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Commissioner congratulates Health Select Committee on report



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[Read the Select
Committee report](#)

Children’s Commissioner Dr Russell Wills says the Health Select Committee has made some courageous recommendations that have enormous potential to improve children’s lives.

“As a starter, I’m delighted the Select Committee recognised the importance of cross-government support on key priorities for children. We need to get beyond the election cycles and make lasting changes to policy for our children.

“It’s good to see the Committee has acknowledged the work of the expert advisory group on solutions to child poverty. The Committee has specifically picked up on the need for an overall action plan or a Better Public Service target for a reduction in child poverty. That’s a great endorsement of a critical recommendation made by the expert advisory group.

“The Committee’s call for the development of an action plan to combat the harm caused by Foetal Alcohol Syndrome is one that I fully support. We need to take all possible steps to reduce the harm done by alcohol on children.”

The Commissioner agrees with the Committee’s emphasis on the importance of antenatal care and the need for a DHB performance indicator for early booking in pregnancy.

“I’m right behind this recommendation. It’s the kids we’re most worried about who are born to mothers who made contact with antenatal care very late in their pregnancies or not at all.

“I agree with the Committee’s recommendation that responsibility for decisions around water fluoridation moves from local government to DHBs. This makes sense on many levels and it is what local councils have asked for.

“I also agree that it is still too hard for professionals working with children to share information when there are child protection issues. Where there are care and protection concerns it should be routine that children’s professionals share those concerns.

“The Government has many good initiatives in place that will make a difference for children. But there is plenty more to be done – as is evident by the extensive report from the Committee. A great start would be an acknowledgement that we need to focus funding and services on the early years, where the evidence is clear we can have the greatest impact on children’s outcomes.

“I look forward to the response from the Government to the suite of recommendations made by the Committee and hope they give it the attention it deserves.”

Ends.