

Summary of Submissions on the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children



Introduction

Almost 10,000 submissions were received on the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children. These were from children, young people, frontline workers, the general public, non-government organisations (NGOs) and other organisations, making this one of the largest consultation processes ever undertaken in New Zealand.

Key themes of submissions from children and young people:

- Children and young people's submissions said it was important adults show them they care, keep them safe and secure, listen to them, see them as unique individuals and guide them.
- Young people also said it was important they felt supported and loved, and had opportunities to do their best in all areas of their lives. Young people largely supported monitoring, information-sharing (with their permission) and prioritising vulnerable children for services.

Key themes from all other submissions:

Share responsibility

- Submissions supported more programmes and services to help parents and support families in difficult circumstances. Submissions emphasised the need to address the wider social and economic causes of vulnerability. Submissions also said government needed to put children first and act to remove them from dangerous situations.
- Submissions said government needed to build and support communities. Submissions supported partnerships and community development models, as well as community-led action.

Show leadership

- Submissions supported a Vulnerable Children's Action Plan, although opinion differed on who should be targeted: all children or children with specific needs. Areas of action identified for the plan included improving health, education, safety, family living circumstances and access to, and uptake of, services.
- Submissions recognised the need for government to work with Māori, and provide services and supports that meet the needs of whānau.

Make child-centred policy changes

- Submissions supported the provision of universal basic services to all children, with extra services targeted to children needing additional support. Submissions supported more funding for vulnerable children, as well as more funding for children overall. Submissions supported prioritising families of vulnerable children for services, especially where child wellbeing might be compromised.
- There was support for prevention and early intervention – supporting families so children did not become vulnerable, and intervening early in the life of the child or life of the problem.
- There were diverse views on how much monitoring should take place, with support for as much monitoring as possible, and the minimum to keep children safe. Submissions suggested those already involved with children should undertake monitoring, eg health workers and educators.
- Submissions typically supported information-sharing where it would contribute to the wellbeing of the child. Protocols to facilitate information-sharing and address privacy concerns were suggested.

Make child-centred practice changes

- Submissions supported a well-trained workforce that collaborated effectively to support children.
- To connect vulnerable children better to services, submissions suggested a single point of contact for families, reducing barriers to services and raising awareness of services.
- Submissions supported co-location of services and contractual arrangements that encourage professionals to collaborate. A "child-centred" practice approach was widely supported.