



## **Proactive Release**

### **Submissions on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy**

August 2019

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has released the following submission received during its public consultation on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Some of the information contained within this release is considered to not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- Where this is the case, the information has been withheld, and the relevant section of the Act that would apply, has been identified.
- Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

#### **Key to redaction codes and their reference to sections of the Act:**

- **9(2)a** – Section 9(2)(a): to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

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## Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy – Submission Template

This document is intended for individuals or groups who wish to make a formal submission on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Please complete this template and email it to: [childandyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz](mailto:childandyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz)

A guide to making a submission is available on the DPMC website <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>

Submissions will close on **Wednesday 5 December**.

**Please provide details for a contact person in case we have some follow up questions.**

<b>Contact Name:</b>	Maggy Tai Rākena
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<b>Phone Number:</b>	
<b>Organisation Name:</b>	START
<b>Organisation description:</b> (tell us about your organisation – i.e. who do you represent? How many members do you have? Are you a local or national organisation?)	<p>START <a href="http://www.starthealing.org">www.starthealing.org</a> is a Christchurch based specialist service with over 30 years experience of supporting children, youth and adults who have experienced sexual violence.</p> <p>START also provides specialist consultations for the general and professional communities, as well as tailored educational sessions around sexual violence and trauma.</p> <p>START has had a long term involvement in many local and national collaborative efforts.</p> <p>On average START has served 616 people per annum over the last 5 years.</p>
<b>Executive Summary:</b> (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	<p>START is delighted that the New Zealand Government has developed a plan to give the wellbeing of the tamariki and rangatahi of our country the focus it deserves. Children are indeed our future and the very act of developing a Child Wellbeing Strategy is hugely significant. It is essential however that this process does not become <b>mere words</b>. Action must follow and children must become safer and healthier in our country. The current rates of harm and neglect of Aotearoa's children is a national tragedy.</p> <p>Everyday START works with children and young people who have experienced sexual violence and the impacts on them are far reaching. With a national propensity rate that seems impossible to accurately measure due to the secrecy surrounding this type of offending, START can inform you that we have been running six month <b>long wait lists</b> for counselling over numerous years, such is the ceaseless demand.</p> <p>In looking forward, an idea central to our submission is that children need to be seen within the context of their <b>key relationships</b>. It is</p>

	<p>especially so in the case of interpersonal trauma, but more generally, children grow, learn and heal through <b>healthy relationships</b>. <b>Relationships are the tool of healing</b> This takes more than just looking after caregivers, this is about the adults in children's lives being central to any intervention. In fact in some cases the adults are even more important as they hold the power and the influence for change in children's lives. Relationships between the professionals supporting families are also vital, and so prioritising and funding <b>time</b> where joint understandings can be formed is central to any effective work.</p> <p>Each child and young person is <b>unique</b> as are their needs. <b>Interventions</b> need to be formulated to meet these needs in order to be effective, incorporating key research and clinical finding around 'what works'. Taking into account developmental needs is central to this.</p>
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## Submission Content

*START thinks the **5 overarching wellbeing domains** of the framework are appropriate.*

We would however like to see the document written in Te Reo Māori and English so that the articulation of intent to work in a Tiriti informed partnership is evident from the outset. Given the high numbers of Māori tamariki impacted negatively by wellbeing challenges, engagement with Māori on the solutions is vital.

*START endorses the **7 principles** underpinning the strategy.*

We would however prefer that Te Tiriti o Waitangi be used as this underpinning principle as opposed to The Treaty of Waitangi.

*START sees the **16 proposed focus areas** as covering the broad scope of needs well.*

START would like to offer a collection of comments and reflections on some of the detail of the strategy:

### Family/Whānau inclusion

1. Of particular note for START is the essential and intrinsic importance of family and whānau to children and young people's wellbeing. This linkage is not borne out well in practice with the separation of Oranga Tamariki from the Ministry of Social Development. As a service provider, we experience the departmental separation very unhelpfully separating services to children and their significant adults.
2. It is also important to remain cognizant of Te Ao Māori where the wellbeing of the individual is interdependent with the wellbeing of the whānau system.
3. Even though family and whānau are emphasized in the strategy, they need to be more front and centre. Without a safe base, any therapeutic work with children is unlikely to be effective. They can only exist with adults to care for them and if we split off the needs of the adults, then the children suffer. The split of Oranga Tamariki from the Ministry of Social Development was aimed at protecting the children and their resources but it has appeared to single out children from their parents/caregivers which does not work.

### Systemic Approaches

4. START appreciates the strategy's recognition of the vital role that wider support systems and communities also play in the wellbeing of children and young people. With that recognition we are keen to have the government address the financial pressures on families that lead to excessive work hours with no time left over for the needs of the children and young people. As a child focussed service we would also like you to start a brave and well informed public conversation about our collective responsibility via taxes, parental leave (not just at birth) and living wages.
5. Every day START has positive collaborative experiences with the Police Child Protection Team and Oranga Tamariki, however we experience difficulties resulting from the seemingly endless changes in staffing and/or roles at Oranga Tamariki in particular. We note the impact on children in care, where attachment is a primary difficulty, who then in turn experience a revolving door of social workers. As professionals we similarly have to interact with a revolving door of professional partners. The negative impact of such 'counter-attachment' conscious management systems cannot

be overstated. Repair of trauma is dependant upon sound attachments. **Relationships are the tool of healing** and they need to be well modelled by professionals and whānau.

6. Attachment is a primary driver of wellbeing and so it needs to be at the centre of all decisions, even those where safety is an issue. If primary attachment figures aren't safe and can't be made safe, then state money would be better spend on resourcing and training caregivers so that children in care do not experience multiple changes. If home life is safe and settled (even if this requires training and paying specialist carers), then this can reduce the need for other therapeutic inputs over time.
7. START believes that support needs to be made available when required over the course of childhood through to adulthood in a manner that allows easy access. An episodic approach is developmentally appropriate for many children and young people, however some with chronic disabilities will need support to be on-going. The ACC Sensitive Claims ISSC offers a sound model for support that can be used and re-engaged with numerous times if required. Children and their family's needs change over time and so an episodic framework is appropriate, with easy access for a piece of work when needed and then to be able to leave the service, without fear that people won't be able to re-enter again if they need to. Related to this, there needs to be alignment in this approach between the key agencies so that they can work together in an ongoing way to meet the needs of children, young people and their whānau. Currently files are closed when opened elsewhere. Although this makes sense from a process point of view, it makes it difficult when additional supports might be needed at times. Sound professional collaborations may lead to less straightforward file management but the focus must be on the best interests of the children and young people.

#### **Stretched Resources**

8. START can fault little about the overall content of this proposed strategy, in fact it is highly aspirational. The challenge with aspirations is that when people are bogged down by stressors and feeling burnt out by realities, aspirations can feel like a fantasy. A fantasy that is difficult to invest energy and creativity into.
9. Services such as START demonstrate the pressing need for this government to more fully address burgeoning current need in addition to whatever new prevention and intervention strategies are implemented. Merely re-deploying funds and resources would place both statutory and NGO social services and families at greater risk and stretch an already insufficient workforce. Support is needed at all stages along the needs continuum. Prevention and early intervention is vital to invest in, however there also needs to be solid investment into existing programmes and known issues, as otherwise agencies 'on the ground' end up prioritizing risk, and prevention and early intervention programmes suffer.
10. Considerable extra funding is required to meet the needs of children and young people to thrive in NZ. Children's Teams are one example of how a fantastic idea has been compromised because the assumption was made that working in a new way would just be picked up by existing agencies within existing resourcing. As a local specialist service for children and young people who have experienced sexual violence, START could not offer to help with the local Children's Team as we are already overloaded with our existing demand with the resources available to us.
11. START is concerned about the lack of universal sexual violence prevention education across New Zealand via a 'Healthy Relationships' approach. The Early Childhood 'All About Me' and the Primary level 'Keeping Ourselves Safe' programmes dovetailed nicely into the secondary schools Health syllabus however the resources required for these programmes to be taught well appears to have dropped off with the ECE programme now all but disappeared. The Education Review Office recently reported

that just 20% of NZ schools cover the topic appropriately which would appear to evidence this as a gap. It is START's belief that supporting school teaching staff to be well equipped and confident with the topic of 'Healthy Relationships' is the ideal way for all children and young people to be reached. The added benefit is that teachers have on-going relationships with the children and young people involved for any subsequent needs.

12. START provides specialist education for professionals working with children and young people around the topics of sexual violence, trauma, coping with disclosures, how to get professional help and how best to support the child or young person as life goes on. We never advertise this service yet demand is ever burgeoning. More work is required nationwide to address this knowledge gap and to keep children and young people safe. Likewise such education is desperately needed in the wider community.
13. When implementing this Wellbeing Strategy the Government needs to recognize and place value on what is already being done. This is important from a workforce point of view, as when feeling valued, people remain engaged. It is also vital to ask people what already works, rather than 'reinvent the wheel' and create another new approach with a pocket of funding to meet a specific need.
14. Time and energy put into the integration of ideas, practices and workplace/departmental cultures is vital. Many an aspirational plan that gets approved by upper management and dreamed about by the men and women 'on the ground' gets lost in the middle bureaucracy, whose job it is to put policies and procedures around ideas. These are of course needed, however it's important that they are client driven rather than risk or service driven, or done in certain ways because they always have been.

### **Clinical considerations**

15. START would ask that the strategy uses the language of 'children with a disability' as opposed to the term 'disabled children'.
16. Trauma is a neuro-developmental injury. This means that the impacts are cognitive, physical, emotional, educational, and social. This reinforces the need for flexible support that is able to be accessed as needed throughout the child's development. It also means that trauma is the normal result of something that happens 'to a person' and is not a sign of weakness or lack of resilience.
17. Traumas are often not singular, but plural. So a whole of person and whanau inclusive approach is important.

Please note that your submission will become official information. This means that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may be required to release all or part of the information contained in your submission in response to a request under the Official Information Act 1982.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may withhold all or parts of your submission if it is necessary to protect your privacy or if it has been supplied subject to an obligation of confidence.

Please tell us if you don't want all or specific parts of your submission released, and the reasons why. Your views will be taken into account in deciding whether to withhold or release any information requested under the Official Information Act and in deciding if, and how, to refer to your submission in any possible subsequent paper prepared by the Department.