



21 September 2023

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Tēnā koe

Thank you for your email of 26 August 2023 to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki), requesting information regarding the processes undertaken by Oranga Tamariki when receiving reports of concern. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I have addressed each of your questions below.

I would like to know the procedure the ministry outlines for uplift of child.

To clarify, “uplift” is not a term that is used by Oranga Tamariki, although we understand that it is commonly used to refer to the time when tamariki and rangatahi come into the care of the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki. As such, the practice policy and guidance that has been provided here is that which most closely aligns to the areas of work understood from the request.

Following the completion of an [assessment](#) (either within the Child and Family Assessment (CFA) or the investigation) we make further decisions regarding how best to respond to any identified concerns or issues that the family or whānau may be experiencing.

From the beginning of our work with tamariki and their whānau or family, our assessment policy expects kaimahi to work with others to understand the risks, needs, challenges and strengths of tamariki, their parents/caregivers and their whānau or family. It is expected that this is an ongoing collaborative process that ensures our understanding and assessment is robust and up-to-date. You can find more information regarding the assessment process on our Practice Centre website: <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/policy/assessment/>.

Our assessment is supported by our Tuituia assessment tool that supports a holistic view of tamariki, their world, and those that provide care for them. Our kaimahi should include

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information and their analysis into their Tuituia assessment tool continuously throughout their work with tamariki and their whānau or family.

More information regarding the Tuituia assessment tool is available on the Practice Centre website: <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/the-tuituia-framework-and-tools/the-tuituia-framework-and-domains/>.

Any decision to seek care or custody of a tamaiti or rangatahi should be based on a thorough assessment.

When a decision is made to seek a custody order for a tamaiti or rangatahi, our assessment policy requires that an up-to-date assessment and report is completed and approved by a supervisor (refer to the “[when a written assessment is required](#)” section). If a social worker forms a belief that tamariki are in need of care or protection, they must make a referral for a family group conference to a care and protection coordinator.

We encourage you to read about our policy regarding family group conferences for care or protection concerns. This covers our work from referral to review and reconvening and is available on the Practice Centre website: <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/policy/family-group-conferences-for-care-and-or-protection-concerns/>.

It is expected that a decision to seek care or custody for tamariki is shared and explored with their whānau or family, who should be given extensive opportunities to participate in the decision making.

Only in circumstances where tamariki may suffer serious injury, undue hardship or risk to personal safety should this action be undertaken with urgency.

Our policy regarding without notice applications for interim custody of tamariki and our emergency actions guidance provides direction for our kaimahi about this. You can find appropriate links to our Practice Centre site below.

<https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/policy/without-notice-application-for-interim-custody-of-a-tamaiti-or-rangatahi/>

<https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/previous-practice-centre/policy/seeking-solutions-with-families/resources/pathways-to-care-emergency-actions/>

<https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/our-work/assessment-and-planning/assessments/intake-and-early-assessment/when-urgent-action-is-needed-to-secure-the-safety-of-pepi-tamariki-and-rangatahi/>

I would like to know the procedure for the ministry's to follow when receiving notifications via phone.

Anyone who is worried about tamariki can make a Report of Concern to Oranga Tamariki or the Police. The National Contact Centre receives most reports of concern on behalf of Oranga Tamariki sites, either by 24/7 freephone (0508 326 459), or email

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(contact@ot.govt.nz). The procedure that follows does not differ depending on how the initial Report of Concern was received.

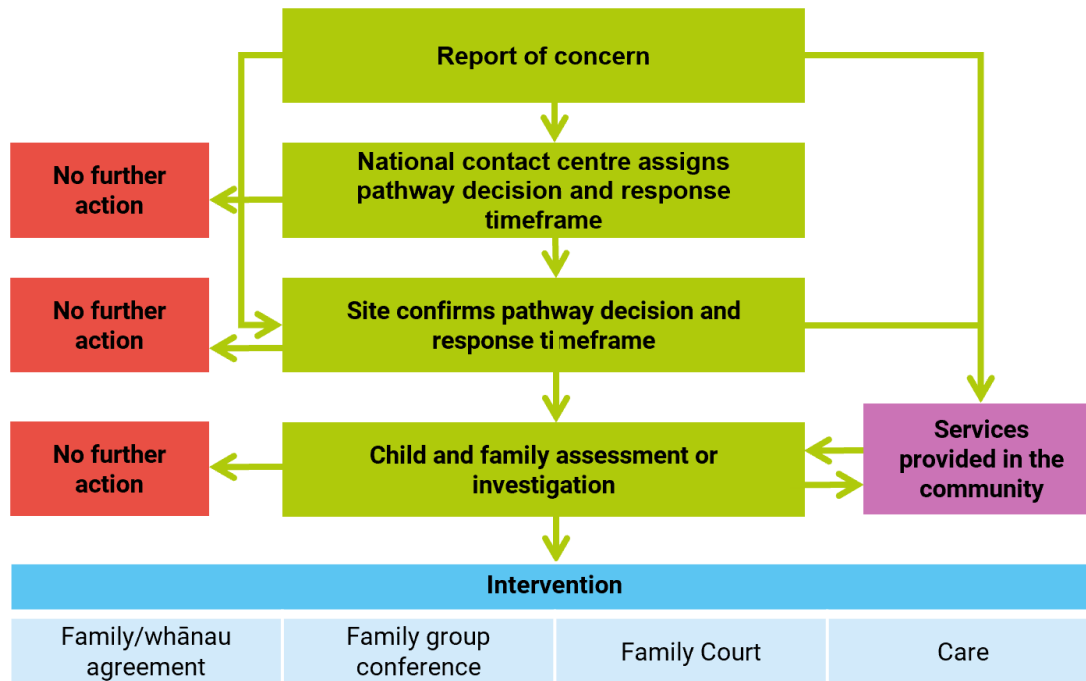
When someone makes a Report of Concern, a social worker will talk with them about their concerns, and what any ongoing involvement with the whānau or family will be.

The pathways/options to respond to a report of concern are:

- No further action – an assessment or investigation is not necessary.
- Refer to Service – whānau or family are referred to another agency, iwi or cultural social service when it is likely a positive outcome can be achieved.
- A Child and Family assessment (CFA) or Investigation.

You can find more information in the Practice Centre links below:

- <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/intake-decision-response-tool/overview-of-the-intake-decision-response-tool/>
- <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/intake-decision-response-tool/considerations-when-responding-to-information-received/>
- <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/intake-decision-response-tool/report-of-concern-response-pathway/>



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Does the Ministry call centre have trained social workers answering the phones gathering all the appropriate information regarding these notifications?

The Oranga Tamariki National Contact Centre (NCC) has a two-tier system.

Tier one is our Customer Support Specialists; they answer the phones in the first instance, and they also process work into our system that has been triaged by a Social Worker or Supervisor. The Customer Support Specialists are not qualified social workers but have specific training relevant to their role.

Tier two is made up of our Social Work teams, who manage the phone calls and the emailed Reports of Concerns under section 15 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. All the Social Workers at the National Contact Centre are Social Work qualified and must have registration from the Social Workers Registration Board.

If a call or email meets the criteria for a follow-up, it must be managed by a registered Social Worker. As such, once this has been determined, our Customer Support Specialists will elevate the report to be handled by a Social Worker. The Customer Support team tends to answer approximately 15,000 calls a month, of which typically approximately 5,000 will then be elevated to be handled by a Social Worker.

In addition, the National Contact Centre receives approximately 5,000 emails per month. These emails are screened for urgency and will go into a high-risk queue or a routine queue for further triage and follow up. Social Workers manage about 3,500 emails a month.

Or does a ministry of child trained social worker call back the person making the notification in the first place to gather the appropriate evidence required when handling notifications?

During the initial assessment phase, if the concerns have come in via email, we engage with the notifier through a direct conversation.

For concerns reported via a phone call, the notifier is not usually called back unless there is a clear gap in the information. Professional notifiers (Health, Education, Police, Iwi providers, Non-Governmental Organisations, etc.) are sent an acknowledgement email that the information has been sent to site or recorded for information purposes only.

For anonymous notifiers, it is not possible to ring them back as we hold no contact details. This is explained to the notifier when they indicate their wish to remain anonymous. See the section regarding gathering information in our guidance: <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/our-work/assessment-and-planning/assessments/intake-and-early-assessment/initial-assessment-phase/>

What sort of facts or evidence is gathered when a call centre person / social worker receives the notification?

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When a Report of Concern is made, a Social Worker will talk with the notifier about the concerns, and what their ongoing involvement with the whānau or family will be.

A Social Worker will gather as much information as possible from the person making the Report of Concern. Our practice guidance regarding considerations when responding to information received outlines the areas of focus when gathering and assessing this information: <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/intake-decision-response-tool/considerations-when-responding-to-information-received/>

The Social Worker can then request information from relevant professionals or other government agencies (including the Ministries of Health and Education, the Police, iwi and non-government organisations) who may be able to provide information to enable an informed analysis of need and risk to make a response decision.

And what evidence / proof is required for a notification to be taken seriously? I gather it's goes by each individual circumstance of situation and or whether a claim is being made whether there is concern child/s immediate wellbeing.

Oranga Tamariki takes all allegations of harm seriously and has a statutory responsibility to assess reported concerns, regardless of the level of evidence or proof provided. Anyone who is worried about a child or young person can make a Report of Concern to Oranga Tamariki.

Our primary focus is understanding whether harm has occurred, what type of harm has occurred, the oranga (wellbeing), strengths and protective factors within the whānau or family group, whether tamariki are safe, understanding any future risk of harm and what supports and plans are needed. For every Report of Concern made, we do not pre-determine the response, but follow our assessment approach to understand whether there are current concerns about oranga (wellbeing), including safety, and the actual circumstances and situation of the whānau.

Regardless of whether a Report of Concern appears to be of a serious nature, or concerns the child's immediate wellbeing, if an individual has concerns for the wellbeing of tamariki, it is the role of Oranga Tamariki to undertake the following steps as part of the Report of Concern pathway:

- consider the concern,
- determine the appropriate response for tamariki their whānau or family,
- complete an assessment appropriate to the level of concern, and
- put in place the support or intervention that te tamaiti and their whānau require if necessary.

Please consult the below Practice Centre links for further information:

- <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/intake-decision-response-tool/overview-of-the-intake-decision-response-tool/>

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- <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/intake-decision-response-tool/report-of-concern-response-pathway/>

How many notifications each year turn out to be completely hearsay or completely different from the true situation once Oranga Tamariki has made contact with the child / family that has had the allegations made about them?

What are the numbers on the successful notifications a year (where a child has truly needed help from Oranga Tamariki), notifications that led nowhere, misrepresented notifications, or notifications that were actually a lot worse than ordinary have judged from the notification that had been given?

We are unable to provide information regarding the outcomes of Report of Concerns as requested, as these are not metrics by which we record outcomes (i.e. we do not record outcomes as “successful”, “hearsay”, “misrepresented” etc.) However, we can provide you with a link to our [2021/22 Annual Report](#), within which you can find information regarding the total number of Reports of Concern received, and the total number of referrals for assessment or investigation. This information can be found on page 15.

I trust the information provided is useful. I encourage you to raise any concerns about the response with OIA_Requests@ot.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman by contacting them on 0800 802 602 or at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Nāku noa, nā



Nicolette Dickson
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