

Chair
Cabinet Business Committee

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE FIRST CHILD WELLBEING STRATEGY

Proposal

- 1 This paper discusses the process for developing the first child wellbeing strategy (the strategy), which will enhance and promote the wellbeing of children and young people in New Zealand.
- 2 Further advice on scope and consultation processes for the strategy will be reported to Cabinet in April 2018.

Executive summary

- 3 This Government is committed to genuine change in order for all children in New Zealand to thrive. To help achieve this Cabinet has agreed to legislative amendments requiring the publication of a strategy for improving the wellbeing of children in New Zealand [CBC-17-MIN-0048 refers].
- 4 This is an opportunity to set out the Government's long-term vision for all children's wellbeing, using an evidence-based approach. It will challenge us to deliver universal services in a way that ensures support and intensity of service is proportionate to a child's need, while at the same time lifting the wellbeing of all children, regardless of their level of disadvantage.
- 5 The strategy will reinforce the Government's thorough commitment to improving the lives of children. It will set out the outcomes sought for all children, including those living in poverty or more general socio-economic disadvantage. To help ensure progress it will describe the concept of wellbeing and associated measures to be reported against. The strategy will contain specific actions to improve outcomes across a range of areas, such as health, education and income adequacy. It will signal efforts both within and outside of government to lift child wellbeing.
- 6 Ministers and relevant agencies will need to work together to develop the strategy, which will be informed by consultation with children and young people, iwi/Māori, and other stakeholders. Ministers and relevant agencies will also need to work together to implement the policies set out in the strategy.
- 7 The first strategy will be developed in 2018, and will consist of a framework to begin building a multi-agency work programme. ^{s9(2)(f)(iv)}

- 8 We propose to report back to Cabinet by April 2018 with proposals on the scope of the strategy and the engagement process.

Background

- 9 On 6 December 2017, Cabinet Business Committee agreed to proposals set out in the paper *Legislating to Drive Action to Reduce Child Poverty*, for a Child Poverty Bill which seeks to help achieve a significant and sustained reduction in child poverty in New Zealand [CBC-17-MIN-0048 refers].
- 10 The paper included a proposal to amend legislation to require the responsible Minister, in consultation with other Ministers, to publish a strategy on how they will promote the wellbeing of children in New Zealand that addresses:
- improving the wellbeing of all children
 - improving, as a particular focus, the wellbeing of children with greater needs
 - reducing child poverty and monitoring outcomes
 - improving the wellbeing of the core populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki (namely, children with early risk factors for future statutory involvement, those who Oranga Tamariki works with, and care-experienced children).
- 11 The intent of the strategy aligns with the Government's broader intentions regarding measuring and reporting against wellbeing outcomes and future Budget reform.
- 12 Cabinet agreed that the legislation will specify certain requirements, including that the strategy:
- be published within 12 months of the legislation being passed, and be reviewed every three years
 - set out the policies that Government has implemented, and those it intends to implement, to improve the wellbeing of children and to reduce child poverty and socio-economic disadvantage
 - set out the outcomes sought for children in New Zealand and how these outcomes will be measured
 - include an assessment of the likely impact on child poverty that the policies outlined in the strategy will have, as well as the likely impact of changing economic conditions.
- 13 The legislation will also require the responsible Minister to report annually on progress in achieving the outcomes set out in the strategy, including monitoring of disparities between outcomes for children in poverty and experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, and outcomes for all children.
- 14 Cabinet also agreed that the vulnerable children's plan, provided for by Part 1 of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, be renamed the "Oranga Tamariki Action Plan". Cabinet also agreed that the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan have a specific focus on

the children and young people Oranga Tamariki works with, and those who are at risk of needing the statutory services of Oranga Tamariki in future.

Broad scope of the strategy

General considerations

- 15 The strategy will set out the Government's vision for the wellbeing of all children. We will take an evidence-based approach to understand how universal and targeted services can make the greatest difference to the lives of children. The strategy will promote proportionate universalism, aiming to achieve equality of outcomes for all children through services that are proportionate to each child's level of disadvantage and need.
- 16 The strategy will highlight the different proportional responses required for:
- all children in New Zealand
 - children who are not significantly disadvantaged for the vast majority of their lives, but who nonetheless experience occasional adverse events
 - children living in material deprivation
 - children whose circumstances may change frequently, meaning they may move in and out of being in high need
 - children who are living in difficult circumstances that predispose them to increasing levels of need in the future
 - children who are in, or at risk of coming into, care and protection or youth justice services.
- 17 It will also highlight appropriate responses to groups of children who have disproportionately poorer outcomes, such as Māori children, Pacific children, and children with disabilities. The scope will be carefully considered to ensure the strategy is effective and sufficiently focuses on child poverty, as well as setting out clear accountability across relevant agencies.
- 18 The first strategy will be developed in 2018, and will consist of a framework to begin building a multi-agency work programme upon. ^{s9(2)(f)(iv)}
- 19 A learning approach will be taken, looking at how measures are tracking, where specific research and evaluation is required to support policy proposals, and whether more formal evaluation is required.

Child poverty

- 20 The strategy will have a clear focus on reducing child poverty, being developed alongside the setting of targets for child poverty, and how the government seeks

to achieve them. Work on the child poverty targets is already underway, including through development of the Child Poverty Bill.

- 21 The strategy will include consideration of different policy measures and their potential impact. There is a range of existing Government commitments that are relevant: including the Families Package, plans to 'overhaul' the welfare system, and Kiwibuild.
- 22 The strategy could also consider, for example:
 - general economic conditions, such as employment opportunities and wage rates, and regional development
 - policy settings that increase the incomes of low-middle income households, reduce the demands on household budgets, and/or improve budgeting skills
 - longer-term measures, including initiatives to improve education and health outcomes for children from households experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
- 23 Additionally, the interaction between the elements relating to child poverty and those addressing child wellbeing, and how to manage potential overlaps, will need to be carefully considered.

Defining the approach to wellbeing

- 24 There are various existing conceptual definitions and frameworks for wellbeing. These include consideration of issues such as physical and mental health, protection from abuse and neglect, secure housing, educational achievement, access to opportunity, and child and youth offending. It will be necessary to align these different frameworks so there is one easily understood approach that guides the strategy.
- 25 Some of the frameworks that will have to be considered include:
 - the holistic wellbeing construct employed in the Oranga Tamariki Lifetime Wellbeing Model, which uses the five domains of safety, security, stability, wellness and development (this aligns with the definition of wellbeing in the Vulnerable Children Act 2014)
 - Treasury's Living Standards Framework, which includes a focus on growing human and social capital
 - those of international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Better Life Index and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, taking into account international agreements New Zealand is party to.
- 26 The science advisors are currently working on a life course narrative of child wellbeing, and this work will also contribute to the framework and measures included in the strategy.

- 27 Any approach to wellbeing will need to take into account the New Zealand context, with key consideration given to family and whānau wellbeing, and research already undertaken in New Zealand.
- 28 The Oranga Tamariki Lifetime Wellbeing Model models the wellbeing of all children in New Zealand. Created in partnership with government agencies from across the social sector, the conceptual construct was built with reference to international evidence, how frontline staff saw the needs of children and young people, and other existing frameworks (such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Whānau Ora outcomes framework).
- 29 We will also need to take into account what types of data are available or can be obtained depending on the measures we choose to use.
- 30 We propose to report back to Cabinet in April 2018 with proposals on the scope of the strategy.

Work programme to deliver on the child wellbeing strategy

- 31 Implementation of the strategy will require relevant agencies to work together closely and effectively. A range of plans may be needed to deliver the strategy, potentially including individual agency and cross-sector plans, and the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan.
- 32 The Child Poverty Bill requires the strategy to inform the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan, which will set out how Chief Executives of children's agencies will work together to improve the wellbeing of the core groups of children of interest to Oranga Tamariki. The strategy will include policy priorities for these children, and promote a cohesive approach to child wellbeing more broadly across government.
- 33 We will consider what appropriate delivery mechanisms are required for actions identified in the first strategy, and will seek decisions from Cabinet on these as appropriate. We will be cognisant of relevant existing work programmes across government, such as the work programme around the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Governance

- 34 The strategy will cover a wide range of government activity. There will need to be a forum for collective ministerial discussions, taking into account the range of portfolio interests (in addition to Child Poverty Reduction and Children) such as: Crown/Māori Relations; Corrections; Finance; Housing and Urban Development; Education; Justice; Social Development; Disability Issues; Health; Economic Development; Māori Development; Police; Revenue; Whānau Ora; Pacific Peoples; Statistics; and Women. We will give further consideration to whether this is provided by a Cabinet Committee or a dedicated Ministerial group.
- 35 We recommend that a transitional Chief Executives' governance group be established immediately by the Chief Executives of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Oranga Tamariki to develop and drive the child wellbeing strategy. The group will first begin work on a narrative for the strategy in time for Budget 2018. As development of the strategy progresses, the role of the Chief

Executives' governance group will be to ensure work is carried out to achieve the targets and outcomes set out in the child wellbeing strategy.

- 36 The State Services Commission is working on advice to clarify roles and responsibilities between existing cross-agency social sector bodies – in particular, the Social Investment Board, the Vulnerable Children's Board and Chief Executives of children's agencies for the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan. The on-going governance for the strategy and the child poverty work can be revisited as necessary as part of this process.
- 37 Expertise from a range of agencies will be needed to deliver policy advice for the strategy. A Cross-agency team is being established to develop this advice, and the team will be hosted by Oranga Tamariki.

Engagement on the strategy

Consultation requirements

- 38 The paper *Legislating to Drive Action to Reduce Child Poverty* included a recommendation that the Child Poverty Bill require the responsible Minister to consult with children, Māori and other stakeholders in the development of the strategy.
- 39 Beyond legislative requirements, effective consultation is essential to ensure stakeholder and public engagement with the strategy and its purpose.

The strategy will build on findings from previous consultation processes

- 40 There has been significant public engagement in the social sector in recent years, such as for the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children (2011), and the update of the New Zealand Health Strategy (2016). The issues that affect children's wellbeing are likely to have been well-canvassed through this engagement, and consultation will build upon a stocktake of the findings from previous processes.
- 41 Targeted consultation has also been undertaken with Māori groups and non-government organisations on the legislative proposals in the Child Poverty Bill. Groups have largely been supportive of the intent of a strategy, and the following specific themes arose from the consultation:
 - A broader strategy risks losing the focus on children who have high levels of material need or systemic poor outcomes. The strategy should be linked to those children.
 - Poverty of child is poverty of whānau, and not just poverty of income, but also poverty of spirit and mind.
 - Māori should be involved as part of the public, as treaty partners, and as the indigenous people of New Zealand.
 - The strategy could have regional actions with local partnerships.

- Experts could be used to create or advise on the strategy, including the Office of the Children’s Commissioner.
- A strategy needs to be supported by funding, including at a local level.

Further consultation

- 42 In addition to previous consultation processes and consultation on the Child Poverty Bill, further engagement will be needed. This will include targeted consultation with children and young people, Māori, other stakeholders and representatives of groups who have disproportionately poorer child wellbeing, Pacific, LGBTI, parents and whānau, the academic community and the NGO sector. Officials will also engage with representatives of other groups who experience disproportionately poorer outcomes compared to other groups, such as Pacific children and children with disabilities.
- 43 Public submissions provided through the select committee process for the Child Poverty Bill will also offer the opportunity to inform thinking for development of the strategy.
- 44 The voices of children and young people should be at the centre of the strategy development process. Children and young people have a right to participate in decisions which affect them, including collective participation in decisions that affect all children and young people. Involving them will bring a grounded understanding of what it means for children and young people to experience wellbeing, and what enables, or acts as a barrier, to their wellbeing. We will build on the engagement of children and young people in the creation, design and set-up of Oranga Tamariki as well as previous engagement and consultations exercises.
- 45 Specific mechanisms for involving children and young people in developing the strategy will need to be explored. However, it will be key for children and young people to be well-supported to partake in a safe, ethical and appropriate engagement process that:
- has multiple mechanisms for involvement
 - ensures involvement from the outset and in an on-going way
 - creates meaningful opportunities for their views to have influence at the highest levels
 - ensures input is grounded in lived experience of, for example, child poverty.
- 46 Officials will also consult with a range of Māori groups and individuals with an interest in child wellbeing, who have resources that are currently deployed to improve child wellbeing, and whose perspective and buy-in will be crucial to long-term success. As this process is developed officials will work closely with Te Puni Kōkiri and the Crown-Māori relations unit in the Ministry of Justice.
- 47 As there will be a high level of interest in the strategy, the engagement process will need to consider how to manage expectations to mitigate the risk of the strategy becoming too broad. We propose to report back to Cabinet on how officials and Ministers will engage with children and young people, Māori, and other stakeholders in April 2018.

Timeframes

- 48 Cabinet agreed that the Child Poverty Bill be included in the Legislation Programme for 2018 with a priority of Category 2. Cabinet also agreed that the strategy be published within 12 months of this legislation being passed. To support the Child Poverty Bill, officials are developing a working understanding of child wellbeing.
- 49 The strategy's work programme will inform decisions for future budget processes. We do not intend to seek funding for the strategy through Budget 2018, but it will help inform other related initiatives. Any resourcing required in the interim (such as establishing a secretariat) will be sought from existing resources and baseline funding.
- 50 s9(2)(f)(iv)

Consultation

- 51 This paper was prepared by Oranga Tamariki, with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Treasury; the Ministry of Social Development; the State Services Commission; Statistics NZ; Te Puni Kōkiri; the Ministry for Pacific Peoples; the Ministry for Women; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Education; New Zealand Police; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment; the Department of Corrections; the Social Investment Agency; Inland Revenue; and the Education Review Office have been consulted.
- 52 The government agencies consulted on this paper have indicated areas where further work is required regarding development and engagement processes. In light of this feedback, we have instructed officials to provide us with further advice on the following areas:
- the scope of the strategy, including how it will interact with the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan, and how it will ensure a strong focus on children in need
 - how to incorporate a full range of indicators of wellbeing, such as cultural wellbeing, physical and mental health, education, parent and whānau wellbeing, disability, child and youth offending, employment opportunities, and parental imprisonment
 - how existing definitions and frameworks of wellbeing will inform the strategy, and how existing work programmes will be taken into account to ensure alignment
 - ensuring the strategy is underpinned by a strong and robust monitoring and evaluation approach, and that the evidence base includes capturing the lived experience of children and young people
 - different approaches that could be taken to ensure effective engagement with the full range of relevant stakeholders
 - the role of advisory and reference groups

- the detailed work programme and associated timeline.

Financial implications

53 Any funding for policy initiatives that will form part of the strategy will be sought through budget processes.

Human rights implications

54 The policy proposals in this paper appear consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Legislative implications

55 This paper has no legislative implications.

Impact analysis

56 An impact statement or impact analysis is not required.

Gender implications

57 Women are more likely than men to be the primary caregivers for children and young people. Strategic policy to improve child wellbeing is likely to have benefits for women who are caring for children, and some of the policy proposals flowing out of the strategy may support parents.

Disability perspective

58 Children with disabilities are more likely to experience poor outcomes. Specific consideration will need to be given to the needs of children with disabilities in developing the strategy.

Recommendations

59 We recommend that the Cabinet Business Committee:

- 1 **note** that on 6 December 2017, Cabinet agreed to amend Part 1 of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 to require the responsible Minister, in consultation with other Ministers, to publish a strategy for improving the wellbeing of children in New Zealand [CBC-17-MIN-0048 refers];
- 2 **note** that Cabinet agreed that the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction and the Minister for Children be jointly responsible for overseeing the development of the wellbeing strategy;
- 3 **note** there is some flexibility for what the strategy could encompass, but consideration should be given to ensuring the scope is manageable, that there is sufficient focus on child poverty, and that the strategy provides for sufficient accountability;

- 4 **note** that the measures included will need to align with existing New Zealand approaches to measuring wellbeing, and take into account international approaches;
- 5 **note** that Cabinet agreed that the vulnerable children's plan, provided for by Part 1 of the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 be renamed the "Oranga Tamariki Action Plan", and have a specific focus on the children and young people Oranga Tamariki works with, and those at risk of future involvement with the statutory services of Oranga Tamariki;
- 6 **note** that a range of plans may be needed to implement the strategy, in addition to the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan;
- 7 **note** that governance arrangements at ministerial and agency levels will need to be established to support the development of the strategy;
- 8 **note** that the Ministers for Child Poverty Reduction and Children will further consider whether Ministerial Governance is best provided through the Cabinet Committee structure or a dedicated Ministerial group;
- 9 **note** that a Chief Executives' governance group will be established immediately to begin work on a narrative in time for use in Budget 2018 communications;
- 10 **note** that the consultation process will build upon a stocktake of findings from recent public engagement processes in the social sector;
- 11 **note** that, in addition to children and young people and Māori who are specified in the Child Poverty Bill to be consulted, other stakeholders should be considered in the development of the strategy, including representatives of: groups who have disproportionately poorer child wellbeing compared with other groups, LGBTI, parents and whānau;
- 12 **invite** the Ministers for Child Poverty Reduction and Children to report back to Cabinet in April 2018 with proposals on the scope of the strategy and the process for consulting with:
- 12.1 children and young people
 - 12.2 Māori, with proposals to be developed in consultation with the Ministers for Crown/Māori Relations, Māori Development and Whānau Ora
 - 12.3 other stakeholders, including those specified in recommendation 11.

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Minister for Child Poverty Reduction

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Hon Tracey Martin
Minister for Children

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