



NEW ZEALAND
POLICE
Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa

Response to “*Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children*”

New Zealand Police response to the Independent Children’s Monitor’s report, *Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children* [In-depth review | December 2025]

Submitted pursuant to section 30 of the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022

February 2026

Purpose

1. This response outlines Police's feedback and next steps to the Independent Children's Monitor's (ICM's) report, *Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children [In-depth review | December 2025]*. It is provided to the ICM, the Minister responsible for the ICM, and the Minister responsible for the administration of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, pursuant to section 30 of the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022 (the Act).

Background

2. Following the murder of Malachi Subecz in 2021, six agencies (including Police) commissioned the late Dame Karen Poutasi to review the Children's System as a whole, to identify ways to improve the system to better protect any child in Malachi's circumstances in the future. Dame Karen's report was published in November 2022 with 14 recommendations.
3. The 14th recommendation of Dame Karen's report was for change to be monitored by the ICM. The ICM's first report on progress was published in August 2024. Police subsequently published its response to that report: [New Zealand Police response to the Independent Children's Monitor's report | New Zealand Police](#).
4. On 16 December 2025, the ICM released its second report on progress.
5. In the period since the ICM's first report, cross-agency working groups have continued to address the recommendations. Police representatives have been involved in most of these working groups, which have been led by Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Social Development.
6. Pursuant to section 30 of the Act, this response outlines:
 - a) what Police intends to do in response to the ICM's findings;
 - b) the timeframe in which Police intends to make any necessary changes; and
 - c) how Police intends to monitor the impact of those changes.

Next steps

7. Police appreciate the ICM's latest report and the continued impetus it provides to ensure children's sector agencies address Dame Karen's report. Police accept the ICM's findings and continues to actively participate in cross-agency work to implement Dame Karen's report recommendations.
8. Three of the ICM's five key findings are relevant to Police involvement in this work. The appendix outlines our response to these findings, including existing practice and initiatives that addresses these findings, as well as work Police has underway, the timeframe in which changes will be made, and how Police is monitoring the impact of those changes. It also outlines the legislation that provides obligations and clarity for Police's role in the children's system to keep children safe. The cross-agency response talks to timeframes and monitoring of the collaborative work underway.
9. This response has been published on Police's external facing website as part of our commitment to openness and transparency.



Richard Chambers
Commissioner of Police

ICM Finding	Subject Area	Police Intentions in Response	Timeframes	Monitoring Impact of Change
<p>Tamariki are still no safer.</p>	<p>Multi-agency collaboration</p>	<p>This finding identifies that Oranga Tamariki is not consistently able to respond when required, and that system-level collaboration must strengthen to prevent harm before statutory intervention is needed.</p> <p>Police continue to work closely with Oranga Tamariki across Child Protection and Youth Justice, ensuring shared visibility of tamariki who may be at risk.</p> <p>Police will also continue to support workforce capability through existing training and the cross-agency training programme being developed. These materials will assist Police staff to identify circumstances where other agencies or community organisations may provide earlier support to whānau, reducing the need for escalation to Oranga Tamariki by way of a report of concern.</p> <p>Police continue to maximise opportunities for early support through initiatives such as AWHI, where approximately 1,000 referrals are made each month and around one third relate to family wellbeing. Although AWHI is a consent-based referral to support people aged 16 and over, strengthening broader whānau wellbeing directly contributes to safer environments for dependants.</p> <p>As outlined in the Police 2024/25 Annual Report, Police receive approximately \$1.1 million annually through the Family Violence Sexual Violence Joint Venture (Budget 2020) to address immediate service gaps for children impacted by family harm. In the reporting period, 1,281 children were supported through applications to this fund. This work is ongoing and continues to form part of Police’s contribution to improved child safety outcomes.</p>	<p>Police are supporting cross-agency work led by Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Police-specific actions as part of this work are dependent on the sequencing of cross-agency programmes outlined in the cross-agency response.</p> <p>Other actions outlined form part of Police’s business-as-usual practice and are ongoing.</p>	<p>This is a challenging area to monitor, as changes in child safety outcomes reflect the effectiveness of the entire child protection system rather than Police-specific interventions alone.</p> <p>To support visibility of progress, Police will continue monitoring operational indicators.</p>

ICM Finding	Subject Area	Police Intentions in Response	Timeframes	Monitoring Impact of Change
<p>Critical gaps identified in the Poutasi report remain</p>	<p>Police Family Violence Death Reviews (PFVDR)</p>	<p>The PFVDR report process is mandated under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 and contributes to the death review function of the national mortality review committees.</p> <p>The report notes that death reviews, including PFVDRs, are 'not child-centred... but instead look at how the agency responded.' PFVDRs are intentionally designed to examine Police’s response to family violence, rather than to undertake a full child-centred, whole-of-system review. The broader needs of tamariki sit outside Police’s statutory remit and subject-matter expertise, but Police provides all relevant information to the Family Violence Death Review Subject Matter Experts (FVSMEs) to support independent oversight.</p> <p>Police acknowledge the limited cross-agency collaboration in past PFVDRs and is commencing a shift toward more collaborative local family violence death reviews. These locally-led reviews involve agencies and service providers who engaged with the whānau, victim, or perpetrator and are intended to strengthen cross-agency learning, improve practice, and build sector collaboration. The model has been successfully trialled in Auckland and Manukau and is now being assessed for broader implementation.</p> <p>Police support strengthened national coordination and oversight of child death reviews to ensure system-wide learning. PFVDRs continue to be routinely shared with the FVSMEs to support this goal.</p> <p>In many child-related death reviews, Police engagement begins at the point of serious injury or death. In these circumstances, the available information for assessing earlier opportunities for Police intervention is limited, and findings therefore tend to focus on how Police responded once notified. PFVDRs typically generate more recommendations in cases where the deceased adult was previously known to Police through intimate partner violence.</p>	<p>The collaborative model for local family violence death reviews is in early development. No specific national timeframes are yet available.</p>	<p>If broader implementation proceeds, Police will identify appropriate mechanisms to monitor improvements - such as uptake of cross-agency reviews, quality of interagency participation, and identification of cross-agency themes - to assess whether changes contribute to stronger sector learning and, ultimately, safer outcomes for children.</p>

ICM Finding	Subject Area	Police Intentions in Response	Timeframes	Monitoring Impact of Change
<p>Critical gaps identified in the Poutasi report remain</p>	<p>Reports of Concern (ROC)</p>	<p>Planned technology improvements between Police and Oranga Tamariki to streamline and modernise ROC submission have made limited progress, due to competing demands.</p> <p>Police remain committed to progressing this work and supports Oranga Tamariki’s exploration of a web-based ROC form that would enable agencies, including Police, to submit reports online. A modernised ROC process would support more timely, consistent, and efficient sharing of information, reducing the administrative burden on frontline staff and improving the overall pathway for protecting tamariki.</p> <p>Police will continue working with Oranga Tamariki at national and district level to support consistent understanding of risk thresholds and coordinated joint responses.</p> <p>In addition, Police will continue to work with Oranga Tamariki to strengthen feedback loops so staff are aware of the outcome of reports of concern and can adjust responses as needed.</p>	<p>This work is ongoing. Planning for the modernisation of the ROC process remains in the early stages and is being led by Oranga Tamariki.</p> <p>Police will continue to participate in the cross-agency design and development process. Indicative implementation dates will be confirmed once the technical approach and resourcing requirements for the new online ROC form are agreed across agencies.</p>	<p>If the online ROC form progresses to implementation, Police will work with Oranga Tamariki to identify appropriate measures to assess the effectiveness of the new process. These may include improvements in the timeliness of ROC submission, reductions in manual processing, increased consistency of reporting across districts, and enhanced data quality. These indicators would support ongoing monitoring of how process improvements contribute to timelier and coordinated responses for tamariki.</p>
	<p>Child Protection Protocol (CPP)</p>	<p>Police remain committed to strengthening the consistency and quality of practice under the CPP.</p> <p>Police will reinforce CPP expectations through internal guidance, training and district engagement, including ensuring timely joint planning, accurate recording of CPP actions, and closer coordination with Oranga Tamariki during investigations.</p> <p>Police will also continue participating in CPP governance forums and the refresh of CPP materials as part of the wider cross-agency response outlined in the joint agency programme.</p> <p>The joint cross-agency response outlines the joining of Health NZ to the CPP.</p>	<p>Strengthening CPP practice is ongoing. Timeframes for Health NZ’s phased entry (as outlined in the cross-agency response) into the CPP and any revisions to the CPP framework are being led through the cross-agency programme.</p> <p>Police will update internal guidance and training in alignment with this national work.</p>	<p>Police will monitor CPP performance through existing quality assurance processes, including district-level file reviews, oversight by Child Protection Teams, and engagement in cross-agency CPP review mechanisms.</p> <p>Police will also contribute to any joint evaluation processes established as part of the CPP refresh to support consistent and coordinated responses across the system.</p>

ICM Finding	Subject Area	Police Intentions in Response	Timeframes	Monitoring Impact of Change
<p>Critical gaps identified in the Poutasi report remain</p>	<p>Multi-agency teams</p>	<p>The ICM notes that while multi-agency teams exist in several communities, they are not implemented consistently across the country. Police remain committed to supporting this approach as an essential component of early intervention, prevention, and cross-agency risk assessment.</p> <p>New Zealand Police is an active partner agency in <i>Te Aorerekura – the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence</i> and works closely with the Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence (The Centre). The broader cross-agency work underway through Te Aorerekura is detailed within the cross-agency response.</p> <p>Police is commencing work to refresh and modernise our operating model for the response and management of family harm events. Police also note the ICM’s findings regarding cumulative harm across repeated family harm events involving tamariki and their siblings. Police will continue to strengthen practices for recognising patterns of harm and will use insights from family harm tables and multi-agency responses to support earlier identification of escalating risk.</p> <p>Police continue to participate in multi-agency family harm tables, including Safety Assessment Meetings (SAMs) and Integrated Safety Response (ISR). These models are designed locally to respond to community need, which contributes to variation in structure, maturity, and coverage across districts.</p> <p>The report highlights positive practice in one region where Police shared information with the Ministry of Education about tamariki exposed to family violence, enabling schools to contextualise behaviours and respond appropriately. This practice, whereby Police inform the Ministry of Education about attendance at family harm episodes where school aged children are present has been established in seven Police</p>	<p>This work is ongoing. Expansion of multi-agency information-sharing practices and participation in family harm tables will continue as part of regional implementation of Te Aorerekura and other cross-agency programmes. This work is outlined in the cross-agency response.</p>	<p>Monitoring of Police participation in multi-agency responses is undertaken through the Centre, which leads oversight of family violence and sexual violence system performance. Police will continue to contribute district-level data and insights to support this national monitoring approach.</p>

ICM Finding	Subject Area	Police Intentions in Response	Timeframes	Monitoring Impact of Change
<p>Critical gaps identified in the Poutasi report remain</p>	<p>Multi-agency teams</p>	<p>Districts. Other districts are showing strong interest in becoming involved and are working with the National Family Harm Team and the Wellington lead to get the School Alerts process established in their areas.</p> <p>Police is supporting the establishment of multi-agency tables focussed on school attendance. Six pilot sites have been identified and Police are actively engaged in the development of information sharing protocols and processes for their operation.</p>		
<p>Changes announced by Government in October 2025 are a start but greater priority must be given to keeping tamariki safe</p>	<p>Keeping dependent children visible in the prosecution system.</p>	<p>The report highlights the need for greater visibility of dependent children within justice processes, including during arrest, prosecution, and sentencing. Police support this focus and is contributing to the cross-agency work designed to strengthen identification and support for tamariki affected when a parent enters the criminal justice system.</p> <p>Police are supporting the cross-agency work programme as outlined in the cross-agency response, with specific Police contributions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports to prosecutors now include information about dependants where appropriate, enabling the Court to be informed when this may be relevant to bail decisions, sentencing, or oversight of care arrangements. • Since late 2025 the Electronic Custody Module (ECM) contains a mandatory prompt requiring staff to ask all people in Police custody about dependants of any age. This ensures early visibility of children who may be affected by a parent’s arrest, irrespective of whether the person is later held on remand or sentenced. • Data from the ECM is being developed into reporting to help identify trends, highlight where additional support for dependants may be required, and refine practice as the interagency model evolves. 	<p>The process for informing prosecutors and the ECM prompt are already in place and being used by staff.</p> <p>Development of ECM-based reporting is underway and will continue through 2026 as part of the wider cross-agency work on identifying and supporting children of sole parents who enter custody.</p>	<p>The content of reports to prosecutors is monitored on an individual basis.</p> <p>Police does not have visibility of the subsequent impact on dependants.</p> <p>Early insights from the ECM free-text field are already providing visibility of dependants and the care arrangements made at the time of arrest. As reporting matures and the cross-agency response becomes more established, Police expects clearer insights into patterns, changes in practice, and any areas requiring refinement to improve outcomes for dependent children.</p>

ICM Finding	Subject Area	Police Intentions in Response	Timeframes	Monitoring Impact of Change
<p>Changes announced by Government in October 2025 are a start but greater priority must be given to keeping tamariki safe</p>	<p>Supporting the information sharing hub led by Oranga Tamariki</p>	<p>The report highlights the need for a stronger, more coordinated approach to identifying and responding to the needs of dependent children when a sole parent or primary carer enters custody. Police support this cross-agency priority and is contributing actively to the development and operation of the new information sharing hub led by Oranga Tamariki.</p> <p>As outlined in the cross-agency response, Police has allocated one Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to support the operation of the information sharing hub and ensure timely sharing of relevant Police-held information. This FTE will assist Oranga Tamariki to make initial assessments about the circumstances and safety needs of dependants when a sole carer is arrested, remanded, or sentenced.</p> <p>Police will also notify Oranga Tamariki / the information sharing hub when bail is opposed for a sole carer, ensuring early visibility of dependants who may require support or safety checks.</p> <p>The dedicated FTE to the information sharing hub is in addition to the existing Police Information Request Team that prioritises information requests related to child safety and wellbeing. This includes requests from Oranga Tamariki and the Family Court, and supports the broader objective of ensuring child safety information is readily available across the system.</p>	<p>Police participation in the hub is in place from February 2026.</p> <p>Guidance on sending information when bail is opposed for arrested sole carers is being incorporated into Police processes now cross-agency practice arrangements are confirmed.</p> <p>Initial changes to provide guidance are expected to be in place in the first quarter of 2026. Some changes may require updates to technology to ensure guidance on relevant forms is provided for all relevant processes. Technology updates have a greater lead time.</p>	<p>Monitoring of the hub's effectiveness will occur at a cross-agency level. Police will contribute to this by tracking the volume and timeliness of notifications and information provided to the hub, and by participating in cross-agency reviews of how well the hub supports early identification and assessment of dependants of sole carers entering custody.</p>

ICM Finding	Subject Area	Police Intentions in Response	Timeframes	Monitoring Impact of Change
<p>Changes announced by Government in October 2025 are a start but greater priority must be given to keeping tamariki safe</p>	<p>Mandatory training / reporting</p>	<p>The report highlights the need to strengthen knowledge, skills, and consistency across agencies in identifying and responding to child abuse, including through mandatory child protection training for children’s workers. Police are actively contributing to the cross-agency work to design this training and supports the uplift in capability across the sector.</p> <p>Police are directly involved in developing the new training, with School Community Officers participating in the initial trials. Their experience in delivering the Keeping Ourselves Safe programme and strong relationships with schools will complement the training for the education workforce.</p> <p>All constabulary members of Police are “core children’s workers”, and all currently receive child protection training based on role. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child protection content in Recruit Training • additional training for investigators • specialist training for Child Protection Teams, and • advanced child protection training for senior investigators and supervisors. <p>Police are reviewing and updating the Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework (QAIF) to reflect current demand, complexity, and risk for Child Protection (CP), Adult Sexual Assault (ASA) and Family Harm.</p> <p>Additional training has already been embedded within the Detective Qualification Course, covering the conduct and quality assurance of child protection investigations, including Reports of Concern. Police has also increased child protection content within the Detective Development Course (the first course in Police’s Detective Programme), with further opportunities being</p>	<p>Existing Police child protection training and associated development is ongoing.</p> <p>Timeframes for the new cross-agency training programme will be determined through the cross-agency work and are detailed in the cross-agency response.</p> <p>Police will align its internal training requirements once the finalised multi-agency training package is confirmed.</p>	<p>Police will monitor completion and uptake of child protection training through existing learning management systems and will assess impacts through quality assurance of child protection files, feedback from districts, and participation in cross-agency evaluation processes once the mandatory training programme is implemented.</p>

		<p>explored to enhance training for child protection investigators.</p> <p>As a partner agency in <i>Te Aorerekura – the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence</i>, Police continues to align internal training with the national Entry to Expert (E2E) framework. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruit Training Programme and Family Harm e-learning modules mapped to Entry Level.• Non-Emergency (105) and Emergency Communications and Dispatch (ECD) training mapped to Essential Level.• Family Harm Coordinators Course partially aligned to Enhanced Level. <p>In 2026, Family Safety System (FSS) e-learning modules will be mapped, and the Family Harm Coordinators Course will continue development toward full Enhanced Level.</p> <p>Regarding mandatory reporting, Police’s role will primarily be to investigate reported abuse. However, materials developed through the cross-agency training programme will assist Police in identifying matters that may not require Police involvement, but do require referral for early intervention and whānau support.</p>		
--	--	--	--	--

ICM Finding	Subject Area	Police Intentions in Response	Timeframes	Monitoring Impact of Change
<p>Responsibility for child protection sits across the children’s system but roles have not been clarified</p>	<p>Legislation</p>	<p>The report highlights that responsibilities for child protection remain dispersed across the children’s system, and that greater clarity is needed to support consistent practice and accountability. Police’s legislative responsibilities in this area are clearly established, and Police remains committed to fulfilling these obligations and contributing to cross-agency work that strengthens shared understanding of roles.</p> <p>Police is a children’s agency under the Children’s Act 2014, and the Policing Act 2008 outlines Police’s core functions, including maintaining public safety, law enforcement, and crime prevention - all of which encompass responsibilities for the protection and wellbeing of children.</p> <p>In addition, the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 places specific duties on Police, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating reports of concern (s.17). • Exercising powers of entry and removal where critically necessary for child safety (s.42). • Returning a child to a parent, guardian, caregiver, or Oranga Tamariki when found unaccompanied and their mental or physical wellbeing is, or is likely to be, impaired (s.48). <p>Collectively, these legislative provisions set out a clear statutory role for Police in child protection and safety. Police support cross-agency training and system-improvement initiatives that enhance understanding of child protection duties and strengthen collaboration across agencies.</p>	<p>N/A (legislative responsibilities are already in effect).</p>	<p>N/A (Police performance against statutory obligations is monitored through existing operational, oversight, and quality assurance mechanisms).</p>