

# He Whakamārama mō te Tūranga Position Description



**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission



New Zealand Government

<b>Position</b>	<b>Secretary for Children and Chief Executive   Te Tumu Whakarae mō te Tamariki</b>
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<b>Agency</b>	<b>Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children</b>
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**This position is a member of the Public Service Leadership Team**

## Position purpose

Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) works with partners and communities, providers and leaders to support children and young people in New Zealand whose wellbeing is at risk of harm now, or in the future; and young people who may have offended or are likely to offend. The Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (the Act) also includes provisions of prevention and early intervention to protect children and young people from harm. The Act empowers Oranga Tamariki and other agencies to take action to prevent or reduce the risk of ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation.

Oranga Tamariki has an important role in leading the Children's sector. However, they are not alone in this and require the support and contributions of other Children's agencies, including the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, to work together to achieve shared goals around the care and protection of children.

Oranga Tamariki was established in 2017 and has, in its current and prior forms, faced considerable and ongoing public scrutiny and been the subject of reviews critical of its approach and performance. In early 2021, a Ministerial Advisory Board was established to provide assurance and recommendations to lift performance and continues to do so.

The Secretary for Children and Chief Executive (Secretary for Children) is not only the legal guardian of children in State Care but is also responsible for providing strategic and operational leadership to Oranga Tamariki to implement the organisational shifts required to effectively deliver for New Zealanders and our most vulnerable children. This role will require gaining the trust and confidence of the public in Oranga Tamariki and New Zealand's prevention, care and protection, and youth justice system.

The imperative for the Secretary for Children is that stability is created and organisational and system performance is improved, particularly on the core care and protection functions. Other priorities include ensuring effective policies and practices are in place for children and young people in need of care and protection or in the youth justice system; the organisation has a fit-for-purpose culture; and solutions for delivery are developed in conjunction with regions, communities, whānau, hapū and iwi.

The Secretary for Children is responsible for a forecasted operating expenditure of \$1.544 billion (in 2024/25) to deliver child-centred services that meet the legislative requirements.

The department employs approximately 4,500 people (with the majority of staff carrying out service delivery) who work in over 75 sites, 220 community homes, 7 care and protection residences, and 11 Youth Justice Remand Homes. There are also over 4,000 children and young people in the Care and Protection Custody of the

Secretary for Children and approximately 145 in Youth Justice custody. This is a subset of the over 18,800 children with open care and protection cases (as of April 2025) and over 74,900 reports of concern received by Oranga Tamariki, highlighting the breadth of Oranga Tamariki's work.

Critical success priorities	<p>The Secretary for Children is accountable for delivering on the Minister's priorities, ensuring the agency remains focused on its core purpose: the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. To achieve success, the Chief Executive will direct their efforts across the following key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading the delivery of statutory functions, including regular visits to children in care, timely responses to reports of concern, support for caregivers, reduction of serious youth offending, and improved complaint handling.</li> <li>• Lead the delivery of Government Target 3 – Reduced child and youth offending. Successful delivery of this would see 15% fewer children and young people with serious and persistent offending behaviour by 2029.</li> <li>• Drive improvements within the Oranga Tamariki commissioning and investment function and consider where a social investment approach can be applied.</li> <li>• Drive organisational change by championing a shift in organisational culture through clear leadership, strengthened accountability, and investment in management capability and performance systems.</li> <li>• Navigate significant legislative and policy reforms within a complex environment, including the Young Serious Offender declarations; Military-Style Academy programme; and improvements to Residential care, both in care and protection and youth justice.</li> <li>• Strengthen trust, accountability and reporting by building and maintaining Ministerial and public confidence through high standards of transparency, quarterly performance reporting against Ministerial priorities, and sound financial and operational management, including success within the commissioning and investment function.</li> <li>• Foster collaborative system leadership by building strong, trusted relationships with caregivers, iwi, sector partners, and public agencies to deliver joined-up services and improve outcomes for children and young people.</li> <li>• Lift performance and assurance through continuous improvement in service delivery, including improved risk assurance, the training and supervision of social workers on the frontline, improved case management systems and delivery and understanding of the legislative, legal and fiscal context.</li> </ul>
Agency	<p>Provided for in Legislation, Oranga Tamariki has the following core functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care and protection – responding to concerns for child safety and wellbeing; providing statutory care and protection services for children and young people; and enabling and supporting families, whānau and caregivers to provide safe, stable, loving care for children and young people in care.</li> <li>• Youth justice – supporting young people to repair the harm they have caused and get back on track through the provision of restorative youth justice family group conferences and providing custodial placement options for remand and supervision with residence orders.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoptions and surrogacy – supporting expectant parents considering placing a child for adoption and assessing and approving adoptive applicants who are seeking to adopt a child within New Zealand or from another country.</li> <li>• Transition support – supporting young people as they transition to independence from state care and youth justice up to the age of 25.</li> <li>• Early support – coordinating, funding and contracting services that prevent children from escalating through the care and protection and youth justice system.</li> <li>• Prevention – leading the system to influence and monitor outcomes for children and young people at risk of coming into contact with the care and protection or youth justice systems.</li> </ul> <p>As part of addressing capability and capacity challenges, the Secretary for Children is expected to consider how Oranga Tamariki can be refocused on its core statutory care and protection role, provide advice to Ministers on options (as appropriate) and make the necessary operational changes to achieve this.</p>
System	<p>As a public service Chief Executive, the Secretary for Children must perform the functions and duties as set out in relevant statutes and legislation, including demonstrating and upholding the values of the Public Service and general responsibilities to the appropriate Minister as set out in the Public Service Act 2020, and complying with the Public Finance Act 1989.</p> <p>As a member of the Public Service Leadership Team, the Secretary for Children is responsible for providing strategic leadership that contributes to an effective and cohesive Public Service, working together to model leadership behaviours and assisting other members to fulfil their responsibilities.</p> <p>These responsibilities include upholding the principles of political neutrality, free and frank advice, merit-based appointments, open government, and stewardship, and ensure the agency also does so. It also includes ensuring the integrity and conduct of the agency's employees and supporting the Crown in its relationships with Māori under the Treaty of Waitangi.</p> <p>The Secretary for Children also has a legislated responsibility for the oversight of the Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan. This Action Plan is designed as a commitment from government agencies to collaborate for children and young people in New Zealand with the greatest needs. It will enable a different experience for these children, young people, their families and whānau when working with agencies, as well as the social workers and other front-line staff who support them.</p>

## Core Competencies

The role of Secretary for Children is complex and critical; the appointee must demonstrate applied experience to deliver across a number of the priority areas set out below:

<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Context Management</b>	<b>Organisational Leadership</b>	<b>System Leadership</b>	<b>Personal Leadership</b>
Leading the delivery of large-scale, people-focused services with a strong focus on quality, timeliness, and accountability.	Ability to identify and manage strategic and reputational risk, to build and maintain high levels of public trust and confidence.	Leading through change, whilst continuing to drive performance, delivering on its core statutory care and protection role and government priorities.	Experienced in leading collaborative efforts to address shared challenges and deliver better system outcomes and joined-up services.	Courage and conviction in leading through significant change and transformation, and creating stability.
Proven ability to drive improvements in frontline operations by enhancing service standards, staff capability, and outcomes.	Building and maintaining effective relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders, NGOs community, iwi and Māori organisations.	Ability to support a healthy, diverse and inclusive culture in Oranga Tamariki.	Demonstrated commitment to working in partnership with diverse communities.	Resilience and tenacity to lead with influence across the system and sector.
Delivered results through evidence-based approaches, performance monitoring, and service improvement.	Operating with confidence in legal, fiscal, and regulatory frameworks to support decision-making.	Business practice expertise that will support the development of a strong control environment.	Ability to challenge the status quo and view things from different perspectives when needed, fostering innovative thinking and continuous improvement.	Ability to inspire followership and confidence in senior leaders and stakeholders.
Demonstrated success in coordinating services across the social sector.	Ability to articulate complex issues clearly and persuasively to various audiences to highlight performance story, including the public and media.	Strong background in financial management and oversight, with experience managing large budgets, seeking efficiencies and ensuring fiscal accountability.		Demonstrates values-driven leadership grounded in integrity and equity, including commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi.

## Key relationships

Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Minister for Children</li> <li>Ministerial Advisory Board</li> </ul>
Public Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oranga Tamariki works closely with many agencies in pursuing its priority outcomes including: Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice, New Zealand Police, Department of Corrections, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Te Tari Whakatau, the Office of Treaty Settlements and Takutai Moana, Te Puni Kōkiri, Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies, Crown Response Office and the Social Investment Agency</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Joint Venture for the Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence, Justice Sector Leadership Board, Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care Chief Executive's Group</li> <li>• Social Workers Registration Board</li> <li>• Members of the Public Service Leadership Team</li> </ul>
Iwi and wider communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Māori and iwi, including those in strategic partnerships</li> <li>• Communities and groups that are over-represented in the system</li> <li>• Non-governmental organisations and social service providers</li> <li>• Social services peak bodies</li> <li>• VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai</li> </ul>
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In international adoption operations Oranga Tamariki has responsibilities to support, assess and provide advice on adoption arrangements</li> </ul>
Statutory	<p>External monitoring of Oranga Tamariki includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission is an independent Crown Entity with responsibilities to advocate for all children and young people in New Zealand and provide advice and guidance on Oranga Tamariki policies, practices and services and monitor residences under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</li> <li>• The Office of the Ombudsman is an Officer of Parliament with powers and responsibilities to investigate complaints, it has established a specific complaints oversight function to deal with complaints about Oranga Tamariki</li> <li>• Aroturuki Tamariki - the Independent Children's Monitor was established to monitor compliance with the regulations (the National Care Standards) which outline the standard of care children and young people in State care must receive.</li> </ul>
Security Clearance	Appointment will be subject to a New Zealand Government <b>Secret</b> security clearance

Up to date information on outcomes, organisational structure, dimensions and appropriations of Oranga Tamariki can be found on the website [Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

- Other useful information is also available at the following links:
- Annual Reports: [Annual Report | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)
- Strategic Intentions: [Oranga Tamariki Strategic Intentions 2024/25 - 2029/30](#)
- Government target 3: [Factsheet - Target 3 - Reduced child and youth offending - December 2024](#)