This image is the New Zealand Coat of Arms. With the words New Zealand Government in both English and Māori - Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa.


# Summary of The Child and Youth Strategy 2024-27

## Minister's foreword

Hello, my name is Louise Upston. I am the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction. I work in the Beehive in Wellington.

Welcome to this version of the Child and Youth Strategy, written especially for you. It tells you about the Government’s plan to improve the lives of children and young people in New Zealand.

The plan has a vision, outcomes and three priorities. These will help the Government decide what we spend money on to make the biggest positive difference for you.

We talked to lots of people including children and young people when we were writing this plan, because we want all children to be able to live a good life.

I hope you enjoy reading this plan to make New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people.

Hon Louise Upston

Minister for Child Poverty Reduction

## Introduction

1 in 3 New Zealanders are children and young people (aged 0-24).

This Strategy has 1 vision, 6 outcomes, and 3 priorities.

This is a plan from the Government to help make life better for children and young people in New Zealand. It’s called the Child and Youth Strategy 2024-2027. The goal is to make sure every child and young person has what they need to grow up happy, healthy, and safe.

The Children’s Act 2014 says the Government must have a strategy to improve outcomes for children.

Children are important for New Zealand now and in the future.

New Zealand is stronger when its people are skilled, educated and healthy, and when our families and communities are doing well.

Childhood is an important time to support kids to grow up happy and healthy. A good start in life helps make sure you can lead happy lives and contribute to your communities.

The Government has a responsibility to protect and support children so they can have a good life. It already invests a lot in children and young people in areas such as health, education, housing, and law and order, but we can do better.

### Our vision and outcomes for children and young people

The vision is that New Zealand is the best place in the world for children and young people.

The 6 outcomes are:

**1.** Children and young people are loved, safe and nurtured.

**2.** Children and young people have what they need.

**3.** Children and young people are happy and healthy.

**4.** Children and young people are learning and developing.

**5.** Children and young people are accepted, respected and connected.

**6.** Children and young people are involved and empowered.

### The 3 priorities

The Government is focusing on three big priorities:

**1.** Supporting children and their families and whānau in the first 2,000 days (from before birth to age 5).

**2.** Reducing child material hardship (from before birth to age 24).

**3.** Preventing harm against children (from before birth to age 24).

We have chosen these priorities because the evidence tells us getting things right in the early years of life is important. Family circumstances and experiences in childhood affect and shape people’s whole lives.

These priorities will help us focus on making New Zealand the best place in the world to be a child or young person.

Other Government Targets also focus on making life better for New Zealanders, including children and young people.

Children and young people are supported by family, whānau, communities, iwi and organisations across their lives from before birth to age 24.

### What children and young people told us

Conversations we had with young Kiwis to develop the Strategy in 2024 showed strong support for the vision, the outcomes and the 3 priorities.

Children and young people said they want:

* Loving, safe and supportive whānau and families.
* Healthy friendships and relationships.
* To celebrate culture and identity.
* To be able to stay happy (mental health).
* To have the basics.
* Affordable sports, recreation and play in safe community spaces.
* Support to learn and grow.

People who represent children and young people (like the Chief Children’s Commissioner) also support the Strategy including a focus on:

* Supporting families and whānau to give children a good start in life.
* Addressing child poverty.
* Recognising the greater needs of Māori, Pacific, disabled and care-experienced children.
* Making sure children and young people are heard when decisions are made that affect them.

You can read more about what children and young people and the people who represent them said they wanted on the Ministry of Social Development website here: [The Child and Youth Strategy 2024-27 - Ministry of Social Development](https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/child-wellbeing-and-poverty-reduction/child-youth-strategy/index.html) (or through this link here: <http://tiny.cc/x00d001>)

## Priority 1: Helping children in their first 2,000 days (from before birth to age 5)

The first five years of life are super important because they help shape a child’s future. Right now, not all children get the best start, so the Government is working to better support children and their families during this important time. Having a good start can help children to be healthy, learn well, and be happy.

### Not all experiences are positive in the first 2,000 days

* Only 78% of two-year-olds are fully immunised.
* Only 75% of children receive a ‘Before School Check’ on time.
* Research suggests that some pregnant women (around 12-18%) are very unhappy during pregnancy and experience depression.
* 28% of people are not enrolled with a ‘Lead Maternity Carer’ (e.g. a midwife) in the first 3 months of pregnancy.
* 20% of children at age 5 are struggling with their speaking skills.

### Government agencies are working on:

Helping parents and carers with support and advice to be the best parents and carers they can be.

Making sure babies get good healthcare before and after they are born and that kids get a good start in learning to support their developing brains.

Supporting mothers to be happy and healthy during the busy time during pregnancy and after a baby is born.

## Priority 2: Reducing child material hardship

Some children don’t have access to the basics they need, which means they experience material hardship.

This includes:

* Not being able to afford two pairs of shoes.
* Going without fresh vegetables often.
* Not being able to pay bills on time.

If children’s basic needs are not met, this can affect their wellbeing now and in the future.

It can affect how well they do in school, their health and the behaviours they develop – including things like being involved in youth and adult crime.

We measure how many children don’t have what they need by looking at how many children live in households that say they can’t afford 6 or more of 17 basic and important items,

The Government has a target to lift 17,000 more children out of material hardship by 2027, compared to 2023.

### Many children are experiencing material hardship

* In 2022/23 there were 143,700 New Zealand children (12.5 percent) in material hardship.
* Rising costs have made it harder for families to afford the basics.
* Some groups of children experience material hardship more than other children:
* 2x higher rate amongst Māori and Pacific children than rates for all children.
* 2x higher rate amongst disabled children and children in disabled households than rates for all children.
* 3x higher rate amongst children in sole parent households than two parent households.

### Government agencies are focusing on addressing hardship and household costs

Key actions include:

* Helping children and their families to access health services, education and employment.
* Making sure families have more money through tax credits and job support.
* Helping families into affordable safe housing.
* Providing free school lunches for children who need them.

## Priority 3: Preventing child harm

Sadly, some children experience neglect and abuse. They may get hurt either physically or emotionally or not be well looked after. To help keep children safe, the Government is focusing on making child harm, abuse and neglect less likely to happen.

Things that contribute to child harm:

* Low incomes.
* Housing instability.
* Drug and alcohol abuse.
* Mental health challenges.
* Community disadvantage.

### Too many children experience abuse and neglect

Every year thousands of New Zealand children experience abuse and neglect at the hands of people who should be looking after them.

From the data we have, we know:

* There were 10,426 Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) findings of abuse or neglect in 2022.
* 23.5% of children born in 1998 had been the subject of a report of concern to Oranga Tamariki by age 17.
* Some groups of children (Māori, Pacific, disabled children and those in low-income households) experience abuse and neglect at higher rates than other groups of children.

### Government agencies are focusing on:

**Addressing risks** – this includes helping families get access to basics including food, housing, and social supports.

**Supporting nurturing, positive parenting and caring practices** – there is good evidence about the factors that protect children from harm, and we will explore opportunities to strengthen these.

**Providing support earlier for children who may be more at risk of harm** – we can do more to help families have the support and skills to prevent harm from happening.

## How we will measure success

We’ll know we’re making progress when we see:

* Fewer children in material hardship.
* More children living in affordable housing.
* Fewer families receiving benefits.
* Fewer children experiencing abuse.
* More students attending school regularly.
* More students passing NCEA Level 2.
* More care for pregnant mothers.
* Fewer children living in homes where food runs out.
* Less child and youth offending.
* Better mental health for children and young people.
* More children who get their vaccinations by 2 years old.
* More parents who say they’re coping well with parenting.
* Fewer children needing to go to hospital.

The Government will report on progress every year via the Strategy Annual Report. This will include reporting for all children and young people and (where possible) for sub-populations, including Māori children, Pacific children, and disabled children.

Agencies will also continue to monitor a wider set of indicators. More information on the wider indicators is available here: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/childwellbeing-and-poverty-reduction/reporting](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/childwellbeing-and-poverty-reduction/reporting) (or through this link here: <https://tinyurl.com/29frd67y>)

## Putting the Strategy into action

### Working with others to make a difference

Government agencies will keep working with (and supporting) others who work with children or young people, along with their families and communities. We will look for ways to fund services that meet local needs. We want children and young people, iwi Māori and communities to have a greater say in determining the kinds of services and supports that work for them.

Thirty percent of New Zealand’s children identify as Māori. We will make sure that the work we do to deliver this strategy includes:

* Te ao Māori and iwi perspectives and experiences, and supports improved outcomes for Tamariki and rangatahi Māori.

This includes the work that we do with Pou Tangata (National Iwi Chairs Forum).

### Working together across government

Government agencies are working together to make the changes needed so that all children and young people can grow well and succeed in life. The Minister for Child Poverty Reduction oversees the implementation of the Strategy and works closely with other Ministers with responsibility for funding and delivering services to children and young people and their families. The outcomes in the Strategy also provide the framework for other important cross-agency work, including the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan and the Youth Plan: Voice, Leadership, Action.

### Addressing greater needs

Some groups of children experience worse outcomes during childhood and across their lives. We know that there are differences in outcomes for some groups of children (for example Tamariki Māori and disabled children). The work on the 3 priorities will focus on all children, with a particular focus on children with greater needs.

## What can you do?

**1.** **Learn about your rights and what support is available**  
Read more on the Children and Young People’s Commission website here: [www.manamokopuna.org.nz/rights/](http://www.manamokopuna.org.nz/rights/)

**2.** **Speak up if you or someone you know needs help**If you need help or are worried about a child or young person you can contact Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) or the Police.

**Phone:** Oranga Tamariki call freephone: 0508 326 459

(lines are open 24/7)

**Email:** Oranga Tamariki at: contact@ot.govt.nz

**Website:** [www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/worried-about-a-child-tell-us/](http://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/worried-about-a-child-tell-us/)   
(or through this link here: <https://tinyurl.com/4pwuwnks>

There is also helpful information on Ministry of Education bullyingfreenz website: [www.bullyingfree.nz/need-help-now](http://www.bullyingfree.nz/need-help-now)

**3.** **Share your ideas on how New Zealand can be a better place for children and young people**Email us at: [ChildYouthWellbeing@MSD.govt.nz](mailto:ChildYouthWellbeing@MSD.govt.nz)

### Find out more

You can also find out more about the Strategy on the Ministry of Social Development website here: [The Child and Youth Strategy 2024-27 - Ministry of Social Development](https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/child-wellbeing-and-poverty-reduction/child-youth-strategy/index.html) (or through this link here: <http://tiny.cc/x00d001>)

## Here’s a list of the principles that we committed to when we wrote this Strategy:

* Investment will recognise the importance of family, community and whānau centred approaches.
* Spending will focus on reducing and preventing negative outcomes for children and young people.
* Spending will help children and young people who have the greatest need.
* Spending will deliver long term value, including for government and society.
* Spending is informed by Government priorities.
* Spending will aim to give everyone a good start in life.
* Spending will be monitored and evaluated.
* Spending is informed by data and evidence.
* Investments will respect and uphold the rights of children. in New Zealand law and recognise their value and dignity.
* Spending will provide opportunities for decision-making, design and delivery of services to occur at local and iwi level.

This is just the beginning. The Government will keep working with families, schools, and communities to help make New Zealand a great place for all children and young people.

**End of information: Summary of The Child and Youth Strategy 2024-27**

This Large Print document is adapted by Blind Citizens NZ from the standard document provided by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD)