



why you should care



a plan for children in care





Minister's Foreword: Why you should care

New Zealand is a land of opportunity and for most, a great place to bring up kids. But there is a dark side to this remarkable country which resides within too many homes. Thousands of children are growing up unsafe and unprotected in chaotic homes. Many are abused and neglected by the very people who should love and protect them. This is New Zealand's ugly secret.

In the last year Child, Youth and Family received over 125,000 reports from people concerned enough about a child's safety to notify authorities. In over 21,000 of these cases, child abuse or neglect was confirmed.

So that's over 340 notifications and 57 confirmed serious abuse and neglect cases every day. That's 2,400 reports of child abuse and neglect every week in New Zealand.

There is no excuse for beating, abusing and neglecting our children. No child's life should begin this way. And when it does, the harm is substantial and long lasting. The social and economic costs of abuse and neglect are beyond comprehension. A baby shaken in anger and out of ignorance may be left with permanent brain damage, or even die as a result. Children beaten and sexually abused grow up carrying the burden of that abuse. Many driven by anger, low self esteem and distrustful of others, follow a path to crime and violence and many repeat their experience on the next generation. The neglected child is a silent timebomb. Left alone, unwashed and unloved this child may not be physically bruised or injured but will be deeply affected and is unlikely to grow into a healthy, loving individual who is a productive member of the community unless we step in to help.

What we are discussing here is ugly, it is shameful and it is unpalatable. But it is New Zealand's reality and one we must all address. Not just the Government, not just Police and Child, Youth and Family, but community, families, individuals, neighbours, teachers, friends, uncles, aunties. We must face this together. We must do everything we can to protect our children from abuse and neglect.

This is a challenge for all New Zealanders. It is a challenge for Māori. Māori children are over-represented in abuse and neglect statistics. Māori clients make up more than half of all findings of abuse. In New Zealand, there can be no excuse for beating and neglecting children.

I invite you to read this document. It shows that Child, Youth and Family is more responsive now than any time in the past two decades and able to respond to increasing notifications and reach out to more at-risk families.

It outlines important changes to further improve the way we protect children which are in the pipeline as well as some recent initiatives. It's clear there is a lot of work being



done and more to do because protecting children and keeping them safe will always be a Government priority. Which is why we need to think about the following things:

No matter how efficient and how innovative Child, Youth and Family continues to be, resources are limited. The organisation and its dedicated, hard working staff are coping well with current demand but in truth that only takes care of the critical cases.

We all know early intervention is the best way to make a difference, but Child, Youth and Family is in the position of having to throw the bulk of its resources into dealing with critical cases when the aim is to be more involved with families before things get really bad.

Surely, the answer ultimately lies in a change in our country's culture; a change which leads to zero-tolerance for child abuse and neglect. Otherwise, we will continue to lead the world in beating, neglecting and abusing our children.

And we know those children who are abused and neglected are the same adults we see years later filling New Zealand courts and prisons. Many of those who live ruined lives will ruin the lives of others - the victims of their crimes and also their own children. That is the price for tolerating child abuse. We must work together to protect our children.

Hon Paula Bennett

Minister for Social Development and Employment



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Keeping kids safe together

Every day of the week, Child, Youth and Family receives 347 notifications of actual or potential child abuse, neglect or exposure to family violence.

125, 000 notifications a year: why you should speak up

It is the Police more than any other, who are primary in referring cases. However, health professionals and education providers are also significant notifiers. And of course, family members themselves, friends, neighbours, concerned onlookers and local helping agencies all play a part in notifying Child, Youth and Family when they see something worrying.

Police notify Child, Youth and Family every time they attend a domestic violence case and find a child present. This change in practice is a significant driver in the 24% increase in notifications occurring each year. If there is violence in the home, even if the child has only witnessed it, there is concern.

Child, Youth and Family extended its **contact centre coverage to 24 x 7 in May 2010**

We need all New Zealanders to step up and speak out for babies and children if they see something is wrong, because children need our protection.

While it may be a hard step to take, by simply picking up the phone and telling Child, Youth and Family you have a concern, you could be making a life-saving difference.

Sometimes it's difficult to know whether what you've seen is abusive or neglectful behaviour towards children. It can also be frightening to know about or to witness such behaviour, and it's often difficult to take that next step and tell somebody who can do something about it. We will often observe or experience abusive or dangerous behaviour more than once before we summon the courage to seek help for ourselves or for others who are victims.

Little children need extra care

Very young children and babies have special vulnerabilities. Small children rely on adults to protect them, particularly when they are too small to run, or hide, or tell their own story.

In 2009/2010 Child, Youth and Family delivered the **Never, ever shake a baby** campaign

That's why Child, Youth and Family contracts with organisations like Child Protection Services (CPS) to provide education on child abuse to people who interact with children and families every day, like schools, early childhood educators, and health professionals, because little children rely on these people to speak up on their behalf.

And some parents simply don't know that they can either kill or permanently damage their children through their own actions. In New Zealand, on average around 23 babies



are admitted to hospital each year from being shaken and four will die. A further 50 to 60 will die from sudden unexplained death in infancy.

Using our public education resources we try to help more parents, especially our vulnerable families, to understand what to do if, for example their baby won't stop crying.

Child, Youth and Family
**contracted 26 child abuse
education sessions for
professionals in 2009/2010**

Education is one of the most powerful forms of intervention, so we will continue to target our efforts on teaching parents about issues that put their babies and children at risk. And we will support the development of programmes and local projects that help spread the message to our more difficult-to-reach families.

How we respond

When you pick up the phone and call **0508 FAMILY**, Child, Youth and Family now guarantees a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week response, this went live in May 2010. That means you get to talk to a trained professional who can listen to your concerns and work out the next best step.

After talking to you, if it is determined we need to take some action we will assign the case a criticality for action:

- 24 hours for critical cases (immediate protection required)
- 48 hours for very urgent cases (immediate action required)
- 7 days for urgent cases (investigation or assessment required)
- 28 days for low urgent cases (assessment required).

Our workload is high and ever growing, so giving each case a criticality rating allows us to prioritise our work, ensuring social workers are most responsive to the children whose safety is at greatest risk.

**92% of cases were seen
within the agreed
timeframes in 2009/2010**

Being on top of our business

Sadly, because of the sheer volumes of children who are notified to Child, Youth and Family in any one year, we have had to apply quite a rigorous test as to whether we can become involved or not. This has meant only the most serious cases received our attention.

So effectively, we set a threshold for entry to our services. Over the years this has meant we have only been able to attend to those families with immediate safety concerns, as opposed to families where we could become involved to address the early signs of neglectful but not necessarily abusive behaviour. We did this to get control of



our workload, so we could help those children and families at the greatest risk. Six years ago, we had 3,682 cases waiting to be allocated to social workers; that meant they were in a queue for services. As at 30 June 2010, we have just 99¹. Effectively, there is no longer a queue, which is a remarkable improvement.

Of course there are many families that sit along the continuum from abusive (where Child, Youth and Family is involved) to troubled (where community support service may play a role). So we introduced our differential response approach, inviting community organisations including those we fund, to partner with us to deliver services and support to families who might not need Child, Youth and Family in their lives, but who could benefit from community support or services. This offers an opportunity for families to work with helping agencies to find solutions. We've also asked the community organisations we fund to prioritise more of their efforts towards the families who will otherwise require a social work response from Child, Youth and Family.

In a period of six years, Child, Youth and Family has **gone from 3,682 cases in a queue for service to just 99**

So Child, Youth and Family is on top of its core business. It is more responsive than any time in the past two decades and continues to prioritise its work and build systems

In 2009 we **introduced differential response nationwide** to help more families

and programmes that allow us to respond even more effectively to families. This provides the first chance in nearly 20 years to intensify our efforts in areas that will

produce the greatest gains for the future of our most at-risk children and families.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all statistics in this document have been sourced from CEI and cover the period 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010, or as at 30 June 2010.



Intensifying our efforts to create brighter futures

Each year thousands of children are found to have been sexually or physically abused, or have experienced harmful behaviour at the hands of their parents.

Children are victims of these traumatic events, and their life stories must be told and understood so that social workers, caregivers and other professionals know where to start picking up the pieces of these damaged young lives. Perpetrators of these crimes against children must also be held to account, so the process of evidence gathering conducted by the Police requires skill, sensitivity and co-operation.

Working with others

It is essential Child, Youth and Family and Police work together. In recognition of that, the Child Protection Protocol has been developed to:

- keep children safe
- hold perpetrators to account
- reduce child victimisation.

At the heart of our joint work with Police is the gathering of evidence through the forensic interview of children who are victims of serious abuse. Both Child, Youth and Family and Police have dedicated evidential interviewing

Police and Child, Youth and Family developed a **Child Protection Protocol** in April 2010

teams and where possible, we are now co-locating these specialist resources to improve services to children and families who are victims. The first purpose-built Multi-Agency Centre, providing specialist facilities and co-located staffing, was opened in Manukau City in June 2010 and we expect more than 1,000 children will need the service each year. A similar co-located service operates in Tauranga and it is expected that the concept will be extended to Wellington and Hamilton within the next year, with plans for nationwide coverage under development. Simply put, staff from Child, Youth and Family and Police are physically working side by side in the same building, so they can provide the most effective response to child abuse together.

Working with District Health Boards and paediatric staff is also central to protecting

The first purpose-built **multi - agency forensic interviewing facility** opened in June 2010

children who present with injuries that are known to be non-accidental. In New Zealand, on average 63 children under two are admitted to hospital as a result of serious

abuse. On average four under twos die as a result of abuse every year.

Because cases of abuse are recognised when children are admitted to hospital, we are committed to having trained staff available to act on concerns. By December 2010, we



will have 16 dedicated social workers working alongside health professionals in 20 of our hospitals. A key role for these social workers is to convene multi-disciplinary meetings with paediatric staff, Police, psychologists, Child, Youth and Family and others to ensure a safety plan is put in place to protect children from future harm.

Child, Youth and Family has **dedicated 16 social workers to 20 District Health Boards** to reduce further abuse of children

Prevention is best

It might surprise you to know that last year, 78² babies were removed from their mothers at birth because of known dangers while the mother was pregnant. It is not uncommon for parents who have previously had children removed from their care to go on to have more children. If this happens, Child, Youth and Family, social workers and

Parents who have previously had a child removed from their care are subject to a **mandatory safety assessment at each new birth**

health professionals have to ensure the new baby will be safe; in some cases that could mean removing the child from the home. We have strengthened our practice in this area, making it mandatory for an assessment of the

child's safety to be completed in each case of a new birth where children have previously been removed.

Most times we know when an at-risk mum is going to have a new baby, because of the relationships that exist at a local level between health professionals, Police, social workers and community workers. However, sometimes the information isn't shared or one party doesn't know the parents' history. Information sharing is a key way for agencies to co-operate in protecting children early, and there is an opportunity to build stronger interfaces and develop some common terminology and recording systems across agencies.

Getting involved when we need to

Last year we involved ourselves directly in the lives of 20,028 families because of serious concerns raised about children.

This means social workers undertook a formal investigation into the safety of children where the risk concerned serious physical abuse and had the potential to be a criminal matter. Alternatively, and in the majority of cases, an assessment was completed, where social workers engaged with families to

Last year, **1,307 children were removed from their families** by Child, Youth and Family social workers

² Sourced from Child, Youth and Family Operational Data as at 30 June 2010



establish a better environment for their children by addressing needs and changing parenting behaviours.

Sometimes social workers encounter situations that are obviously harmful and require immediate action to remove children to safety. Every time we do this we must seek authority from the Family Court to uplift children, so this is never a decision we can take on our own. And it is always a last resort, used only when all other alternatives have been exhausted. Often times parents will consent to the removal of their children because they know they are not coping, and even though it is the hardest thing to admit, they realise they are putting their children at risk.

Removing a child from their parents and their homes can be traumatic. They don't know what's going to happen next or when they'll see their mum and dad. While many

Social workers are regularly accompanied by Police when removing children to keep everyone safe

parents are resigned to, or are accepting of the actions social workers take, others are violent, abusive and threatening. This is why, when we remove children from homes, we are often accompanied by the Police.

Because of the critical nature of the choices that confront social workers in keeping kids safe, there will always be more than one person involved in key decision making that affects children's lives. To strengthen our decision making, we introduced the 'Child and Family Consult', a decision-making framework that brings key professionals together to combine our thinking about a case and to search for the best solutions. We learned about the Group Consult from Minnesota in the United States of America and it is now central to our decision-making practice.

We strengthened our critical decision making for at-risk children by introducing the Child and Family Consult

Of all the cases notified to Child, Youth and Family in 2009/2010, in 30% of cases we took no further action

Of course, many families in New Zealand will come into contact with a social worker because concerns have been raised about their children, but Child, Youth and Family may not see any cause to be involved in their

lives or seek any active role in their parenting.

We recognised however, as a result of the review of our response to the repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act, that whether our involvement was intensive or fleeting in

We set up the '0508 ASK CYF' helpline for concerned parents

families lives, we could provide more information and support. That's why we now leave behind an information brochure, so that families can understand what's happening if we contact them. It's also why in April 2010 we set up the '0508 ASK CYF' telephone line (0508 275 293), so that concerned parents or family



members could talk to someone when they felt worried or unsure about what they'd been told.

Finding families own strengths: family meetings and conferences

Over the last six years ending 30 June 2010, 40,955 care and protection Family Group Conferences have been held, to ensure families are a central part of the solution for children and young people.

New Zealand is the only country in the world that requires, by law, its child welfare agency to bring together family members and professionals such as schools, family support workers, the family's GP and counsel for child, to discuss serious concerns about children. It is a central and mandatory step in our decision-making process about the welfare of children at risk, and is a requirement of all future planning that is presented to either the Family Court or Youth Court.

Family Group Conferences offer a **chance for family and whānau to reach out to their younger members** and provide safety and security

It recognises that a family is more than parents and siblings; it can be formed from an extended set of relationships. For young people who offend, it provides an opportunity for reconciliation and restoration for victims in a way that courts can seldom provide. It

allows everyone to play a role in keeping kids safe.

This is the place where families develop future plans for their children, and where agreement is sought with key professionals on the best course of action. Most of all, this is the chance for family – immediate or extended – to reach out to the child at the centre of the situation and offer them the support they need to deal with the challenges before them.

As Child, Youth and Family has struggled in the past to cope with the avalanche of notifications and the associated resource demands on its service, it has constrained the number of Family Group Conferences that are held, holding them largely when matters are heading towards court.

So while we ran 8,160 care and protection Family Group Conferences last year, we think we could help many more at-risk families to keep their children safe, by moving Family Group Conferences further to the front of our practice; starting earlier when problems are evident. This would enable families to be involved and addressing concerns for children's care and safety before problems become entrenched.

We could help keep more kids safe by **involving families and whānau earlier** in the Family Group Conference process



Seeking innovative solutions

We place high value on the development of innovative initiatives, and sponsor a range of Child, Youth and Family community-led innovations that improve outcomes for young New Zealanders.

In the year ending 30 June 2010, there were 62,543³ babies born in New Zealand, most of whom will be cherished and well cared for. Sadly, a small number of these babies (166⁴) and a larger number of children aged under two years (502) entered into State care, and another group will grow up in tenuous and less than satisfactory environments.

We place high value on developing **innovative initiatives and solutions**

That's why our staff in Greymouth have implemented a new programme called 'Babies Can't Wait', focusing on the needs of high-risk parents. The programme is an approach to parenting that aims to improve parental understanding of the child, and promote greater attachment. For many of the parents involved, the influences of their own experiences of childhood abuse and neglect on their parenting will be uncovered.

New Zealand has the second highest rate of teenage pregnancies in the OECD. When they are very vulnerable with little or no parental or family support, their babies are at extreme risk. That's why we are leading the Government's supported housing initiative, funding up to seven houses in high-priority communities, to provide accommodation for five mothers and five children per house at any one time. They will receive 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week adult supervision by trained and experienced staff, supported by health services, lead maternity carers and Well Child providers.

Thirty-five teen mums and their babies will receive supported housing and supervision at any one time

The Government is also developing parenting support for teen fathers who are so often overlooked. This initiative will provide assistance to young fathers to help them gain the skills they need to prepare for the birth of their child, to parent well and identify and respond to their children's health, education and social needs.

³ Sourced from Statistics New Zealand

⁴ This number refers to babies aged under 30 days



Every child needs a home to call their own

In response to the growth in notifications, the number of children in Child, Youth and Family's care almost doubled in the past decade.

Kids in care

Securing the safety of children and young people who can't live with their parents is core to our work as a care organisation. But care must be a journey rather than a destination, so we don't stop until children have the opportunity to live with a family they can call their own, whether this is returning home, living with extended family or a new family.

Child, Youth and Family care needs to be a journey, not a destination

In the 2009/2010 year, at any one time there can be around 5,500 children and young people in the custody of Child, Youth and Family. Of these:

- about 1,000 stay in Child, Youth and Family's residences, group homes or with contracted providers
- with our support, approximately 1,000 remain living with their parents or are living independently
- around 3,300 live with extended family/whānau or with foster carers. Of this group:
 - around 1,100 Māori children are living with extended family/whānau, and around 630 are in non-kin care with foster families
 - around 670 non-Māori children are with extended family/whānau, and around 870 are living with non-kin foster families.

Safety is paramount. Removing children from their parents is one of the most significant interventions we can make in a family's life, so it follows that we must assure ourselves that the next person that cares for them is appropriate and poses no risk. For

We want to ensure kids who can't live with their own parents are placed with extended whānau or foster parents who will give them a home to call their own

this reason all our caregivers go through a series of checks, and we have internal checking standards against this. We also want children to be with the people who are best for them, right from the start wherever possible. This means looking firstly to extended whānau or people connected to the family.

When children can't live at home with their own parents, the next best thing is a safe, loving home with extended whānau or foster parents who are willing to give them a 'home for life'.



About our foster parents

The 4,000 plus caregivers we work with are at the heart of our organisation. They provide a lifeline to children in need of safe and secure care, giving them the grounding they need to succeed in life. They need support so they can be at their best when caring for some of our most vulnerable young New Zealanders.

What caregivers want most from Child Youth and Family is to be valued and treated as an integral part of the system that wraps supports and services around our children and young people. They also see the need for access to better support systems for those kids with challenging behaviour.

Child, Youth and Family has 85 caregiver social workers dedicated to supporting and working alongside foster parents. Over the last 12 months we have put in place 10 dedicated care services managers and an additional 12 caregiver social workers, strengthening our relationships and enhancing our responsiveness to foster parents nationwide.

Child, Youth and Family has **dedicated more frontline staff to supporting foster parents**

To ensure the children who live in our care are doing well and their caregivers are receiving all the supports they need, we are committed to visiting children in our care at least every two months. And we've introduced proactive outbound calling, checking in with caregivers to see if there is anything that they need or anything we can help them with.

Our social workers will **visit kids in care every two months** - minimum

We have a dedicated phone line 0508 CARERS (0508 227 377) that caregivers can call 24 hours a day, seven days a week for advice, or to get connected to a social worker in their area.

Having the right information available is critical to a caregiver's role. Caregivers are invited to attend training and information sessions about the challenges of caring for kids who have been affected by abuse, and they are encouraged to link up with other foster parents through local support groups. In response to their request for more information, we have also developed a foster care kit. One of the things we ask our caregivers to do is keep a diary of events and milestones, so this includes a journal as a practical resource to help them in their foster parenting role.

We introduced a **dedicated 0508 line and proactive call-up service for caregivers**

Ways to care

It's important that we make the process of becoming a caregiver easy for those who want to take up this important role. That's why we are implementing our 'ways to care'



approach for people who want to welcome a child who needs them into their home. Through this process, it won't matter whether the carer is thinking about emergency care, longer-term foster care, giving a child a home for life, or adoption. 'Ways to care' will ensure carers receive information about all the options, so they can make informed choices about the sort of care they want to offer. This also means we can get placements right for the children who need care, matching their needs and long-term goals with people who will be there to love and support them for as long as they need it.

Regardless of the sort of care people are thinking about providing, **'ways to care' will make it easy for them, and help us get it right for the kids**

We always look to whānau first, and we recognise that providing care for children that are part of your family is different from offering care to children who are not known to you. For this reason we are developing a process specifically for family caregivers that recognises their special relationships and needs. This involves the introduction of a family meeting to make sure they are the right people for the role, and to identify the ongoing supports they might need from us and others.

We recognise that whānau caregivers have different needs that require a different response from us

Giving children a home and family to call their own, for life

Securing a home for life within a child's timeframe is potentially our greatest challenge. The transition from care to a 'home for life' relies on people who are prepared to make a lifelong commitment to a child who needs them. Our task is to ensure they are equipped for the challenges new children bring into their lives, so they can provide nurture and care, and feel supported on the journey.

The changing face of care

The 'ways to care' for a child or young person, who is not your own has changed significantly in New Zealand over the years. Those of us who grew up in the 60s and 70s were familiar with the process of adoption and the relative ease of adopting a child. In fact most people who grew up in that time or earlier would likely know someone who was adopted. In 1970, 3,837⁵ children were legally adopted in New Zealand.

Most New Zealanders who grew up in the **60s and 70s will know someone who was adopted**

Changing social values, attitudes and expectations over the following 40 years has shifted adoption from being the primary mechanism for children and young people to

⁵ Keith C Griffiths 1997 (NZ Adoption History & Practice, Social and Legal 1840 -1996)



achieve a permanent home, when they can't live with their parents, to being the least likely pathway. In the year ended 30 June 2010, 199⁶ children and young people were legally adopted in New Zealand. Most of these involved family members such as step-parent adoptions. Child, Youth and Family approved 63⁷ adoption placements for non-relatives during the same period.

Adoption legally transfers all of the birth parents' rights and obligations to the adoptive parents, effectively extinguishing the legal relations between birth parents and adoptive children. Even in the most difficult of circumstances it is unlikely that birth parents agree to adoption, even if they don't have the ability to care for their kids.

In New Zealand **3,837 children were adopted in 1970; last year only 199 children** were adopted

So we have developed a new way to offer permanency for children and their caregivers without extinguishing altogether the rights of birth parents.

A 'home for life'

Both the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 and the Care of Children Act 2004 create increased possibility for children to achieve a 'home for life' that is secure and permanent without needing to go through a legal adoption process. This makes it possible for children who need it to get a safe, long-term home.

A 'home for life' is when whānau or foster carers make a lifelong commitment to a child in foster care, and they are no longer in Child, Youth and Family's care.

In the two years ending June 2010, **389 children were given a 'home for life'**

The advantage for children is that they get to grow up with the care, security and love they need from people who want to and are able to be there for them. In the two years ending 30 June 2010, 389 children were given a 'home for life' with foster carers and people within their own family.

The process that leads to the decision-making about placing children in long-term permanent care is thorough and involves social workers, lawyers for children, judges, birth family members and the new caregiver family. This ensures that when a custody or a parenting order is granted in favour of a new caregiver family, there is a high degree of certainty and security about the permanency of the arrangement for all parties.

⁶ Department of Internal Affairs: Identity Services

⁷ Child, Youth and Family adoption records



What's different from adoption is that while the day-to-day care, responsibility and decision making for the child is held by the 'home for life' parents, an ongoing legal relationship exists with the birth parents. This might mean the birth parents will seek occasional access visits, or may wish to be consulted about the more significant life events that might occur. In those instances social workers liaise and support the parties.

Supporting 'home for life' parents

We want to make sure the parents who offer children in care a 'home for life' are well supported, given the right information and feel confident in making this commitment.

The Government has committed to supporting this strategy, which removes barriers and provides a consistent package of supports for home for life parents throughout the process and beyond.

We will make a **one-time payment of \$2,500** for children moving from foster care to a 'home for life'

If you are a foster parent wanting to offer a 'home for life', we will:

- Connect you with a 'home for life' specialist who will step you through the process. They will answer your questions, help you with paperwork, offer advice and support you in whatever needs to happen.

Once you've offered a 'home for life', we will:

- Pay an upfront payment worth \$2,500.
- Offer a baby care starter pack for those families giving a home to our under twos. This will cover items like high chairs, cots, clothing or other things you might need to get started.
- Meet reasonable legal costs, generally to the level of \$2,500.
- Make sure you have access to supports like respite care, counselling or help with mediation as needed for a period of three years.
- Check in with you every three months, and have someone from the community visit you every six months if you'd like, to make sure you're going ok and see if there are any other things we can help with.
- Link you up with the right financial assistance through Work and Income.
- Work with you and the child's birth family to sort out ongoing contact, in a way that is safe and works well for the child.

We want children who start out in foster care to have the opportunities that all Kiwi kids deserve, which is why we are building a

Our **'friends of home for life' programme** will allow businesses to **support children's hopes and dreams**



'friends of home for life' programme. This will enable corporate and community partners to support the hopes and dreams of our children and young people by offering scholarships and experiences like *Outward Bound*. We share the ambition of our caregivers for these young people.

Supporting families who step-up so kids don't come into our care

All children belong in families where they will be safe and well cared for. When children can't be safely raised by their own parents, then their grandparents, aunts and uncles or cousins often step up and take on parenting roles without Child, Youth and Family involvement. For the most part, these family members never expected to be taking on other people's children, and most grandparents had thought their child rearing days were behind them. They offer the love, nurture and security that all children deserve so that these children don't need to come into Child, Youth and Family care.

The Government recognises these people do an important job and need financial support, which is provided through the Unsupported Child's Benefit. This payment ranges from \$134.91 to \$188.88 depending on the age of the child. It is a universal entitlement meaning it is paid irrespective of what you earn.

The Unsupported Child's Benefit is equivalent to the foster care allowance which is paid to caregivers who look after children while they are in Child, Youth and Family's custody.



Caring for our high needs, high risk kids

Sadly, a subset of the thousands of children who live in our care have high and complex needs; their behaviour means they often present a risk to themselves and others.

Children in our care often have significant developmental delays, display serious antisocial behaviour and have lower than average IQs. Some of the young people are serious offenders who have committed crimes that are indictable in the High Court such as rape, murder, aggravated assault and robbery, and there are others who have committed sexual offences and who have developed sexually harmful behaviours.

Some kids in care have high needs and require a significant level of care and supervision

These young people are unpredictable, sometimes dangerous, and almost always victims themselves of crimes perpetrated upon them by their parents or other adults in their lives. They tend to attract public attention through their actions and are considered high risk by their communities. Our response to these young people must balance the need for community safety with the potential for rehabilitation. This will often involve methods of containment and supervision together with access to psychological and other health-related interventions.

A number of these young people continue to be in our care beyond the age of 17, under guardianship orders directed by the Family Court until the age of 20. This continues our responsibility for young people who are considered by the court to either be at high risk of hurting themselves or somebody in their community.

Caring for kids in our residential facilities

Young people who display moderate to high needs require a different set of accommodation options than children who adapt well to standard foster parenting arrangements. For many of these kids the reality is their 'home for life' will not move beyond a Child, Youth and Family care facility or service.

For our most disturbed kids, their 'home for life' may be in a Child, Youth and Family home or service

For those young people who are not able to be cared for in a community-based setting, their options are confined to one of the eight residential facilities we operate.

Residential facilities are both capital and labour intensive, resulting from the need to ensure effective containment and to prevent young people from harming themselves or others. Because they are secure facilities, specific regulations drive their operating procedures to ensure the young people don't come to harm themselves given their confinement.



Today Child, Youth and Family has four residences with 58 beds dedicated to children and young people with care and protection needs who are victims of abuse and neglect and now experience extreme behavioural problems.

We also have four residences with 146 beds dedicated to young offenders aged between 14 and 17 who have been ordered by the Youth Court to secure care because of the crimes they have committed. We recently opened the fourth residence in Rotorua to accommodate a growing need for beds and we will be extending our Palmerston North facility to accommodate another 10 young people.

We opened a new Youth Justice residence in Rotorua in August, extending our capacity by 30 beds

So overall we expect our capacity to accommodate children and young people in residential care will peak at 214 in 2012.

There is also a specialist secure facility in Christchurch specifically for young people with harmful sexual behaviours. It is run on contract to Child, Youth and Family by Barnardos and houses up to 10 young people.

We now have specialist employment co-ordinators to help young offenders find a job when they leave residence

Our residences provide an environment where we can meet the needs of our most challenging and vulnerable young people. Our goal is simple – improving outcomes for these young people by helping them to realise their potential, and

supporting them to successfully transition back into the community.

Because this is a last chance for many young people to turn their lives around, we have introduced a new clinical services model which focuses on behaviour modification and transition planning. We want to make sure we use every moment a young person is in a residence to rehabilitate and teach, so that's why we've introduced new routines and structure, matching containment with therapy and development.

We introduced into our residences a new clinical service model focusing on rehabilitation and transition

Caring for kids in a group home setting

We also own and operate 80 homes in the community that can accommodate up to 500 children and young people. These houses have been used in a variety of ways by our local staff; some will accommodate only teenage girls, and others will be dedicated to young offenders who are remanded into our custody. On the whole they house those young people who have struggled to live in normal foster care arrangements because of their high needs or high-risk behaviours.

To increase our ability to respond to young people who must either transition out of a secure residential facility or who, unless we can turn the behaviour around are heading



for one, we are dedicating 12 of these homes to our very high needs young people. We call these our Supervised Group Homes because we have invested in upgrading the facilities and in specialist staffing to provide 24/7 supervised and rehabilitative care.

The period that follows a residential placement is a difficult one for young people. Often the transition is too great and placement with foster parents or family members break down, and they return to secure care. The Supervised Group Homes provide an intermediate option so that the young person can adapt back to community living in a supported environment, where family and potential foster parents can visit and learn about how to manage and work with the behaviour of a young person.

We are **dedicating 12 homes as specialist facilities** for our high needs kids

For some of our young people aged between 12 and 14, it will offer an important alternative where offending has occurred, to being placed with older kids in a youth justice residence.

Young offenders aged between 12 and 14 will have **priority access to Supervised Group Homes**

Taking care of children's health needs

As many as 65% of children and young people who come into Child, Youth and Family's care have mental health or behavioural problems. Some 40% have a mental health disorder that warrants referral to a specialist mental health service.

Quite simply, the experience of growing up in care instead of a safe and loving family environment increases the chances children will develop mental health or behavioural problems. If children were already prone to a mental health disorder, being in care can make the symptoms more intense than would otherwise have been the case.

To address the mental health and behavioural problems in this group, a co-ordinated investment approach is required including improved recognition through screening, development of primary care mental health services, support for parents and care givers and enhanced access to specialist mental health services.

We develop a management plan and this may involve specialist mental health intervention and/or a therapeutic living environment (which is often the main agent of change). Where the child or young person is placed in a therapeutic living environment, it is critical everyone understands the underlying issues for the child and provide a consistent skilled response to meeting their mental health needs.

We are developing and implementing a range of tools and processes to systematically identify the mental health needs of children and young people who come into care. These include the Needs Identification Prompt, Health and Education

We are **developing a range of tools and processes to identify the mental health needs** of children who come into care



Assessment programme and planning tools for social workers. As these processes more reliably identify children and young people with mental health and behavioural problems, the demand on existing mental health services will rise.

Access to specialist mental health assessments and services is required to give both the kids and their caregivers a better chance of success.

Children who enter care will almost always have come from abusive or neglectful backgrounds, so making sure their health needs are met is a priority for their long-term wellbeing. For the last two years we have been piloting a health assessment process with four District Health Boards, to provide all kids who enter care with an assessment of their health status. We have learned that 88% of the kids we encounter have an unmet health need which could impact on their long-term outcomes, like hearing problems that lead to learning difficulties. This is an important issue to address.

Access to **mental health services is a priority for kids in care**

Meeting the needs of our disabled kids

About 20% of the children and young people in Child, Youth and Family care have disabilities. To meet their needs, all Government agencies and community providers must work together.

Most disabled children and young people come to Child, Youth and Family's attention for the same reasons as any other child. Over two thirds of disabled children in our care come to our attention along with their siblings because they've been abused or neglected by their families.

Another one in six of the disabled children that come into our care do so because they've been treated differently from their siblings, and have been abused or neglected because of their disabilities.

Only a sixth come to our attention because their families are unable to meet their needs because of the child's disabilities or because the parents are disabled themselves or have mental health problems.

For kids who have a single disability, **a caring foster family can meet all their needs**

Disabled children need a loving supportive home, as any other kid does. Others require intensive co-ordinated supports 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For kids who have a single disability, such as those with a mild intellectual disability or who are paraplegic, a caring foster family can meet all their needs. For others with multiple disabilities, such as those who are blind, deaf and intellectually disabled, well trained foster parents are required, supported by a specialist community provider with access to a range of health services.



All disabled kids are eligible for services funded by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, and some are entitled to services funded by the Accident Compensation Corporation. These services range from those provided by District Health Boards, Primary Health Organisations, community-based disability service providers accessed through Needs Assessment Service Co-ordination (NASC) agencies and special schools, to a number of private specialist providers. Navigating through the maze of the disability support sector can be difficult and complicated.

Navigating through **the maze of the disability support sector can be difficult and complicated**, and many kids miss out

Disability advisors

In 2009 Child, Youth and Family appointed child disability advisors to assist frontline social workers to navigate this maze. The primary role of these advisors is to work with our social workers, to make sure that the right Government agencies and their funded

Newly appointed **child disability advisors make sure the right services can be accessed** to support our disabled kids

community providers are engaging and providing services to our disabled children, and planning the transition when they leave care. They can also work alongside our differential response co-ordinators to ensure that the right community organisations are involved to support these kids and their families

when direct Child, Youth and Family involvement is not required.

While the advisors are a great asset in helping social workers access the health and disability services currently available, there are still gaps in some areas of much-needed support. We're continuing to work closely with the Ministry of Health, particularly in areas of assessment services, behavioural support services and services for kids with Autism.

Transition planning makes sure a young disabled person's **move to a more independent life can be a great success**

Better supports for people caring for disabled children

An important area where we are working is with disability service providers to increase the range of supports available for the disabled children and their families who come to our attention. For example, CCS Disability Action in the Northern Region, along with Community Living Trust in the Midlands Region and the Richmond Fellowship in the Central and Southern Regions are directly supporting families with disabled kids or disabled parents, to make sure the children don't need to come into Child, Youth and Family's care.

We are also working with the Open Home Foundation to increase the availability of skilled foster parents to better meet the needs of these children. We're helping them to develop a proposal that will provide a home where foster parents will be supported by



rostered staff, to create a family environment that meets the needs of disabled young people with multiple disabilities and complex needs.

Through this close collaboration with community service providers, and with the support of other Government agencies and their community providers, the needs of our disabled children are being better met.

Working collaboratively with other agencies such as Health, Education and ACC will ensure we can **better meet the needs of disabled kids and kids with health needs**



A fresh start for young offenders

In an average day at Child, Youth and Family, we will hold 40 youth justice family group conferences, holding young people to account for their offending while helping turn their lives around.

Youth offending takes place among a relatively small group of teenagers in New Zealand. Many offend only once, learn from their mistakes and move on with their lives. There is a subset of more persistent and recidivist offenders who cause harm to themselves and others through their actions. These young people are not easy to work with – they typically come from challenging backgrounds and present with multiple difficulties. Child, Youth and Family, the Police, courts and an array of community providers all search for solutions to help turn these young lives around.

Government's Fresh Start package

The Government's Fresh Start package provides a wider range of options, to hold young offenders to account and to provide more intensive, sustained and individualised support to assist long-term positive change. As well as targeting services and persistent offenders, Fresh Start includes early-intervention initiatives for children and young people at the lower end of offending, or at risk of getting into trouble.

Fresh Start provides **more programmes, more help and more ongoing support**

Changes to sentencing options that extended the length of time young people remain on supervision orders provides an opportunity to work longer and more intensively on rehabilitating young offenders most at risk.

The introduction of military activity camps for our most serious and recidivist young offenders has proven effective already in its trial phases. The young people have

Longer sentences provide more **opportunities to effect behaviour change** for young offenders

responded well to the discipline and structure Army personnel have brought, with many finding hidden talents. The positive nature of the programmes not only offers the outdoor experiences the Army can provide, but puts right

alongside it much needed attention to criminogenic needs, ongoing mentoring and preparation for work. In our last trial programme, two young people got work and four have not re-offended within the seven months since completing the programme.

Perhaps the most telling point in the programme is the graduation ceremony where parents are invited to join their young people and share in their success. It is not uncommon for the parents, many of them hard-bitten adults themselves, to shed a tear at their young person's success – for some it is a time for new beginnings.



Our Military Activity Camp programme is **reducing re-offending and helping young people into work**

Fresh Start has also allowed us to expand Supervision with Activity programmes, providing more capacity to work with serious young offenders, and extend our reach to parts of the country that previously had to send their kids out of

the area like Northland, Nelson and Timaru.

For those young people who are not at the very serious end of offending, the introduction of court supervised and community youth programmes like the one run by 180° Trust in Canterbury allows for a wilderness experience and ongoing mentoring and support that opens up new horizons.

Parents play a key role in the outcomes of these young people, and so the introduction of parenting orders administered by the Youth Court strengthens the accountability to the wider family system, to make change along with the young person.

We will be **funding new supervision programmes** in areas that have missed out until now

The investment in mentoring programmes, alcohol and drug programmes and supervised bail services reinforces the objectives of Fresh Start, rehabilitation and ongoing support.

The pathway to offending often starts at a very early age, and it is quite common for offenders to have a history of care and protection concerns with Child, Youth and Family. Those children who struggle in foster care, or who live in less than satisfactory home environments may well enter into offending behaviour as a child and continue this pattern through their teenage years and on to adulthood.

Staggeringly, almost 60% of Corrections clients have a prior record with Child, Youth and Family.

Most young people stay out of adult prisons, but at some point Child, Youth and Family will have seen most of the young people that do end up there. Where young people have prior involvement with both care and protection and youth justice services within Child, Youth and Family, 52% will have a Corrections record by age 20.

This knowledge presents an opportunity to intervene early in the onset of problems through targeting a more intensive set of responses that address behaviour patterns that are becoming established in the early years.

New Zealand has a chance to significantly impact its future prison population by doing more for the children and young people by deviating them from the pathway to prison.



Looking to the future

In partnership with other agencies and communities across New Zealand, Child, Youth and Family knows what's needed to make the most difference for children and families.

For the first time in 20 years we are in a position where we can be ambitious for the children we care for and families we work with. We're on top of our core business and can begin looking to stretch our services beyond dealing with only the most critical cases, to working with others to help make families stronger, and give children who can't go home a family and life where they can have the same opportunities as other Kiwi kids.

We also understand how what we do in the early years of a troubled child's life can alter what might otherwise become a pathway towards youth offending, and what effective interventions look like for young people who do find themselves in the youth justice process.

While celebrating our successes, this story also highlights a number of opportunities. If we can take the next steps outlined here, we can all work together to move from keeping kids safe to giving them brighter and hopeful futures.