ENHANCING TAMARIKI AND WHĀNAU PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

External Evaluation Summary Report

Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit

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Te Aroha

Te Whakapono,

Me Te Rangimarie

Tātou Tātou e

With Love,

Faith and Belief,

Peace and Calm

We will share and care for each other

Foreword

Me mihi ka tika te rōpū rangahau nei ki ngā tāngata huhua i whakawātea mai i ō rātou mahi ki te whai wāhi i roto i tēnei kaupapa rangahau.

E kiia ana ngā kōrero a ō tātou mātua tīpuna nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou ka ora ai te iwi.

Tēnā koutou katoa.

The research group would like to thank the many people that made themselves available to participate in this research project. An ancestral proverb states that "with your foodbasket (contribution) and my food-basket (contribution) we can all prosper".

Thank you all.

Summary Report

The focus

This is an external process evaluation report of a pilot project being carried out in three New Zealand sites entitled 'Enhancing Tamariki and Whānau Participation in Decision Making', by the Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit for Oranga Tamariki. The kairāranga-a-whānau initiative sits within the framework of 'enhancing tamariki and whānau participation in decision-making'. It is one of a suite of 'Early Enhancements' that Oranga Tamariki introduced under the 4 year 'Transformational Change Programme'. The Early Enhancements are aiming to achieve tangible improvements for Māori tamariki and whānau within Oranga Tamariki's areas of responsibility and generate momentum for long term change.

The evaluation research sought to understand: i) how whakapapa research, whānau searching, and hui-a-whānau are operating in practice on the ground at evaluation sites through the different implementation models; ii) how the kairāranga role supports tamariki and whānau participation in decision making, particularly through the use of cultural practices; and iii) the experiences of tamariki and whānau with the services in terms of finding them meaningful, feeling supported and whether there is an overall improved quality of service as seen by them.

The evaluators were also asked to investigate how the work of kairāranga, and the experiences of tamariki and whānau working with them, is aligned and/or consistent with Te Toka Tumoana the framework for working with Māori, that was introduced in 2016. Te Toka Tūmoana was developed by Principal Advisors Māori at Oranga Tamariki's Practice Centre to provide guiding principles for working responsively with Māori mokopuna.

The methodology

The methodology utilised kaupapa Māori and co-creation principles in a qualitative study. The questioning adopted a whānau narrative enquiry approach. Interviewing was carried out kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) by Māori interviewers. A mixture of focus groups and individual interviewing took place depending on the choice of the participants.

Separate interviews and question lines were prepared for tamariki, whānau, kairaranga, kaimahi and stakeholders. The interviews took place in three selected sites West Auckland, Blenheim and Christchurch South.

Findings

Kairaranga positions are specialist positions requiring deep understanding of and experience within te Ao Māori and tikanga-a-iwi values and practises.

The consistent responses from tamariki, whānau, kaimahi, stakeholders and kairāranga themselves was that they were making deep connections helping the

young people and families involved, to explore their whakapapa heritage and become much more involved in te Ao Māori through their extended families. High levels of trust have developed, and the young people and their families clearly felt they had agency in the process. They experienced the service as helpful and empowering for them, which for many whānau in the child protection system is a new experience.

The following three findings were evident at all sites examined in this research:

- Whakapapa research, whānau searching, and hui-a-whānau are being implemented successfully at all sites.
- Tamariki and whānau report positive outcomes from these processes
- Early involvement of kairāranga and implementation of these processes for new notifications will assist and most probably improve the assessment process.

The specific guiding principles of Te Toka Tūmoana are certainly evident, both within kairāranga 'on-the-ground' practise, and from the service as experienced and described from a tamariki/whānau perspective. While kairāranga themselves were often not comfortable with breaking their models of practise down into the discrete guiding principles associated with Te Toka Tūmoana, and nor were tamariki and whānau specifically aware of these principles, Te Toka Tūmoana principles were featured in these tikanga based models of practise.

- Kairāranga worked naturally within an Ao Māori, tikanga based framework.
- Te Toka Tūmoana guiding principles clearly expressed primary values and Māori beliefs set out in the three overarching principles.
- Te Toka Tūmoana were naturally manifested in Ao Māori, tikanga based practice.
- Kairāranga did not, in practice, differentiate individual principles in their approach to tamariki and whānau. Instead, an Ao Māori, tikanga-based framework was utilised.
- This usually incorporated the eight principles, applied simultaneously during processes, including whakapapa research, whānau searching, and hui-a-whānau.
- Kairaranga activities are driven by aspirations and aroha for tamariki and whānau, together with belief in the efficacy of whānau, hapū, iwi, hāpori systems, i.e. a Māori worldview.

The model is working successfully. The kairāranga bring skill, experience, cultural connections and knowledge. Whānau report high levels of trust, engagement and satisfaction. The teamwork in the sites is strong and the model is bringing positive outcomes for tamariki/whānau, their participation and their decision-making.

Challenges ahead

Despite the clear strengths of Kairāranga models of practice, there are several challenges in the Oranga Tamariki context. These challenges are closely related to the strengths listed above and the success to date. The implications section highlights the issues involved. New hope has been created and sustaining it is now very important for the tamariki and whānau directly, but also kairāranga, other kaimahi and stakeholders who have committed a lot to the change, and potentially have innovative perspectives to improve state services for tamariki and whānau in the long term.

A fundamental issue concerns how kairāranga and other kaimahi can maintain cultural integrity and develop their practice models within a large established institution of government. Their success has been largely due to their cultural knowledge, deep connections into the Māori world and the flexibility they have had to work with tamariki and whānau. For this to continue and develop, a role and status within the organisation needs to emerge out of the initial contracts.

The kairāranga are helping turn an organisation around, that despite many well-intentioned efforts, has failed tamariki. They are going to need employment pathways, pay levels that recognise the skills they bring and employment security. At the same time, they need to be free from the institutional constraints that take them out of their embedded cultural and community connections and the trust they have built up. They will need to be properly resourced in the role and sustainably employed so Oranga Tamariki does not lose them to some other organisation.

These are challenges of the success of the project and are addressed in the implications section. The care of many of Aotearoa's most vulnerable children has failed over many decades. The extraordinary results revealed in this evaluation do suggest those failures can be turned around for Māori children, young people and their whānau if a deeply embedded cultural model such as this one, can continue to grow and offer hope and empowerment to whānau who have experienced little of that.

Implications

The child protection system in Aotearoa New Zealand has had a mixed history and by world standards, minimal success. The numbers of Māori children in care, when compared proportionately with other cultural groups is a testament to systemic failure despite numerous attempts to turn it around. The effects of Māori over-representation in state and non-whānau care impact whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities as well as the tamariki themselves. These impacts are inter-generational and overwhelmingly negative.

The development of an indigenous model with whakapapa/genealogy and extended whānau at its heart is a seriously alternative model to those that have been practiced by mainstream social workers, psychologists and other Crown-institute professionals. It draws deeply from Māori culture rather than the academic training and professional codes of practice that are usually implemented with modest success and worse.

The findings in this evaluation have demonstrated the strength of this deeply cultural approach that encourages participation, builds identity and strengthens family connections, particularly through the work of culturally connected community based kairāranga. The trust they have been able to generate with vulnerable whānau through their immersion in, and respect for, te Ao Māori has been quite remarkable, and in sharp contrast (albeit early days) to the state welfare services for Māori children over decades and more.

The recommendations below spring from the voices of tamariki, whānau, kairāranga, other kaimahi and stakeholders interviewed who are most affected by, and potentially have innovative perspectives to improve, state services for tamariki and whānau. A fundamental issue concerns how kairāranga and other kaimahi can maintain cultural integrity and develop their practice models within a large established institution of government.

1. Oranga Tamariki develops a supportive management structure that provides security and tenure for kairāranga within the institution with a recognised status in relation to other helping roles, but at the same time facilitates the flexibility for them to continue to grow and develop their tikanga practise.

2. Oranga Tamariki develops secure employment pathways that enable kairāranga to have a recognised role in relation to other employment paths so their experience gained with tikanga and whānau, can in future years also contribute to the quality and culture of the Ministry.

3. Kairāranga increasingly be drawn into early decision-making roles in partnership with other staff at the triage stage, so that their role of enhancing tamariki and whānau participation in decision making occurs as an early strength-based intervention.

4. As Oranga Tamariki recognises the substantially positive cultural and support roles that kairāranga have, it protects them against mainstream and bureaucratic requirements that could compromise their cultural work and strong advocacy for families.

5. Oranga Tamariki ensure provision for appropriate kaupapa Māori professional as well as peer supervision, ongoing training and development for kairāranga.

6. Oranga Tamariki work to increase understanding and appreciation by existing staff of kairāranga, other kaimahi kaupapa Māori and iwi/hāpori partnerships for their expertise and the value of their contributions. This could occur through professional development, education and training for staff at all levels (management, supervisory, social work, administrative) to increase understanding of kairāranga models of practice and Te Toka Tūmoana principles.

7. That Oranga Tamariki continue to develop consistent principles and standards in the work of kairāranga but allow flexibility across sites and local application.

8. Kairāranga be resourced adequately for their role with tamariki and whānau in the community, including koha, manaakitanga, travel and accommodation

9. Special care be taken during the transition to care process, particularly when deciding a placement where the tamariki involved are not aware of their Māori heritage or have few links to it and do not know the whānau they may be being connected with. Where this intervention is used, it is important that support for the tamariki and whānau continues after the placement and ensures that it is secure and fulfilling for them.

10. As kairāranga have direct contact with the sorts of children and families who have often been failed by our child protection system, their participation and influence in decision making be encouraged and developed within the Ministry, and that the expertise of kairāranga,

kaupapa Māori kaimahi, iwi and hāpori partners be actively utilised to inform this process.

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