



**OPEN HOME  
FOUNDATION**  
TE WHARE KAUPAPA ĀWHINA

17 January 2024

Minister for Children  
Private Bag 18041  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

National Office  
P O Box 31036  
Lower Hutt

Dear Minister Chhour

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the most recent Experiences of Children in Care report by the Independent Children's Monitor. Overall, we are pleased with the organizational progress we have made.

For the Open Home Foundation it is a privilege to care for children who for various reasons are unable to live within their biological families for a time. We acknowledge that whilst we have made progress in many areas and are pleased that we could answer all questions for all Tamariki/rangatahi in relation to the National Care Standards, there is more work to be done.

As an organization providing care, we welcome participating in the important process of monitoring progress for children and young people in care and custody.

Specifically, in relation to the Monitor's findings, we note that more work needs to be done in the following areas;

- Grow Relationships with Iwi/Maori organisations (so that this translates into meaningful relationships and contact for Tamariki and rangatahi)
  - timeframe – Ongoing
  - We will monitor our progress by the ongoing work of the Principal Advisor and the Continuous Improvement Team, along with Te Whaitahitanga
- Seek views of family/whanau in our needs assessment and planning processes.
  - Timeframe – ongoing
  - We will monitor this expectation by ensuring that our social workers and managers are aware of policy expectations, and our continuous improvement team will conduct 6 monthly checks (on progress) and report back to supervisors on both progress and where further effort is required.
- Visits to children (%) at the frequency outlined in their plan has plateaued and needs to increase.
  - Timeframe – ongoing

- We will monitor this by bi-monthly progress reporting to our Regional Managers
- We will continue to drive to ensure foster parents are visited as per OHF policy and that foster parent support plans are current. (we note that this finding has been impacted by foster parent social worker vacancies in some service centres while vacancies have been filled in Rotorua, Nelson, Wellington, Manawatu and Canterbury Service Centres).
  - Timeframe – ongoing
  - We will monitor this by ensuring remaining vacancies are proactively addressed towards being filled and that while vacancies exist, teams understand ways to ensure foster parents remain well supported by children’s social workers.
- Record more clearly and accurately when there are allegations of abuse or neglect.
  - Timeframe – ongoing.
  - We have clarified our policies regarding expectations of social workers when an allegation of abuse or neglect is made. We will monitor this by continuing to flag allegations within our CMS (OSCAR) elevating these to relevant senior managers, summaries being provided monthly to the Executive Team (Including the CEO) and a high-level briefing provided quarterly to the OHF board of directors.

Minister, thank you once again for the opportunity to provide comment and feedback on this report that outlines progress made against the National Care Standards and Related Matters Regulations. We continue to appreciate the learning this provides us towards further ensuring that all young people in OHF care are safe and well cared for.

Nga mihi



Don Irwin  
Chief Executive



Trish McConnell  
Board Chair