

Appendix A. Dame Karen Poutasi Review – Recommendations to address gaps in the children's system

System gaps exist ...	Recommendations to address the gaps:
in identifying needs of a dependent child when charging and prosecuting sole parents through the court system	1. Oranga Tamariki should be engaged in vetting a carer when a sole parent of a child is arrested and/or taken into custody. Police (or other prosecuting agency) in the first instance, and the Court in the second, will need to build into their processes time for this to occur. 2. Oranga Tamariki should be engaged in regular follow-up checks and support for such an approved carer while the sole parent remains in custody. Resourcing must be addressed to enable this to occur.
in the process for assessing risk of harm to a child, which is too narrow and one dimensional	3. Multi-agency teams working in communities in partnership with iwi and NGOs, resourced and supported throughout the country to prevent and respond to harm. 4. Medical records held in different parts of the health sector should be linked to enable health professionals to view a complete picture of a child's medical history. 5. The health sector should be added as a partner to the Child Protection Protocol between Police and Oranga Tamariki to enable access to health professionals experienced in the identification of child abuse, and to facilitate regular joint training.
in agencies and their services not proactively sharing information, despite enabling provisions	6. The Ministry of Social Development should notify Oranga Tamariki when a caregiver who is not a lawful guardian, and who has not been reviewed by Oranga Tamariki or authorised through the Family Court, requests a sole parent benefit or other assistance, including emergency housing support, from the agency for a child whose caregiver is in prison. 7. The enhancement of understanding of the information sharing regime in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, to educate and encourage child welfare and protection agencies and individuals in the sector to share information with other child welfare and protection agencies on an ongoing basis.
in a lack of reporting of risk of abuse by some professionals and services	8. Professionals and services who work with children should be mandated to report suspected abuse to Oranga Tamariki. I recommend this be legislated by defining the professionals and service providers who are to be classed as 'mandatory reporters', to remove any uncertainty around their obligations to report. 9. The introduction of mandatory reporting should be supported by a package approach that includes: a. A mandatory reporting guide with a clear definition of the red flags that make up a high-risk Report of Concern, together with the creation of a 'High Report of Concern' category similar to the New South Wales 'Risk of Significant Harm' definition. b. Defining mandatory reporters, all of whom should receive regular training. c. In addition, for professionals deemed to be mandatory reporters, there should be: i. Undergraduate courses teaching risks and signs of child abuse. ii. mandatory regular updated training regarding their responsibilities and the detection of child abuse, with practising certificates conditional on training and refreshers. 10. There should be active monitoring of the implementation by early childhood education services of their required child protection policies to ensure they are providing effective protection for children. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office should jointly design and administer a monitoring and review cycle for the implementation of Child Protection Policies in Early Learning Services.
in allowing a child to be invisible. The system's settings enabled Malachi to be unseen at key moments when he needed to be visible	11. The agencies that make up the formal Government's children's system should be specifically defined in legislation. 12. These agencies should have a specific responsibility included in their founding legislation to make clear that they share responsibility for checking the safety of children. 13. Regular public awareness campaigns should be undertaken so the public is attuned to the signs and red flags that can signal abuse and are confident in knowing how to report this so children can be helped. Aotearoa society needs to hear the message 'don't look away'. 14. So change can be monitored, the recommendations made in this report should be reviewed in one year's time by the Independent Children's Monitor in its new system-wide role.