke about their families not having enough money because of their disability. They spoke about how families can’t always cover the costs of the extra supports that they might need to have a good life. As a result, the family may not be able to afford things that they otherwise would. Children and young people wanted to spend more time with their whānau. Some said their parents have to work two jobs and don’t have any time for anything else.

Abuse, neglect and harmful family environments

People told us that families and whānau are a major influence on children and young people’s wellbeing, but not always in a positive way. Whānau were sometimes a barrier to having a good life when, for example, they were not accepting of the child or young person’s identity, or when whānau were the source of violence and drugs. ‘Abuse, neglect and harmful family environments’ was the second most common barrier identified in the adult survey responses. About a third of adults talked about family and whānau being a barrier to good wellbeing. People talked about parents’ mental health issues, drug and alcohol addictions, selfishness, divorce, and family violence as adverse childhood experiences and hugely detrimental to

children and young people's wellbeing. Children and young people talked about the physical and emotional trauma caused by past events, such as the pain of being separated from their parents, living in a 'broken home', or experiencing violence in their home.

When I go home I'm getting ready to battle the devil.

Young person (pg.35*)

Many adults recognised that parents' lack of skills or time to support their child's wellbeing was often due to their own childhood experiences of poor parenting, lack of role models, or the other stressors in their life. There was a strong emphasis on providing more support for parents and disrupting intergenerational cycles of abuse and poverty. A number of adults talked about how we need to stop assuming that good parenting comes naturally, and incorporate child development and parenting skills into the curriculum at an early age.

Children and young people talked about how they wanted parents to be able to be the best parents they could be and how sometimes that meant needing services like counselling or addiction support, or support to make better choices.

1). Parents who themselves have not had the opportunity to develop their own potential and feel inadequate for whatever reason. 2). Low wages of some jobs and consequently parents being preoccupied and stressed by the family's lack of resources (money, accommodation, skills).

Adult

A better environment for our whānau and parents creates a positive and better environment for our children.

Young person (pg.39*)

We heard from parents who had been separated from their children, who spoke of the pain and heartache of having their children taken away, and the fear of being reunited without getting the support they need. Children and young people (particularly those in contact with Oranga Tamariki) wanted to live with their whānau and not be separated from them, but they also emphasised the importance of support for their parents. They recognised that their whānau unit needed to be well in order for the children to be well. Some wanted their whānau to be better supported by their community and by professional support services. Without this support, their parents might not be able to take care of them anymore, which would impact on them.

Drugs, alcohol and addiction

For some of the children and young people we spoke to, drug and alcohol abuse is a normal part of life in both their family and their community. Children and young people told us how drugs can play good and bad roles in their life. Most acknowledged that alcohol abuse can have negative impacts on them, their family and their friends.

However, for some young people, alcohol and drugs can also be a way to cope with life or escape from reality and have a good time. One young person spoke of how he regularly had to look after his younger siblings. He found this stressful, so would smoke pot to help him be more patient. Young people talked about the pressure to fit in, which could mean drinking, smoking, doing drugs or self-harming.

The drugs help me deal with depressions, helps me forget about it, escape, get away.

Young person (pg.36*)

About one in seven responses to the adult survey talked about drugs, alcohol, or addiction as a barrier to children and young people's wellbeing. It was also discussed at many of the face-to-face engagements and in about 15% of written submissions. Adults regularly commented on the harm that alcohol, drugs and addiction is doing to children, young people, whānau and communities. It was perceived by many to be an issue that was highly interrelated with poverty and hardship, both as a coping mechanism and a contributor to poverty and hardship. For example, the specific policy approach of reducing smoking through price increases was seen as ineffective and perpetuating inequity. Poverty and hardship causes stress, which drives people to smoke as a coping mechanism, which in turn increases poverty and hardship. People often talked about the need for alcohol, drug and addiction issues to be approached from a position of empathy, and for additional wraparound support rather than taking a punitive approach.

When I was 14 my friend invited me to his house, his mum showed us how to shoot meth. He never invited me again. That was his role model. You can't fix that. It will always happen like that. This country needs to show people that have severe addictions that they are loved, that they can be valued. A rat with no stimulus and the option of drugs will always choose drugs, a rat with something to do will do something. We all want to feel like we are a part of something that people care about us. When we don't, anger takes control. We're only human.

Adult

Bullying, discrimination and racism

Children and young people also said that bullying gets in the way of a good life. Bullying at school and online were the most common examples, but some children also spoke about bullying within their family or their homes. Bullying was an issue that was experienced in different ways for different individuals and groups, for example young people who identified as a part of the LGBTQI+ community mentioned online bullying more frequently than others. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori often linked bullying to racism. Some children and young people with disabilities spoke about being made to feel different because of their appearance. For some children and young people, bullying was so prevalent in their lives that it had started to become normalised.

It is very different today now because you can be bullied in your own bedroom on the phone. That is a big thing we should be careful of. There is cyber bullying.

Young person (pg.32*)

Some children and young people believed they aren't given the same opportunities as others, such as sports and activities. They felt that people judged them as less capable than others and, as a result, they were not offered equal opportunities. Young people talked about not being listened to at home, at school and by society. They said adults make assumptions about what they can or can't do and what they want. Some young people feel as though no one expects anything of them, or worse, everyone expects them to make bad choices and to fail.

Something I always have to deal with at school is the stigma. When people find out you're a foster kid they're like 'oh you're an orphan, whose house did you burn down?'

Young person (pg.33*)

Expectations – no role models, no inspirations, no goals.

Young person (pg.35*)

Adults talked a lot about the lack of representation of diverse cultures and backgrounds in positions of power and influence being key barriers to wellbeing. They told us that policy and services aren't always designed with the specific needs of different population groups in mind, for example LGBTQI+, people with disabilities, or people with English as a second language. Adults spoke about mainstream services and agencies lacking cultural competency at both a structural level and in the competencies of the people delivering the frontline services. They told us that Māori and Pacific Peoples in particular continue to be marginalised, that there is institutional racism at most levels of the system, and that there is a lack of regard for Māori and Pacific cultural intelligence.

Children and young people spoke about the impact that racism has on their lives. They gave examples of experiencing racism at school, in employment and in their community. Many children and young people talked about how racism is common in their everyday life. Racism was mentioned by a range of different children and young people, including those from refugee backgrounds, recent migrants, and Māori and Pacific Peoples.

At our school people find mocking Māori culture to be a joke. 'Māoris go to prison', or 'Māoris do drugs'.

Young person (pg.32*)

Māori service providers spoke of a sense of double standards, higher expectations, and inequitable funding for them compared to mainstream providers. This included having funding pulled and/or redirected to mainstream services if they didn't deliver radical change for Māori in short timeframes, despite the same mainstream services not working for Māori for decades. There was a strong call for these issues to be addressed.

Irrational fear of funders that Māori are incapable or can't be trusted to meet the needs of their own

Adult

Lack of Māori voice on key governance boards

Adult

Some young people and a number of adults talked about the impact of colonisation and a lack of respect for Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori spoke about tokenism – one young person said that adults were happy to listen to rangatahi when those adults needed them to do a whaikōrero or pōwhiri, but would not listen otherwise. Tokenism was closely linked to racism for these young people. There was clear frustration from Māori that Te Tiriti o Waitangi continues to be ignored, or that its inclusion is tokenistic. Issues raised by participants at face-to-face engagements included lack of true partnership with Māori, not adhering to Te Tiriti principles, and a need for greater emphasis on Te Tiriti across the whole of government.

Bureaucracy, criteria and other access issues

Children and young people talked about how ‘the system’ can get in the way of a good life. The system usually meant Oranga Tamariki, Police, their school, the health system or Work and Income. Young people in care talked about how they didn’t know what support they were eligible for and only learned about financial supports when other young people they knew got them. Some young people said they didn’t feel that professionals such as their doctor, teacher or social worker understood them. They talked about their frustration with the services designed to support them and how they don’t understand what professionals are telling them or what is required of them.

I've done all of these things, but nothing changes. Will all of Oranga Tamariki make a change? No little white lies.

Young person (pg.37*)

Adults also identified a range of barriers to children, young people and their families and whānau accessing the services they need. Cost of services, the indirect costs associated with accessing the services like transport or school uniforms, and long waiting lists were all identified as barriers to accessing appropriate services. Co-locating services where children spend their time, such as schools and marae, and increasing home visits and bringing the specialists to rural communities were suggested solutions to increase access.

There's a problem of accessibility: secondary students need a free school bus service, or there needs to be a new school built.

Adult

Health literacy, a general lack of knowledge about what supports were available and what they were eligible for, and difficulties navigating systems to gain access to services were also identified as significant barriers. Some of the families we engaged with told us how helpful the ‘navigators’ provided through Whānau Ora had been at addressing some of these issues.

The navigators are really helpful. They help find support through means other than WINZ to help, like stationery and food parcels. They also help with the organisation stuff. The financial stuff [budgeting advice] is good and they are helping you get prioritised and organised WINZ

Adult

Adults also talked about experiences of different government agencies providing contradictory information or advice. There was a feeling that no one was willing to help and that agencies were referring families to each other in order to not have to be the one to “deal with the problem”.

There needs to be one government with one goal - no ‘wrong door’ for us to enter.

Adult

A lack of capability or knowledge about how to navigate the requirements of “bureaucracy” was also identified as a barrier by support people working within the system. Service providers and NGOs in particular spoke about needing to hire someone specifically to manage the complicated administrative requirements of their contracts with government agencies.

We also heard that a lack of kaupapa Māori services is a barrier for many Māori, and a lack of cultural safety within mainstream services creates a barrier for Māori to participate. They told us that there is a need for Māori to create Māori services, as mainstream services are not working for Māori. There was also an expectation that all Māori, regardless of where they live, should have the option of access to Māori services.

Support that comes too late or only addresses a small part of the problem

A common criticism from adults was that government agencies are not operating in a way that meets the needs of children, young people, and their whānau. High thresholds and restrictive eligibility criteria, were also identified as significant barriers. Adults told us they felt that the system does not appear to value the health and wellbeing of children, young people and their whānau. At the Ministry of Health workshops, participants identified that services are often focused on intervention during crisis, and on treating illness rather than prevention, particularly around mental health and behavioural issues. The “ambulance at the bottom of the cliff” was a common phrase that occurred throughout the engagement process.

Some adults spoke of falling in the gaps between agencies’ criteria or services, and having to wait until problems got much worse before they could get the access they needed (e.g. a child, parent or family whose needs couldn’t be met by the mainstream services but whose needs weren’t serious enough to qualify for the more intensive intervention services). Many of the adults who worked within the system, such as service providers or public servants, felt that the underlying funding system and organisational structures of government agencies was a significant barrier; it incentivises competition instead of collaboration between agencies.

Not receiving a quality education

A lack of a quality education was a common theme identified as a major barrier by adults. Children and young people's lack of education was seen as a barrier to their future wellbeing, while parents' lack of education was seen as a barrier to their children and young people's current wellbeing.

A number of general, and some specific, barriers within the education system were identified as getting in the way of children and young people receiving a quality education. These included funding related things like "stressed school system", "under resourced schools", and "ECE subsidy is not enough", "not enough specialist teachers", and "lack of resources". Adults also identified some of the costs associated with education as barriers, for example uniforms, transport or student loans. There were barriers identified around teaching and the curriculum including outdated teaching methods, the breadth or depth of subjects being taught, and a lack of relevance to life skills.

Some people expressed the need for greater opportunities for whānau, as a whole, to continue education. There was also specific focus on the role that Early Childhood Education could play in enhancing child health and wellbeing.

Working with young people in isolation as issues and problems vs holistic and integrated support for them as a whole person

Adult

Education was also raised as an issue by children and young people. They mostly talked about education and learning as a thing that is important for their wellbeing, but many identified barriers within the education system. For some the education system is not serving them well.

We go to school having a 'bad as' morning, we can't talk to them about it because they don't care and then you get kicked out of school.

Young person (pg.43*)

They talked about some of the costs associated with education, and how education needed to be funded so that all schools have equal resources and facilities. They talked about the stress that school can cause in their lives and specifically mentioned the NCEA system as not being helpful and being very stressful. They said that it needs to be okay to fail and that they want schools to be more accepting and respectful. 'What' children and young people learn at school was frequently mentioned. They called for more life skills to be taught at school.

Not listening to children, families, and communities

An overarching theme across the engagement was that government agencies do not listen or, if they do listen, they do not act on what they heard. There was a clear call for greater partnership with communities in co-design, decision-making and delivery of services, in addition to the need to listen to the voices of our tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau.

At the face-to-face engagements, many adults expressed frustration around previous government public consultation exercises, with many participants feeling they are having the same conversations over and over, or have not been listened to in the past.

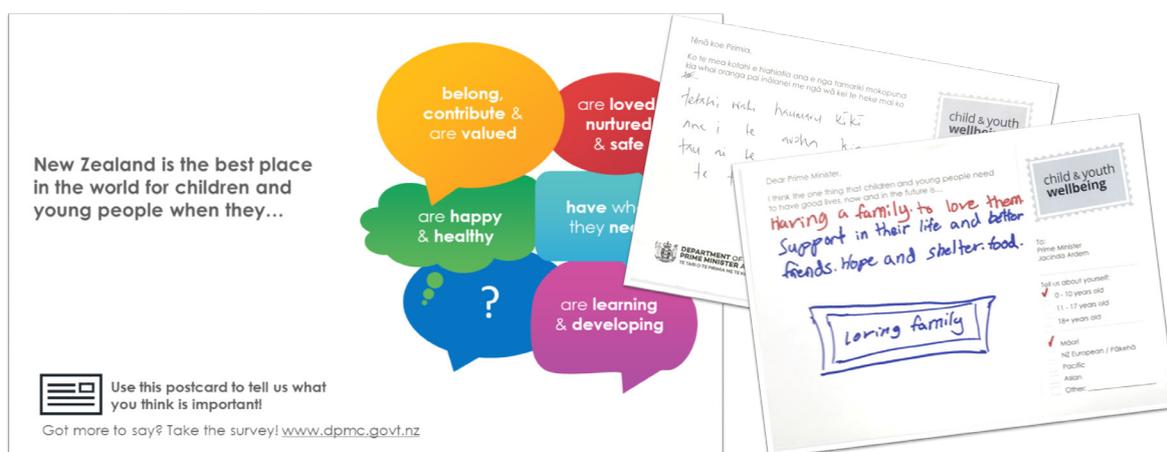
There was also a degree of mistrust. Questions were raised as to whether this engagement process would be like many others that government agencies undertake, which have very few outcomes. People felt that they had heard these messages and promises of change before, but little change had eventuated. Pacific attendees in particular felt that Pacific values are often ignored or their importance diminished.

Could you please listen to us?

Adult

The 'one thing' children and young people need

The 'Postcard to the Prime Minister' was a way for children, young people and adults to express their "big ideas" directly with the Prime Minister. The postcard was available online, and in hard copy at the face-to-face engagements. Additionally, both the adult and children's surveys also asked the question "What is the one thing you want to tell the Prime Minister about what children need to have good lives, now and in the future?"



A total of 2,007 adults and 3,761 children and young people answered this question. Around 400 of the responses from children and young people and all the responses from adults were analysed by the child wellbeing unit using a combination of computer automated text analysis techniques and a manual coding system. The remaining responses from children and young people were analysed by the *What makes a good life?* team. The key themes and findings from their analysis were similar, and have also incorporated in this section.

There was a huge range of responses - from single word answers such as "Love", to responses that were over 500 words, covering many different topics and concepts. On average, each response was about 40 words and contained 4-5 different themes. For example:

They need hope that they will have a voice to be heard. They need love to be the most prominent part of their lives. They need understanding that uniqueness is a hallmark of who they are and should be embraced. They need fun, laughter, playfulness and space to be free to explore in nature.

Adult

To have the support they need to absolutely 100% without a doubt believe in their inherent value as human beings that they know are important, that they feel safe, that they feel like they belong in their communities and have support to be themselves in every aspect of their hauora.

Young person

The most common themes that were raised are discussed below. This is not an extensive list of all the issues talked about by children, adults, and young people.

...more support for their family and whānau

'Family and whānau' was one of the most common themes. The people who talked about family and whānau also talked a lot about support, education, money, homes, employment, and love. Having loving, supportive parents, family and whānau who spend quality time with their children was identified by children, young people and adults as one of the most important things that children and young people need to have good lives.

I think a good life is where your parents are there to support you and look after you and help you when you're in need. I feel safe around my Mum and Dad because they provide food for me, keep me healthy and safe, they take me to my after school activities if I need a lift. When I feel emotional, my mum is always there to listen to me when I'm upset. She understands what I'm going through. My dad makes me happy and tells bad dad jokes! They take me to school to educate me. I think family is the most important thing in our lives because they love and support and help you.

Young person

Children, young people and adults told the Prime Minister that we need to provide parents, families and whānau with more support. The wellbeing of the family is essential to the wellbeing of the child.

I have grown up with family being around me constantly and I think having family and good friends around children and young people do make a massive contribution to their journey. What is most important is the parents are just as supported as the children because what affects the child affects the family as a whole. Finding long-term solutions for our families will be great :)

Adult

Adults talked about how government, employers, and society more widely need to value and recognise the importance of parenting.

More focus on valuing the role of families as the centre of health and wellbeing for children. Through the use of the media (education) and providing employment opportunities, social community events all things that promote a parents sense of healthy connection with their children.

Adult

Children, young people and adults also spoke about providing more financial support, or better working conditions to enable parents to spend quality time and provide for their children.

The ability for our parents and care givers to take care of us with one job. That means that our parents have more time with us and are less tired. And we have more money.

Young person

Many adults talked about providing support through parenting programmes or educating parents about the emotional and practical skills and knowledge needed to raise children, particularly where parents had had poor role models themselves. This included specific suggestions about teaching things like nutrition, financial literacy, how to use positive reinforcement, set boundaries, and how to talk to kids in a way that supports growth and development.

Just because it was / is does not mean it needs to be! Educated whānau who don't just become parents but are made good parents through education and support. It is time to break the cycle and that means support at the beginning not at the end when it becomes expensive and often can be too late.

Adult

...investment in education

Education was a very common theme that emerged, with references to education, schools, teachers and childcare. Education was widely talked about as a positive thing and an enabler for a better future. Adults talked about an investment in education as an investment in the future. Children and young people told us over and over again about the importance of learning. They know that education can help to set them up for success in life and help them achieve their aspirations.

I believe education is the key to unlocking anyone's potential. Investing in our schools to provide all children with greater opportunities and aspirations for themselves and their futures is key to children leading better lives now and in the future.

Adult

Having a better education so they can be something big when they grow up and have enough money to support their future family and future generation.

Young person

One of the most common things adults talked about in regards to education was the need for more funding and resourcing for education providers and making education cheaper. This included specific suggestions such as additional resourcing for low decile schools, and more support staff and learning support services. A lot of children and young people also told us that education needs to be cheaper, but they were more likely to focus on the costs that impacted on their parents, such as uniforms, supplies and lunches. There were recommendations from children, young people and adults to fund other non-educational services such as social workers, counsellors, and nurses through schools. Both adults and children suggested that schools should provide food, especially low decile schools.

Curriculum content and delivery also featured often, with children and adults alike suggesting that education should be more relevant to 'real life'. This included a greater focus on things like budgeting, self-care, social skills, and resilience to prepare them for life beyond the classroom, as well as 'learning how to learn' to prepare them for a rapidly changing workforce. Te Reo Māori, New Zealand history, and sexuality education (including healthy relationships and consent) were specific subjects that children, young people and adults suggested the education system needs more of, or to do better in. Children and young people also wanted education to be more interesting, fun, and responsive to who they are as an individual. This included things like a request for more sports, longer lunchtimes, more arts, nicer teachers, more one-on-one support, and less exams or pressure to get high grades.

Children need great education and an education system that doesn't fail them, to give them the best possible chance at life. I think the education system is somewhat flawed. I think subjects like budgeting, understanding economics, money, loans, and other real life issues that we all face is vital and I wish that someone had of taught me this in high school.

Adult

I do love school and learning however being tested doesn't benefit all students. An exam or test is a fact vomit, it is about cramming in everything so you get a good grade. Everyone is unique and saying they are and not taking it into consideration that everyone learns differently is limiting our future. I know you will most likely not read this but if you do please learn about Finland's school system.

Young person

...people who support, love and accept them

There were many comments about the importance of relationships that provide children and young people with a feeling of support, love and acceptance. Having a support network and the certainty that they have someone they can trust, rely on for support, and look up to was important to children and young people's wellbeing. There was a large cross-over with the 'family and whānau' theme (discussed above) particularly when talking about younger children. Providing for children's and young people's emotional needs was also talked about in the context of peers, friends and other important adults in the children's lives such as teachers, older siblings, friends' parents and youth workers.

Aroha. Kei te aro auki to hā. Unconditional love. Whakaatu te aroha, whakaako i te aroha, mā te mana o te aroha ka puawai, ka tipu, ka ora te tamaiti. Show love, images of what love is on media, TV, marketing. More courses and gatherings of love, sharing and caring for others. Have more teachers with heart, true heart for the holistic-ness of the child and their whānau, not just their education.

Adult

To find a love for learning and to be supported by the people around them, both their whānau and government. To never have to live with a lack of love.

Young person (pg.53*)

Children, young people and adults talked about the importance of people being accepted for who they are, and being free to explore and develop their culture and identity. Adults were also more likely to talk specifically about children learning about their culture and heritage in regards to ethnicity, whereas children and young people talked about their identity more broadly – e.g. their sexuality, their friends, who they wanted to be or what they wanted to achieve. Discrimination and bullying also came up frequently.

I think we should all treat people the same even if they're different they should be respected.

Young person

A future that allows all children/youth from every ethnic background to have a promising future. As a young Muslim wearing a headscarf (hijab)... If we could find a way to change systematic discrimination, it would be beneficial towards all Muslim women. Thank you.

Young person (pg.52*)

For all children to feel they have the ability to be their best selves, without having their gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status define them.

Adult

An important part of being accepted, particularly for marginalised groups, was finding people who understand them and who they could relate to. Some young people explicitly noted how, in their experience, their parents or the other adults in their life (including professionals) weren't able to provide this support because they weren't able to relate to them, or those people lacked the emotional and social skills or experience to provide that support.

Someone who the youth can talk to. I am 14 years old and I'm not religious so I don't have many youth groups that I can go to. If you add the fact that I'm gay on top of that I pretty much have nowhere where I can meet new people (other than school). It would be great to see more support towards the LGBTQI+ community. I just want someone to understand what we go through.

Young person

To know that they are important/valued. They have a place in this world, they belong to groups of people that love and care for them, and whom they can identify with. For my community (deaf and hearing impaired children) this is not the norm. ...other kids may struggle identifying with peers, but they can link/identify/see their future in family/whānau. Not so the case for our kids. Wellbeing results from knowing who you are and being connected with others like you.

Adult

...enough money for the basics, plus a little bit more

Money, and the cost of things, came up in about a quarter of the postcards. Housing featured in about a quarter of the postcards, while food and other basics needs like clothing featured in about 15% of responses.

Many children and young people stressed that everyone should have their basic needs met. This was the most common theme identified in the messages to the Prime Minister in the *What Makes a Good Life* report. Food and having a good house were frequently mentioned, and some children worried about the homeless or other children who might not have the basics like shoes, lunch or somewhere safe and warm to sleep. Adults also talked about raising benefit levels, addressing poverty, and helping families who were struggling.

Money. There are lots of poor people. Don't say mean things like 'GET A JOB' and walk away. Do this, go to them and say 'Here have some more money it might help you.' Give some money to poor people. So I hope I have convinced you and the government to give poor people money.

Child

I think that it is incredibly important that families have enough money to be able to pay for basic things like food, clothing, bills and other necessities. When children go to school hungry or without enough warm clothing it impacts their ability to learn, communicate and participate in class. Without being able to do these basic things, it can impact their future career, and most importantly their wellbeing.

Young person

Children, young people and adults also spoke about how 'just enough', is not enough. Many families are getting by, but still struggling financially. They have housing, but not quality housing; they can provide food, clothes and other essentials, but special occasions like birthdays and Christmas required saving all year, and they struggled to afford the 'extras' like activities on the weekend or school trips.

Parents play the most important role in a child's development and future. At-risk families need the financial and developmental support to thrive, not just get by. The future depends on the start kids and families get now.

Adult

Relating to your question as to what makes a good life for children and young people in Aotearoa lots of things come to my mind, but one thing stands out to me because I relate to it. That is never worrying about running out of resources such as money. There have been times in my life where my family has been able to spend money on things that we don't need and not have to worry about having enough left over to pay for things that we do need, like food and rent. Those times were the best because there was no stress in our household and I could get cool things like new books, games, video games, and consoles without ever stressing out about being broke. So these are my reasons for why never having to worry about running out of money is one the most important aspects of a good life.

Young person

Is to spend more time with family and if they are poor they still get to do all the cool and fun activities that we get to do.

Child

...support for their mental and physical health

Health featured commonly in responses from children, young people, and adults, with references to physical or mental health - people often talked about health as both. Spiritual health was mentioned in other parts of the engagement, but did not feature as strongly in the postcard responses.

To have good health. By having good health I mean to have good healthy food, clean water, do exercise and have a good medical treatment. Education is one of the most important things, we should all be allowed to have a good and free education. That way we can have opportunities in our lives and we can build a good life for ourselves. Mental and social health are really important and necessary in our day to day because young people want and need to know that they are loved and respected for who they are. Mental health is important because that way we make good decisions in our lives.

Young person

Children typically focused on physical health, e.g. eating healthy and getting exercise as important for their wellbeing. Children and young people also asked for better supports for those with a disability, and wanted children and young people to be able to go to the doctor or the dentist when they need to. Young people sent messages about providing more support for mental and sexual health. This included wanting better education about health issues, and a request for more counsellors. Adults talked about more affordable and accessible health services, particularly for rural communities and disadvantaged children. Hours outside school/work time, services such as dentists, nurses and counselling located within schools, and transport assistance were all suggestions to make services more accessible.

Access to facilities to keep me healthy (physically and mentally) and the ability to achieve my goals in life.

Young person

More public awareness around anonymous mental health counselling sites for teenagers. We have 1737 but often people don't know about it, or aren't sure if or how they can access it. Also, making sure it's completely anonymous, so parents or guardians can't trace it...

Adult

A lot of children, young people, and adults also talked about having access to healthy food and good homes (i.e. warm, dry, clean and healthy) as important to children and young people's health. More visible services, and educating parents about things like nutrition, breastfeeding, and the importance of maternal health and the first 1000 days of infant development, were also common themes for adults.

The first 1000 days from conception are the most important part of a child's development. Support through nutrition, housing and healthcare are a vital first step in early intervention.

Adult

I have more than one thing but I would like to enforce the cost of food issue. I care for children as an in-home educator and the lunch boxes of the lower income children are basically just sugar and junk food that leads to teeth issues and other issues as well e.g. concentration levels etc. I cannot afford it myself but every day I take that food out and supply them with a shared kai of fresh fruit and vegetables, I also grow certain vegetables with the children. It is not their fault they are not getting fed healthy food for healthy brain and body development and it is also not the parents' fault. It is the fact they cannot afford to buy or the parents are not educated properly

Adult

...to be heard and considered in decisions that impact on their lives

Children and young people wrote that they wanted to be respected, listened to, taken seriously, and have their opinions taken into account when decisions were made that affected them. Adults also advocated strongly for children's voices and rights to be better recognised.

The ability to be heard and taken seriously on what they have to say

Young person

No family violence and no court. Kids have rights don't force kids to do stuff they don't want to.

Child

Children need to be recognised as active participants who can contribute to society and can contribute ideas and views on matters affecting them. Their inclusion in decision making on matters affecting them should be taken more seriously by our government

Adult

Children and young people need political representation to influence policy development, decision making and, most importantly, the allocation of resources. For example, we could give the parents of children under the age of 18 years old some additional voting rights on behalf of their children. Let's think outside the box!

Adult

Some children and young people spoke of very specific rights they should be entitled to. Some of these appeared to relate to personal experience, where they had felt a lack of control or that they were being forced to do something because adults didn't listen or take their objections seriously enough. In some cases these were very serious in nature⁵.

⁵ Note there was a process in place to ensure sensitive disclosures were handled appropriately.

To not have to share your personal details with your peers. Like weight and height because it had to do with a maths lesson.

Young person

For family court to listen to their wishes and views. Not placed with an abusive parent who tells them he does not love them, teaches them to lie and deceive, makes belittling remarks about their mum, calls them names, hits them, shows them pornography and drugs. A child should have the right to say no to these things. Not be forced into his care.

Young person

If a child has worked at an official workplace part time for more than a year then they should be entitled to the minimum wage.

Young person

... equal opportunities, no matter who they are

Fairness was a theme identified in the *What makes a Good Life* report and reinforced in the wider thematic analysis. Children and young people wrote messages about how they wanted everyone to have equal chances to do well in life and have fair opportunities. Adults also talked about equal opportunities and equity of outcomes.

I think all children need to start on the same platform, all with strong family relationships, food, shelter and necessities, as well as being able to go to school feeling happy and safe. If all children have this same platform then they are getting a better start to life and adulthood. I also believe that not all schools allow the same opportunities - I strongly believe that all children in New Zealand need to be offered the same opportunities so they have an equal and fair chance of being successful. I think if all children have the same skills and knowledge then they will be better supported for the future.

Young person (pg.53*)

Children, young people and adults talked about how all children deserve a chance to participate in social activities, express themselves creatively, and have fun.

Some more time to relax. Lunch and morning tea can be really hectic, busy and tiring. As a result we aren't quite ready for learning. We need some time, even as little as 10 minutes to do a relaxing activity. Some examples are reading, yoga, and art. Reading helps you learn, but the quiet environment is very beneficial. Yoga makes you physically and mentally stronger. Art helps your creativity and it's a good way to express yourself. All of these activities make you happier and you doesn't want that?!

Young person

Other themes

Being and feeling safe, both at home and in the community, was frequently mentioned. There was significant cross-over between the 'safety' theme and the other main themes such as 'having their basic needs met' and 'people who love, support and accept them'. Children felt safe when these things were in place and became, or felt, unsafe when these things were absent.

Many children and young people talked about caring for the environment, with a particular emphasis on climate change, banning plastic, and "saving sea creatures". Some children and young people felt protecting the environment was important for the future, while others wanted clean beaches and parks to play in, and to go fishing or hunting.

Adults, children and young people also talked about the harmful impacts of family violence, gangs, and smoking, alcohol and drugs on children's wellbeing. Issues or concerns about family court, and the care and protection system were also common themes. Adults also talked about the systems and settings needed across government to enable an effective strategy; such as collaboration between agencies, long term commitment and early investment. They also talked about children needing stability, consistency, discipline, to be taught right from wrong, and things like resilience.

Children also asked the Prime Minister for specific things, like a giant chocolate fountain, a kitten, or more sports equipment. Some children just told her she was doing a good job or congratulated her on having a baby. A few children mentioned their political views or gave advice to her about matters of State

More support and increased ties with other countries like Russia, Iran, Iraq and Kuwait. Fiji also and USA. The commonwealth at any point can fail, so in any case of war, it's good to have backup with USA, Russia, Kuwait. I would like to be in the cabinet one day.

Young person

Feedback on the proposed Outcomes Framework

This section talks about the specific feedback we received about the proposed Outcomes Framework (see Appendix Two). The Outcomes Framework was not typically discussed with children and young people, so this feedback predominantly represents adult's views. However we did consult with a small number of young people about the Outcomes Framework and their views have also been incorporated. We therefore use the term 'people' in this section.

Feedback on the vision statement

People were asked to comment on the vision through the survey, the face-to-face engagements, and through the written submission process. They were told:

A "vision" is one sentence that describes what we hope that the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy will achieve. The proposed vision for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is:

"New Zealand is the best place in the world for children and young people."
"Ko Aotearoa te tino whenua o te ao mō te tamariki me te rangatahi"

Just over 1,128 people responded to this question through the adult's survey, and 37 of the written submissions provided direct feedback about the vision. People also provided feedback on the vision through the face-to-face engagements.

About a quarter of adult survey responses were neither affirmational nor critical of the vision. These responses typically included: statements that it was an ambitious goal; the reasons why New Zealand is not currently the best place in the world; and what actions the Government or the Strategy should take to achieve the vision.

Many people thought it was a good and ambitious vision

Over 40% of the survey responses included affirmational statements such as "I love it", "great vision", and 19 of the 37 submissions that comment on the vision were fully supportive of the vision statement. People also noted its aspirational nature and that we have a long way to go, and a lot of work to do, before we can achieve it. Many also emphasised the importance of collective responsibility and urged the Government to make a long term commitment to achieving it.

Ka rawe! I love that it's positive and aspirational. But government must be prepared to do the mahi to make it reality, and fight for our tamariki. This is too important to be a political party issue, we need to make it happen because it's the right thing, make it a baseline and not something that's going to shift with any government changes.

Adult

The board supports the vision set out in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. It is ambitious and sets high aspirations to reach for, but this is necessary to overcome the severe levels of poverty and deprivation that currently exist.

Manurewa Local Board

Some people suggested the vision could be improved with minor revisions

While the majority of comments on the vision were supportive, other feedback suggested minor changes to the wording of the vision to reinforce some of the wider themes that came through feedback. A common suggestion in the written submissions and survey responses was to include “all” children and young people in the vision statement, to emphasise a focus on equity and to ensure the inclusion of those in society who have little visibility and voice.

Child and Youth Friendly Christchurch (CYFC) congratulates the New Zealand Government on its vision to make “New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people”. We fully support a prioritisation of the needs of children and youth, many of which have no voice in the political process as they are too young to vote. CYFC would like to suggest that the word “all” be placed before the word “children”, to emphasise the importance of equity.

Child and Youth Friendly Christchurch

Another common suggestion was to include reference to family and whānau, to acknowledge that children’s wellbeing is strongly influenced by the wellbeing of their family and whānau, and to encourage a whole of family approach to wellbeing.

‘New Zealand is the best place in the world for children, young people **and their families**’ *[emphasis added]* - Children and young people cannot be separated from their context - so family wellbeing is vital to this vision.

Adult

People also appreciated that effort was made to have the vision statement in both English and Te Reo Māori, noting more widely the importance of the revival of Te Reo. There was also support for the use of Aotearoa rather than, or as well as, New Zealand within the English translations i.e. “**Aotearoa** New Zealand is the best place in the world for children and young people”.

There was a group who did not relate to, or feel inspired by, the vision

Around a quarter of the people who commented on the vision did not like the vision statement or did not feel any connection to the vision. The most common reason people did not like the vision was because of the phrase “best in the world”. About 10% of respondents felt it was too vague or ill-defined and wanted to see the definition of ‘best’, to know how we intend to measure it, or to see a qualifier added to the end of the vision. Another 10% of people critiqued the use of “best in the world” because of its comparative nature. They felt it was needlessly competitive, positions cultural diversity as a negative thing or positions ‘improving the status of New Zealand’ as the focus of the Strategy, rather than improving the wellbeing of children and young people.

Why does it have to be the best place? It's not a competition. Where is the focus on safe, free from harm, where children's needs and rights are given priority? Where children are seen as equal to adults?

Adult

For some Pacific Peoples spending some time in the Islands their family comes from is also very important culturally. The vision limits their potential – young people get inspiration and opportunities overseas too. The vision suggests that New Zealand has to be the best place but it is not the only place that they can thrive. Children are part of a global society.

Adult

For others, they could not relate to the vision because, for them, the distance between the vision and the reality was too wide and it therefore felt unrealistic. This was particularly true for people living in low income households or more disadvantaged communities. They felt that it was so ambitious that it failed to recognise the experiences of many New Zealanders and reinforced a feeling that the Government does not see them. They wanted a vision that inspired hope for a better future but still recognised their lived reality.

We have a long way to go to be able to believe that this could be a vision that will be fulfilled. It is a bold statement that needs to be more realistic and honest with what our children and young people are facing today.

Adult

The vision makes it seem like the government is focused on making New Zealand the best place in the world when locally crime is high, abuse is a lived experience for many, and children don't have lunch, shoes or somewhere safe to sleep.... Communities need to be able to buy into the vision statement and the Strategy more widely because at the end of the day the regions / locals buying into the Strategy will be the most important factor to the success or failure of the Strategy.

Adult

Feedback on the principles

People were provided with an opportunity to comment on the principles through the face-to-face engagements and the written submission process.

There was widespread support for the intent of the seven principles

There was broad agreement and support for the seven principles as being very important things, which often led to a discussion on how they could be better applied in practice and what this might mean for the Strategy. In particular, there was significant discussion around how there needed to be a stronger application of: principle 2, and how family wellbeing will be considered within the Strategy; and principle 4, and how the Strategy will honour the Crown's commitment to the Treaty.

A small number of people provided us with feedback about how to change or improve the principles. This included general feedback that the language of some of the principles could be reworded to better reflect the "definition of a principle" - a statement which is a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour. We were also told that the principles needed to be reviewed to better represent a Te Ao Māori view, particularly through the inclusion of some concepts such as Whanaungatanga and Manaakitanga.

The Treaty of Waitangi | Te Tiriti o Waitangi needs to be more than a 'token' principle

The majority of the Māori engagement hui and Ministry of Health workshops featured strong feedback that the Treaty and the unique relationship of the Crown to tamariki and rangatahi Māori needed to be better woven throughout the Outcomes Framework, and into the Strategy. This included the actions or decisions that come out of the Strategy. About a quarter of the written submissions also reinforced the importance of respecting the Treaty, with many providing practical advice or suggestions about how to do so.

While there was very strong support and acknowledgement of the foundational role of the Treaty and its role as a fundamental principle to the Strategy, many felt that they could not see it reflected elsewhere in the draft Outcomes Framework. Some people expressed a frustration that the inclusion of the Treaty under principles was a tokenistic gesture. Suggestions included that: the reference should be to “Te Tiriti o Waitangi” rather than the “Treaty of Waitangi”; Māori should be acknowledged as tangata whenua; and there should be an explicit goal of equity in outcomes for Māori. A small proportion of people felt strongly that the Treaty should be separated out from, or given greater prominence than, the other underpinning principles. This would acknowledge its significant status as a founding document between the Crown and the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Some people also suggested that the wording of this principle inadvertently implied that the Crown intends to work in partnership with Māori and/or meet the obligations of Treaty only in reference to the “promotion of wellbeing”. They stressed that the role of the Treaty in child and youth wellbeing includes much wider obligations and responsibilities of the Crown to Māori.

The Strategy is an opportunity to recognise and reaffirm our human rights obligations

There was strong support for the inclusion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and significant commentary about how to apply it. This included using the Strategy to promote or mandate the use of the Child Impact Assessment Tool. The absence of acknowledgment and reference to other international obligations was noted by some, including: the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Feedback on the proposed five domains of wellbeing

People were asked to comment on the proposed domains of wellbeing through the face-to-face engagements, written submissions, and the survey included the following questions:

We have identified five key areas of wellbeing. These are:

Children and young people...

- are happy and healthy | e harikoa ana, e noho hauora ana
- are loved, nurtured and safe | e arohatia ana, e poiipoia ana, e haumarua ana
- have what they need | e tutuki ana o rātou hiahia
- belong, contribute and are valued | e whai wāhi ana, e tautoko ana, e tiakina ana hei kura
- are learning and developing | e ako ana, e whanake ana

How well do the five key areas cover what good wellbeing means to you?

Not at all A little bit Somewhat Mostly Completely

What is good wellbeing in your own words?

The majority of people felt that the five domains were pretty good

Approximately 91% of people responding to the adult survey thought that the five domains either mostly or completely covered what good wellbeing means to them. Māori were slightly less likely to agree that the proposed five domains covered what "good wellbeing" means to them; this was a small, but statistically significant difference. There was no significant difference in answers from Pacific Peoples or low income households compared to all other respondents.

Table 1: Responses to "How well do the five key areas cover what good wellbeing means to you?"

	1 Not at all	2 A little bit	3 Somewhat	4 Mostly	5 Completely	Total Responses	Weighted Average
Māori	0.7% (2)	3% (8)	11% (30)	40% (112)	46% (127)	279	4.27
All	0.5% (8)	2% (28)	7% (112)	43% (714)	48% (780)	1,642	4.36

Include a focus on family and whānau or relational wellbeing

We compared the responses of the 148 people (9%) who felt the five key areas didn't really cover what wellbeing meant to them (i.e. somewhat, a little bit, or not at all) to those who thought that the domains were pretty good. The biggest difference between the two groups was that the former was more likely to use "family" and "whānau" and less likely to use "love", "care" or "nurture" when describing 'good wellbeing' in their own words.

There was overwhelming support for prioritising the “Have what you need” domain. People also told us that if we were to use a linear model, it was important to order it so that the “have what they need” domain comes first. This would reflect Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and the order in which people typically agreed government should prioritise its efforts.

Models of wellbeing that better reflect a Te Ao Māori worldview

We received feedback at various engagements and in submissions that the Outcomes Framework needs to better incorporate Te Ao Māori concepts and perspectives. In particular, we heard that the Outcomes Framework should take a whānau-centred approach and should incorporate wairuatanga (spirituality). Suggestions to better reflect Te Ao Māori concepts of wellbeing included adding more domains or, more commonly, using existing wellbeing frameworks (i.e. Te Pae Mahutonga, the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework, Te Whare Tapa Whā, and the Whānau Rangatiratanga Framework). One submission proposed an entirely new wellbeing framework structured around Te Ao Māori concepts.

There is a well-documented challenge in producing universal indicators of wellbeing, that include or have any impact in supporting indigenous or minority population wellbeing, (Durie, 2006; Cram 2014). There is little visibility in these identified areas of a Te Ao Maori worldview (e.g. taha wairua). It would be good to see the Strategy more fully reflect a Te Tiriti based framework of relationships and ways of being...

Adult

Feedback on the outcome statements

The outcomes need to be well defined and measurable

There was a clear message to move away from measuring outputs (‘widgets’) and towards outcome measures. A number of people raised concern or noted that some of the outcome descriptions were subjective and questioned their relevance to a government strategy. There was also concern that they were phrased in a way that was open to interpretation. We heard that it is important that they are well defined, that accountability and measurement is important, and that we should aim for continuous improvement. We received questions, concerns, and advice about how the outcomes could be measured.

The outcomes need to include more references to family, whānau and community

We received clear feedback that family, whānau and community needed a greater presence in the outcome statements.

There needs to be a stronger focus on youth and young people

We had feedback that many of the outcome statements were focused predominantly on children or younger teenagers. We received a range of suggestions to improve the outcome statements to better reflect all youth, including adding some additional outcomes specific to youth.

We received a range of feedback on specific wording and outcomes that could be added/removed

We received a range of detailed feedback and suggests on the wording of the outcome statements. Some of the suggestions were about how to frame the statements more positively. A number of people recommended adding more detail to the statements. This included explicitly noting that health included oral health or spiritual health etc., or that being accepted for who they are included being accepted for their culture, gender, sexuality etc. We also got recommendations to include additional references to Te Reo Māori concepts. We also received a lot feedback that, overall, we needed to make the wording simpler and use more plain language.

We received a range of feedback about additional outcomes that could or should be included, but also feedback suggesting the number of outcomes should be reduced in order to focus government actions on the things that were most important.

Feedback on the proposed 16 Focus Areas

In the adults survey we asked people to select the six areas that they thought government should prioritise first. The question technically allowed respondents to select as many or as few options as they wanted. Most people chose six options, however several people selected all of them (and commented that they all needed to be prioritised equally). A total of 1,578 people responded to this question.

The table below shows the areas that people prioritised - from most common to least common.

Ensuring homes are safe, loving and free from violence and criminal activity	74%
Reducing the number of children and young people in poverty	58%
Supporting mental wellbeing	50%
Housing quality and affordability	48%
Enabling healthy lifestyles (nutritious food, exercise and sleep)	38%
Social and emotional development of young children (ages 2-6)	35%
Building skills and knowledge for life	34%
Support during conception, pregnancy and for parents of young children (under 2 years)	33%
Resources and access to services for disadvantaged children	32%
Addressing bullying and building positive social skills	31%
Enabling quality time with family and whānau	27%
Ensuring cultural identity is recognised, enhanced and supported	24%
Freedom from racism, discrimination, and stigma	22%
Children and young people's autonomy and rights (eg. ability to be heard and participate in decisions)	20%
Ensuring children are able to play and have fun	20%
Opportunities for young people transitioning to employment	19%
Opportunities and outcomes for children with disabilities	18%
Enabling young people to make positive, informed choices (eg. about alcohol / sexual relationships)	17%
<i>Something not on this list (please specify)</i>	17%
Contributing to civic life and the protection of the environment	7%
Reducing accidental injury (eg. road accidents, drowning)	4%

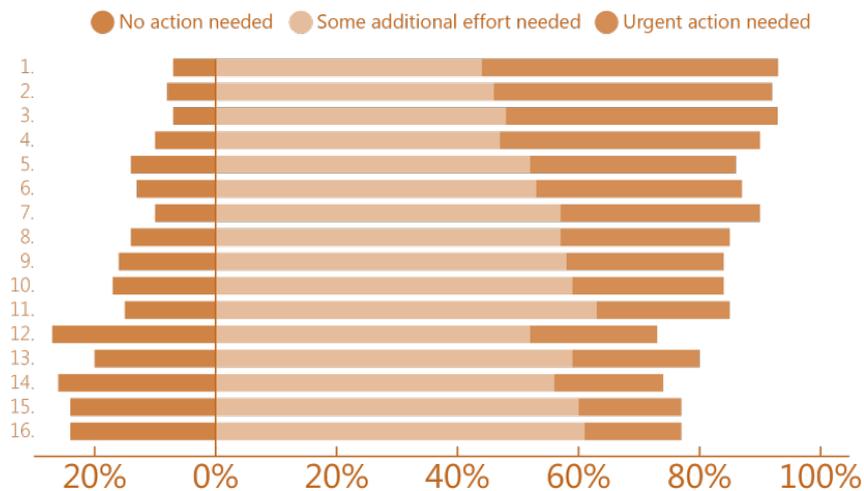
The responses to this survey question are generally consistent with what people typically talked about in the open-ended questions. For example safety and poverty were some of the most frequently discussed topics, and accidental injury and the environment were infrequently mentioned.

People were also asked to pick the one area that had the greatest personal importance to them and provide some ideas about what would make a difference in this area. Many organisations and individual practitioners and professionals who sent written submissions also provided detailed suggestions, research or evidence about what works in their area of expertise.

Secondary school students completing the survey were asked how much attention they thought the government should place on a list of different areas to improve child and youth wellbeing. Possible responses were:

- No additional government action is needed
- Additional government efforts would help, as there is room for improvement
- Government effort is urgently needed.

The figure below shows their responses across sixteen different areas.



1. Children and young people who experience poverty or disadvantage are supported to have their needs met
2. All children and young people and their whānau have enough money to pay for basics like food and clothing
3. Children and young people live in affordable, good quality housing
4. Children and young people’s mental and emotional wellbeing is supported
5. Children and young people are free from racism and are not treated badly if they are different
6. Children and young people with disabilities are supported to reach their full potential
7. All children and young people have the best possible education and training to succeed in their future
8. Children get the best possible start in life, starting with a healthy mum during pregnancy
9. Children and young people are safe and nurtured by their family/whānau
10. Children and young people are supported to make positive life choices
11. Children and young people and their whānau have the skills and knowledge to lead healthy lives
12. Culture is recognised and supported
13. Children are supported with their whānau to thrive in their early years (ages 2-6)
14. Children and young people are safe during travel or play
15. Children and young people have good relationships with peers and adults
16. Children and young people are supported to be involved in their community

Key insights for the Strategy

There were a number of key themes that were raised over and over throughout the engagement. Things like family and whānau, equity and community. Even when we didn't ask explicitly what this means for the Strategy, some key messages came through loud and clear. These key messages have been summarised below.

Change is needed, and it is needed now

There was enormous support for a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. At nearly every face-to-face engagement with adults, and in many of the responses to the survey and in the written submissions, people told us that they had high hopes that something real and tangible will come from the Strategy. Almost every child, young person and adult could name something that needs to be improved for children and young people in New Zealand. This was not limited to people who said they were currently struggling. People who indicated that their wellbeing needs were being met also said that change was needed, to help others. They wanted government to take action to make this happen.

There was also a sense of urgency to make some changes quickly. Many felt that they had heard messages and promises of change before, but little change had eventuated. Some adults talked about previous strategies or other 'engagements' that hadn't resulted in change, and spoke of having the same conversations over and over. Many frontline workers said that they felt stressed and overwhelmed by their work as so many children, young people and their families and whānau were struggling and needed more help than they could provide. People we talked to were passionate about looking for solutions and identifying some changes that could be made immediately to "begin a process of radical change in child wellbeing". We heard that every New Zealander has a role to play in making New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people, and that the Strategy needs to kick start this collective action on a national scale.

The Strategy needs to be bigger than the government of the day

Some adults worried that the Strategy may end up being another document that is discarded with any change in government and asked us "What would be different this time?". People felt that, in the past, the constantly changing priorities of government had incentivised short term solutions and 'easy wins', without ever successfully making real change. Service providers in particular talked about the pressure to deliver results quickly, annual contracts, uncertainty about future funding, and changing priorities being major barriers to making real change and delivering sustainable solutions.

People we spoke to told us that child wellbeing is too important to be a 'fad' and emphasised the need for a long term commitment to the Strategy. There was also hope that: cross party support for the child poverty reduction legislation; putting the requirement for a strategy itself in legislation; and setting long term goals, would mean that the Strategy would have a real chance to change some of the major systemic issues that have typically been considered "too hard" or "too big" to address.

...Please don't let this be something that starts with a bang and fades to nothing - especially if there is a change of Government later on. Our tamariki need us to role model what it is to protect and leave a legacy. In fact may the legacy of our generation be that we leave a country that enables children to truly thrive - no matter their background. That we, as a collective group of adults, see this is something so important that it overrides political points, funding challenges and any other barrier that might come up along the way. This must be enduring.

Adult

Local communities are integral to the success of the Strategy

In addition to bipartisan support, a wider collective responsibility for change was seen as essential to the success of the Strategy. Adults told us that the Strategy needs to empower communities and give them the tools to make the changes needed themselves, and to be able to demand accountability even if government priorities change. We heard that while government and national agencies had a role to play in providing direction, resourcing, and some specific supports or skill sets to build local capability, there needed to be greater flexibility to enable communities to lead, design and deliver the solutions.

We don't want more service provision or an expansion of service provision. We don't need another top-down programme. We need ground-up transformation. Give power to communities to do the mahi.

Adult

Adults told us that the local community providers often have the lived experience as well as the learned experience to deliver sustainable service solutions for tamariki and their whānau. Without the local level insights, involvement and support, any nationally driven strategy would fail. A one-size-fits-all strategy won't work. They talked about the experiences of policies or programmes that had been delivered to their communities with no understanding of what was needed, and how that had undermined local programmes and systems. When funding was later withdrawn, the community was left worse off than before the programme.

Children and young people very rarely mentioned services when they described what having a good life meant. They talked about government services as barriers or enablers. Government services can enable the conditions through which children and young people's families and communities can support them.

The Strategy needs to have a focus on family and whānau wellbeing

A theme that came through very strongly across all types of engagement, in response to multiple issues was a need for the Strategy to emphasise the crucial role of families and whānau. 'Families and whānau' was the theme that people were most likely to talk about in their messages to the Prime Minister, while 'Abuse, neglect and harmful family environments' was the most common barrier identified by adults. It also came up in feedback about the Outcomes Framework, including the vision and principles.

Most children and young people live within families or whānau, and their collective wellbeing is inextricably linked to the individual wellbeing of each child and young person. Children, young people and adults told us that we need to provide parents, families and whānau with more support. Children,

young people, and adults told us that families and whānau must be well in order for children to be well, and families must be involved in making things better.

The majority of adults we heard from felt the Strategy needed an explicit focus on families and whānau, and that all levels of the Strategy should include a family and whānau focus. Suggestions included the addition of 'wellbeing of parents and whānau' in the vision, outcome statements and focus areas, and a whole of family approach to service delivery and design. Many people mentioned the 'Whānau Ora' approach as being a shift in the right direction.

The one thing I want to tell the Prime Minister is that what all our children need most in their lives is to be connected to their culture; to feel strong and confident in their identity; and to have a sense of belonging to their whānau. That singling out or separating children from a focus on what their whānau need to create safe, strong and healthy homes, will never achieve the enduring change we need. Whānau Ora is intricately, intimately linked to the wellbeing of our children - the two are mutually reinforcing.

Adult

My parents and family are stressed because of everything they have to pay for and things just get harder. I don't want to be extra stress

Young person

Te Tiriti o Waitangi should be a clear and empowering dimension of the Strategy

It was strongly expressed at the majority of the Māori engagement hui and Ministry of Health workshops that the Treaty and unique relationship of the Crown to tamariki and rangatahi Māori needed to be better woven throughout the Outcomes Framework, and into the Strategy and actions or decisions that come out of the Strategy. About a quarter of the written submissions also reinforced the importance of the Treaty, with many providing practical advice or suggestions about how to do so. A small number (less than 1%) of the postcards and responses to the adult survey also made explicit reference to the Treaty or Te Tiriti.

Some adults felt there is a lack of trust that Māori can meet the needs of Māori and a failure of the Crown to honour the Treaty principle of partnership with Māori. It was suggested that to be true to the principles of partnership, Māori should be leading or at least co-constructing the Strategy.

Adults told us there needs to be authentic input from the beginning to create a strategy that reflects Te Ao Māori concepts of wellbeing, rather than just translating or giving a Western strategy a token makeover. Some people, Māori and non-Māori alike, felt that the proposed Outcomes Framework does not adequately reflect Te Ao Māori concepts. There was an emphasis on the difference between government and agencies 'consulting' Māori and then designing solutions for them, rather than designing with them. Māori reinforced the message that solutions and services need to be designed and delivered by those who have real lived and learned experience about what works, and that means services for Māori need to be delivered and designed by Māori.

Some adults told us there is a lack of Māori representation in governance roles, management, service planning and a general lack of consultation with the workforce. We heard that, historically, ideas,

services, and approaches that fit in with Western views have been prioritised over those that reflect Māori world views. They told us to trust Māori to know what works for Māori and that the Strategy needs to create an environment that supports Māori whānau wellbeing. This would involve a culture shift, with the inclusion of Māori values starting at the top.

The Strategy needs to focus on reducing inequity

The issue of equity/inequity was also a strong theme across the engagement. Adults talked about equity in terms of outcomes, and children and young people talked about fairness. We heard a lot from children, young people and adults about the importance of ensuring all children had the basics.

While most children and young people are doing well, many face major challenges. Poverty, material hardship, and the high cost of living were identified as significant barriers for many children and families and whānau. People want a strategy that will improve the wellbeing of all children and young people, but recognise that there are population groups for whom 'wellbeing' is a goal that will require much more effort and focus to attain. We heard that some whānau and communities have entrenched and increasing poverty. This, combined with a lack of opportunities, is resulting in a loss of hope. Some people are struggling to just survive. We were told it's hard to address deeper or bigger issues around children's wellbeing when parents don't even have enough to get by.

When asked where government should prioritise its focus, ensuring all children 'have what they need' focus areas (e.g. housing, meeting material needs, addressing poverty etc.) received the strongest support from children, young people and adults alike. People often expressed that if benefit levels and wages were higher, and if parents and families had greater job, food and housing security, many of the other outcomes would improve.

A good life is more than the bare basics

Children and young people told us they want to be accepted, valued and respected. They want to feel safe in their homes and communities. They want to be with people who care about them. We heard that their need for basic things is essential, but they are also hopeful that their future will include more than that. A minimum standard of living is not enough. Adults also want more for children and young people than the absence of risk, deprivation or harm. They emphasised the importance of a positive framing of wellbeing, and told us that reducing poverty is an admirable and important goal, but that it shouldn't set the tone and aspirations for a wellbeing strategy.

Children and young people have a right to be included in the decision making process

Under New Zealand law, specifically those derived from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to be heard on matters affecting them. Children and young people stressed that 'being listened to' is one of the things that could help them have a good life. Many involved in the face-to-face engagements talked about how grateful they were that we were asking them their opinion, and that they appreciated being listened to. Many said this was the first time they had been asked for their opinion like this.

There was also a lot of advocacy by adults for the practical inclusion and consideration of children and young people's voice in the Strategy and in any decisions that impacts on children more widely. 'Autonomy, advocacy, and listening to children and young people' was a common theme across all the adult responses. Many adults at face-to-face meetings asked us what engagement we were undertaking with children and young people, and emphasised the importance of hearing what they thought. A number of adults also questioned, or provided suggestions about, the role children and young people would have in the governance, accountability, and decision making processes for the Strategy.

Invest in ensuring all kids get a great education

Children, young people and adults all emphasised the importance of education. Schools can have a major impact on children and young people's wellbeing, for better or for worse. Education was a key theme raised in both the things that support a good life, and as something that can get in the way. Children, young people and adults could identify good and bad things about our current education system.

Children and young people told us how important a good education is for future opportunities. They also talked about wanting to feel that they belong at school. Adults characterised investment in education as an investment in the future, and identified a lack of education (for children and young people, and for their parents, family and whānau) and some issues within the education system, as barriers to wellbeing. From adults in particular, we heard a lot of support for greater investment in education. If we invest in ensuring children receive a good education, we are investing in their future

wellbeing and their future children's wellbeing. Suggestions ranged from more, or more targeted, funding for education providers, to requests to fund specific services such as counsellors in schools or food in schools. People of all ages also suggested government should reduce or remove costs associated with education, such as uniforms, transport, and student loans.

Focus on early intervention and, specifically, on the first 1,000 days

Adults firmly supported placing a greater emphasis on providing support earlier. This means providing services to children and young people at younger ages, and before they reach crisis point, as well as providing more services that take a preventative approach. We heard strong support for improving the journey for both the child and for their whānau in those very early years, including before birth. This includes preparing young people for parenthood, and ensuring they are in the best mental, physical and spiritual health. There was support for prioritising funding towards ensuring children have access to particular services, like behavioural and mental health specialists, much earlier and at a lower threshold.

Government, agencies, and services need to work together better

Adults told us an effective strategy will recognise, support and build on what communities are already doing to support and foster child wellbeing. Government agencies not collaborating, and services competing against each other for funding, were identified as a major barrier to wellbeing. There was acknowledgement that while some new initiatives will be needed, a lot can be achieved if government agencies and community services were able to communicate and collaborate more effectively. We heard that being aspirational means being willing to radically reshape the ways children and young people are supported when they and their families and whānau tell us that the current approaches aren't working. We heard that efforts to support children and young people will not be effective if the sole focus is on what services and supports need to be delivered - how supports are delivered matters just as much. Children and young people told us that services need to accept them for who they are and recognise their critical relationships.

Children and young people talked about their lives as a whole. Their needs do not exist within neatly-defined categories. The development of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is an opportunity to reflect on how we can respond to children's and young people's needs using holistic and comprehensive approaches to wellbeing.

Appendix 1: Additional information about Face-to-face Engagements

Child wellbeing unit engagements with children and young people

Engagements with children and young people were primarily undertaken by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki. Staff from the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki formed a project team that designed, carried out, analysed and reported on engagement with over 6000 children and young people across New Zealand. These engagements have been reported on publicly in the What Makes a Good Life report, available here: <http://www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports/what-makes-a-good-life/>

Additionally, the Child Wellbeing Unit also engaged directly with children and young people through a small number of face-to-face engagements as opportunities presented themselves during the engagement period. These engagements were more informal and less intensive than those lead by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki. At each event the primary method of data collection was via the postcard to the Prime Minister and these were included in the postcard analysis. These events included:

- 25 October 2018, A Picnic with the Prime Minister, Wellington, 84 participants
- 2-5 October 2018, Weaving our strengths ki te Tairāwhiti, Gisborne, over 150 children and adults
- The Wellington City Council Youth Summit, Wellington, 7 November 2018, 75 participants
- Street stall in Winton, Southland on Sunday 18 November 2018, 61 participants
- 21 November 2018, Irongate Primary School's visit to Parliament, Wellington, approx 65 participants
- 24-25 November 2018, The Kids Election, Te Papa Wellington, approx. 50 participants
- An additional 130 children and young people also wrote postcards to the Prime Minister which were delivered by post or completed online.

Eleven Regional Māori Engagement Hui

The eleven regional Māori Engagement hui attended by the Child Wellbeing Unit were:

- 12 November 2018, Te Puni Kōkiri, Gisborne, 21 participants
- 13 November 2018, The Green Shed, Hastings, 13 participants
- 14 November 2018, Nukuteapiapi Whare Tupuna, Rotorua, 20 participants
- 19 November 2018, Distinction Hotel Conference Centre, Hamilton, 20 participants
- 20 November 2018, Arai te Uru Marae, Dunedin, 20 participants
- 22 November 2018, Rehua Marae, Christchurch, 36 participants
- 26 November 2018, Te Puea Marae, Auckland, 7 Participants
- 28 November 2018, Te Puni Kōkiri, Wellington, 14 participants
- 29 November 2018, Auto Lodge Motor Inn, New Plymouth, 19 participants
- 30 November 2018, Te Puni Kōkiri, Nelson, 5 participants
- 24 January 2019, Te Puni Kōkiri, Kaitia

The hui were typically two hours long, most hui started with a mihi whakatau or pōwhiri and whakawhanaungatanga, followed by a presentation by the Child Wellbeing Unit introducing the purpose of the engagement, Strategy, and draft Outcomes Framework, followed by a whakawhitiwhiti kōrero/discussion. Notes and a summary of the discussion was recorded by one of the facilitators or officials from the Child Wellbeing Unit.

Ten regional workshops hosted by the Ministry of Health and District Health Boards (12-30 November 2018)

The Child Wellbeing Unit attended ten meetings hosted by the Ministry of Health in partnership with their local District Health Boards. There were approximately 700 participants across the 10 hui. These were:

- 12 November 2018, St Michaels Church Marae, Palmerston North (Kaupapa Māori hui)
- 15 November 2018, Pinnacle Health, Hamilton
- 16 November 2018, Ngā Maia Māori Midwives Conference, Napier
- 21 November 2018, Edgar Centre, Dunedin
- 23 November 2018, Manawa, Te Papa Hauora/Health Precinct, Christchurch
- 26 November 2018, Spire Pavilion, Whangarei
- 29 November 2018, Mangere East Hawks Rugby League Club, Auckland (Pacific Fono)
- 30 November 2018, Ko Awatea, Auckland
- 3 December 2018, Ministry of Health, Wellington (Pacific Fono)
- 3 December 2018, Waiwhetu Marae, Wellington

Pacific engagement

We also participated in pre-arranged Pacific national and regional meetings held by other agencies plus organised our own discussions with the assistance of NGOs. Engagements ranged from promotion (i.e. encouraging people to make a submission or complete the survey online), to one on one interviews, focus groups or workshop style discussions seeking input on the vision statement, Outcomes Framework and responses to questions related to wellbeing. These included:

- 30 October 2018, Presentation at Pacific Leaders Forum, Wellington, 20 attendees
- 13 November 2018, Presentation at Pacific leaders National Summit, 250 attendees
- 16 November 2018, Workshop with Oranga Tamariki funded providers, Auckland, 16 participants
- 22 November 2018, Pacific Fono with Mangere Youth Providers, Auckland, 30 participants
- 27 November 2018, Pacific Fono with Whānau Ora families and navigators, Christchurch, approx. 30 participants
- 28 November 2018, Pacific Fono Pacific Leaders Forum, Wellington, 20 attendees
- 28 November 2018, Pacific Fono with Whānau Ora families and navigators, Hamilton, 8 participants
- 29 November 2018, Ministry of Health Pacific Fono, Mangere East Hawks Rugby League Club, Auckland
- 30 November 2018, Pacific Fono with Whānau Ora families and navigators, Auckland, 42 participants

- 3 December 2018, Ministry of Health Pacific Fono, Ministry of Health, Wellington
- 4 December 2018, Pacific Fono with Whānau Ora families and navigators, Wellington, 30 participants

Other Engagements

We met with a range of particular population and interest groups to obtain their unique perspectives. Engagements ranged from promotion (i.e. encouraging people to make a submission or complete the survey online), to one on one interviews, focus groups or workshop style discussions seeking input on the vision statement, Outcomes Framework and responses to questions related to wellbeing. Meetings included:

- 19 October 2018, Local Government - Justin Lester and Jill Day, Wellington
- 25 October 2018, Regional Sports Trust Cluster, Wellington
- 6 November 2018, Matt Reid, Hutt Council, Wellington
- 12 November 2018, Local Government New Zealand Policy Advisory Group, Wellington
- 15 November 2018, Philanthropic Sector Roundtable, Auckland
- 16 November 2018, Children's Ward Southland Hospital, Southland
- 16 November 2018, Zone 1 Local Government New Zealand, Auckland
- 18 November 2018, St Thomas Catholic Church, Winton
- 19 November 2018, South Alive, Invercargill
- 21 November 2018, Office for Disability Issues Youth, Auckland
- 21 November 2018, Shakti, Auckland
- 22 November 2018, Local Government New Zealand Rural and provincial Mayors, Wellington
- 22 November 2018, New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, Wellington
- 23 November 2018, Philanthropy and Government Group meeting, Wellington
- 26 November 2018, Disabilities - Office for Disability Issues focus group - Christchurch
- 27 November 2018, Southern REAP, Winton
- 3 December 2018, Rainbow Youth, Auckland
- 3 December 2018, Richard Hills, North Shore Ward Councillor, Auckland
- 4 December 2018, Asian Network, Auckland
- 4 December 2018, members of the Migrant and refugee communities, Auckland Survey for Adults
- 21 December 2018, InsideOUT, Wellington
- 5 February 2019, Intersex Trust Aotearoa New Zealand, Wellington

Appendix 2: Proposed Outcomes Framework

CHILD AND YOUTH WELLBEING STRATEGY PROPOSED OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

DRAFT - FOR CONSULTATION - NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY

VISION

New Zealand is the best place in the world for children and young people

This will be achieved when all children and young people:

WELLBEING DOMAINS



Families, whānau and homes are safe and nurturing

Children, young people and their parents, caregivers, families and whānau are able to spend quality time together

Children and young people are kept safe from accidental injury at home, in the community, on the road and when taking part in sport and recreational activities

Communities, including at school and online, are safe and supportive, with children and young people protected from victimisation



Children, young people and the adults caring for them have a good standard of material wellbeing, including food and housing

Parents and caregivers, and young people transitioning to adulthood, enjoy quality employment

Young people who are not in education, training or employment receive additional support to gain education and skills and to obtain and maintain employment

Children and young people live in sustainable communities and environments



Children and young people know who they are: their heritage, their whakapapa and their connection to family, whānau, community, culture, place (tūrangawaewae) and beliefs

Children and young people feel connected to their family, whānau and communities, and are actively included in schools, communities and society

Children and young people are valued and respected for who they are and are supported to have their voices heard

Children and young people are empowered to make age appropriate decisions, and are supported to exercise increasing autonomy as they move to adulthood

Children and young people care about and recognise their responsibilities to others, and contribute positively at home, school and in their communities

Children and young people are empowered to engage on matters of civic and environmental importance



Children and young people have the best possible physical health, and health status is not a barrier to living a good life

Children and young people experience mental wellbeing, are supported to cope with life's challenges and to heal and recover from trauma

Children and young people have strong networks of trusting, caring relationships with family, whānau, peers, communities and school

Children and young people can play, express themselves creatively, have fun, and have opportunities for down time

Young people take a positive approach to relationships, sexual health and reproductive choices



Children have positive development starting before birth, including through the wellbeing of mothers, families and whānau

Children and young people develop resilience, and emotional, behavioural and communication skills at home and in education, and are equipped to make successful transitions, including to primary school, secondary school, and into adulthood

Children and young people are positively engaged with and achieving in education, and building skills and knowledge for life and learning

Children and young people have developmentally appropriate opportunities outside the classroom that build confidence and important life skills

Young people make positive choices about alcohol, drugs and sexual relationships, and avoid criminal offending

NOTE: 'Child' and 'children' includes children and young people up to age 18, and, for those transitioning from State care, up to age 25

PRINCIPLES

Our approach to wellbeing is underpinned by seven principles:

1 The inherent dignity and value of children and young people

2 The wellbeing of children and young people is interwoven with the wellbeing of the family and whānau

3 That networks of loving, trusting, caring relationships are at the heart of children's and young people's wellbeing

4 The foundational role of the Treaty of Waitangi and the importance of the Crown-Māori partnership in work to promote the wellbeing of New Zealand's children and young people

5 That children's and young people's voices and views should be taken into account in developing and implementing the Strategy and in important decisions affecting them

6 The rights contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which New Zealand has ratified

7 We have collective responsibility to nurture the children and young people in our communities, and to support and value the adults who are caring for them

Sixteen potential focus areas for the first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy have been identified:

1. Children and young people are safe and nurtured in their families, whānau and homes

- Children and young people live in loving homes, connected to relationships and support and are free from abuse, neglect and family violence
- The work of parenting and nurturing children is recognised, valued and supported
- Adults caring for children and young people enjoy good mental health, including freedom from severe stress, misuse of alcohol and drugs
- Children and young people in care (including because of offending) have a safe environment and relationships of care, trust and connection

2. Children's and young people's physical safety is protected during everyday activities like travel and recreation

- The community and the physical, policy and regulatory environment work together to promote children's and young people's physical safety
- Serious injury and death through road accidents, drowning and other major accidental causes are reduced
- The particular vulnerability of disabled children and young people to accidental injury is addressed

3. Children and young people have positive interactions with peers and others outside the home

- Children and young people have safe and appropriate relationships with other children and young people and with adults outside the home
- Bullying in schools and recreational environments is addressed
- Children's and young people's safety online is supported

4. Children and young people and their families and whānau live in affordable, quality housing

- Families and whānau can access and afford housing near their work and/or social support structures
- Housing is warm and dry, has space and facilities to meet essential needs and supports good health
- There is stability of tenure for children and young people and families and whānau in rented accommodation
- Housing is supported by quality infrastructure and community facilities to enable good quality of life and positive social connection

5. Child poverty is reduced, in line with the Government's intermediate and ten-year targets

- Children, young people and families and whānau have the resources they need to meet children's basic needs, and enable them to participate fully in society
- Rates of child poverty are significantly and sustainably reduced
- Parents' education and participation in paid work is supported, where appropriate
- Once housing costs are met, families have enough income left over to meet their other needs

6. Children and young people experience improved equity of outcomes, with services helping address the impacts of poverty, low socioeconomic status and disadvantage

- Services and institutions are accessible, welcoming and respectful to all
- Parents, children and young people have the ability to influence the way they get support so it works best for them
- Core services and systems like health, education, justice and social support are designed and delivered in ways that meet diverse needs and that minimise the costs and stresses of engaging with them
- Universal services identify children and young people facing disadvantage and focus proportionately greater resources, effort and energy on supporting them

7. Children and young people are free from racism, discrimination and stigma

- All children and young people are respected and valued for who they are
- No child or young person, or group of children and young people, faces discrimination or stigma on the grounds of ethnicity, disability, or for any other reason

8. The cultures of children, young people and their families and whānau are recognised, enhanced and supported

- Whānau centered approaches are recognised and supported, increasing the agency of children, young people and their families and whānau
- Te Ao Māori and Te Reo Māori are actively promoted
- Children and young people see their cultures, values and context portrayed in a positive way

9. Children and young people have improved opportunities for civic engagement and environmental awareness

- Children and young people are supported to be positive, valued contributors to civic life and the protection of the environment (kaitiakitanga)
- Children's and young people's individual and collective agency is encouraged, and they participate in decisions that affect them directly and wider society

10. Children and young people and their families and whānau are empowered to make healthy lifestyle decisions for children and young people

- Children and young people and those caring for them have the knowledge and resources to make healthy decisions about food, exercise and sleep
- Communities offer access to affordable, nutritious food and environments that enable children to be physically active

11. Disabled children and young people have improved opportunities and outcomes

- Disabled children and young people:
 - Are actively included as full and equal participants in every aspect of community and society
 - Have agency and voice in their wellbeing and choices
 - Have access to quality support and services to enable full and equitable participation
- Neurodiversity and neurodiversity are recognised, with children and young people receiving quality services and support

12. Children's and young people's mental wellbeing is supported

- Families and are equipped to provide a supportive home environment that promotes children's and young people's good mental wellbeing
- Children and young people are supported to build the resilience that helps them navigate life's challenges
- Children and young people with emerging mental health needs are identified and they and their families and whānau receive quality, culturally appropriate support
- Children and young people are free from bullying, substance abuse, self-harm and suicide
- Children and young people are supported to recover from trauma and harm

13. Children and young people are supported to make positive decisions

- Children and young people make considered and informed decisions about alcohol, drugs and sexual relationships
- Children and young people consider the impact of their behaviour on others
- Children and young people are supported to be accountable and address the underlying causes of their behaviour if they break the law

14. Children experience best development in their "first 1000 days", safe and positive pregnancy, birth and responsive parenting (conception to around 2)

- People make positive, empowered choices about when to have a family
- The environment around parents helps them make positive choices for pregnancy, birth and parenting
- Communities support families and whānau to grow stable, loving relationships of care for each other and for their babies
- Services for parents and babies are accessible, culturally appropriate, meet a range of needs and support parents to build the lives they want for their babies
- Parents' mental wellbeing is supported and care is taken to reduce stress in the lives of new parents

15. Children are thriving socially, emotionally and developmentally in the early years (around 2 to 6)

- Parents, families, whānau and communities are supported to provide loving, stimulating environments for children to develop and learn
- Children build resilience, self-control and mental wellbeing
- Children develop effective communication skills to support learning and social success
- Children benefit from high quality early learning
- Children's learning needs are identified quickly, and responded to in a timely way, including through additional learning support and support for family and whānau

16. All children and young people have an equal chance to gain the skills, knowledge and capabilities for success in life, learning and work

- High quality education for all children and young people is assured, given the intrinsic value of education, and its role in enabling children and young people to meet their academic and social potential and in ensuring they have options for meaningful work once they leave school
- Children, young people, their families and whānau have a voice and can help shape their learning and skills opportunities
- There is equity in access to quality learning and achievement among children and young people of different socio-economic groups and ethnicities
- All children and young people can take part in a full range of opportunities to develop and express their talents