



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's  
Commissioner**

## Report shows the way to improve the lives of all children and young people

**15 June 2017**

The Children's Commissioner says the UNICEF Innocenti Report Card for 2016, released today, provides a template for how to improve the lives of children and young people living in the most difficult circumstances.

The report card measures how well New Zealand cares for its children against the most relevant Sustainable Development Goals, and compares us with 41 other OECD/EU nations. The report card shows a low ranking for health and wellbeing in particular, due to high rates of neonatal mortality and adolescent suicide.

"A lot of New Zealanders will be surprised by these rankings as the children and young people they know are happy, healthy and thriving," said Judge Andrew Becroft. "But what they often don't see are the 20% who are not succeeding in education, are experiencing bad health or are living in severe hardship.

"But sadly there aren't any surprises here for us at the Office of the Children's Commissioner. This is a long-standing problem that is not well understood by New Zealanders as a whole, and we want to see all children and young people lifted up to the same level.

"Our Government has signed up to the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes halving poverty by 2030. We support that aim. Now we need milestones to measure progress along the way, and a concerted plan to get us there.

"We already know a lot about the issues covered in the Innocenti Report, and they are a high priority for the Government. Some are already being addressed, for example via the new Better Public Services target of 90% of women having a Lead Maternity Carer within their first trimester. The Government is also trying to fundamentally improve how it deals with child abuse and neglect through the work of Oranga Tamariki.

"These initiatives will make a difference, but there is no overall picture. Measuring our progress against the Sustainable Development Goals provides a framework for positive change, and all government agencies will need to work together to get us there.

"In 2015 the Government increased benefits by \$25 per week, and this year they have increased the Family Tax Credit along with other changes. These will improve the lives of many families. We need steps like this every year, as part of a bigger plan to improve children and young people's lives – a plan that businesses, philanthropic groups and the community as a whole can participate in. As a country we are committed to doing better for children and young people, and UNICEF has given us a template to achieve that."

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### **About the Office of the Children's Commissioner**

The Children's Commissioner is an Independent Crown Entity, appointed by the Governor-General, carrying out responsibilities and functions set out in the Children's Commissioner Act 2003. The

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Children's Commissioner has a range of statutory powers to promote the rights, health, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people from 0 to 18 years. These functions are undertaken through advocacy, public awareness, consultation, research, and investigations and monitoring. The role includes specific functions in respect of monitoring activities completed under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989. The Children's Commissioner also undertakes systemic advocacy functions and investigates particular issues with potential to threaten the health, safety, or wellbeing of children and young people. The Children's Commissioner has a particular responsibility to raise awareness and understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Children's Commissioner's activities must comply with the relevant provisions of the Public Finance Act 1989, Crown Entities Act 2004 and any other relevant legislation.