



OIA-CE-2024-02647

27 November 2024

Rodney Parsons  
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Tēnā koe Rodney

Thank you for your email, received on 24 October 2024, to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) requesting information about sexual assault on children and young people in the care of the Oranga Tamariki Chief Executive. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

You have requested:

- *The process related to management of concerns related to sexual assault, in children and young people who are already in Oranga Tamariki services or care.*
- *Provide aggregate figures nationally, on the number of children who have experienced sexual assault whilst under OT care, over the past decade.*

I have addressed each of your questions below:

- *The process related to management of concerns related to sexual assault, in children and young people who are already in Oranga Tamariki services or care.*

The Oranga Tamariki practice framework assists us to make sense of and organise our practice. It is based on best practice social work evidence applied within the context of our work and includes models and tools to guide our social workers and other practitioners. It is guided by our statutory and legislative responsibilities, framed by te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) and draws from te Ao Māori principles of oranga (wellbeing), within the context of our role in statutory child protection and youth justice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Oranga Tamariki processes for responding to reports of concern raised about children, including but not limited to cases where sexual abuse may have occurred, are founded upon requirements, responsibilities and principles set out in the Oranga Tamariki Act. These are made sense of, explained and built upon through practice policies. These policies set out requirements, and practice guidance for social workers to apply, supported by research, information, context and information which supports

application into practice. Oranga Tamariki practice policies and guidance are published on our [Practice Centre](#).

The policy that outlines how we respond to allegations of ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation ('harm') of tamariki in care or custody, including keeping tamariki safe, carrying out the assessment or investigation and managing the outcome can be found [here](#).

In relation to your question, the most relevant information setting out how Oranga Tamariki responds to concerns that include possible sexual abuse are:

- the [Allegations of harm \(ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation\) of tamariki in care or custody](#) policy, which covers core responsibilities and requirements when allegations of harm regarding children in care are raised
- the [Child Protection Protocol](#), (a joint protocol between Police and Oranga Tamariki) which sets out the roles and responsibilities of both Police and Oranga Tamariki when both agencies are working together around more serious allegations of abuse or harm, including alleged sexual abuse
- our [guidance around how to respond to concerning or harmful sexual behaviour](#), which is the sexual behaviour of child or young person that is developmentally inappropriate or harmful to self or others, and;
- [definitional guidance around sexual abuse which includes types of sexual abuse \(including for example grooming\) and potential indicators of sexual abuse](#).

Given the above, this part of your request is refused under section 18(d) of the Act as the information is publicly available.

- *Provide aggregate figures nationally, on the number of children who have experienced sexual assault whilst under OT care, over the past decade.*

Oranga Tamariki takes harm to children seriously and is dedicated to understanding how and where harm does for children in care. Since 2018 we have published an annual Safety of Children in Care report about the rates of harm for children in care, including sexual abuse, and provided detailed information about the nature of harm occurring and our work to identify and respond to the safety and needs of children.

The most recent report was published as part of the Oranga Tamariki Annual Report and can be found [here](#) (please see Appendix C titled *Safety of Children in Care Annual Report – reporting period 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024*). During this reporting period, 66 children in care had a finding of sexual abuse (a total of 74 findings, but an overall reduction in findings of 23 from the previous year). The majority of sexual abuse experienced by children in care occurs outside the child's placement and includes harm by peers or other non-related adults. In this context sexual abuse also includes non- contact abuse such as acts like grooming a young person, exposing them to pornography or suggestive behaviours or comments. This information is described more fully in the report.

Previous Safety of Children in Care Annual Reports can be found [here](#).

## IN-CONFIDENCE

Given the above, this part of your request is refused under section 18(d) of the Act as the information is publicly available with respect to the last five years.

Prior to 2018, and the commencement of our yearly safety of children in care reporting, Oranga Tamariki and its predecessor organisations did not collect this data in a format that enables us to respond to your request. As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) as the information cannot be made without substantial collation or research.

Your request for information was for this data over the past decade. We do not have reporting in this format prior to 2018 and therefore your request for earlier data is refused due to manual collation.

Oranga Tamariki may make the information contained in this letter available to the public by publishing this on our website with your personal details removed.

I trust you find this information useful. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise them with Oranga Tamariki. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about this is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by contacting them on 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Nicolette Dickson  
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