

7 April, 2020

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Parliament Office
Private Bag 18888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington



Cc Minister for Children Hon Tracey Martin, Minister of Finance Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Education Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Health Hon David Clark, Minister of Social Services Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Justice Hon Andrew Little

Tēnā koe Prime Minister

The Tick for Kids Coalition sincerely thanks you for the decisive and compassionate leadership that you have shown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, putting the wellbeing of people in Aotearoa New Zealand at the heart of the response.

During this complex and challenging time, we urge the Government to continue to keep children, young people and their families and whānau at the centre of every aspect of New Zealand's COVID-19 response.

Tick for Kids has two key concerns as to the effect of COVID-19 on our children, young people and their families:

(1) it will exacerbate family poverty and the impacts of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage on children, including food poverty; and

(2) the stress and uncertainty caused by the pandemic will impact children and their families, including through

- increased family and sexual violence; and
- dislocation and disruption to relationships between children and important people and support systems in their lives – friends, family, ECE services and schools.

We know that you will share these concerns too, and we thank you for what you have done so far to communicate to children and their families during this pandemic and to consider children in the response.

To guard against the potential negative impacts on children's mental health, physical health, learning and wellbeing of COVID-19, we believe the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy principles and priorities (especially those related to the Māori-Crown relationship) should remain a critical lens for the Government's actions, both during lockdown and as we move into other Alert Levels during the post-lockdown recovery.

We offer our expertise and assistance in supporting the government to deliver for all children during and after the COVID-19 crisis, and attach, for government's consideration, some specific suggestions on how children's wellbeing might be protected and advanced during this difficult time.

Ngā manaakitanga,
Tick for Kids Coalition (please see final page for list of supporting members)

Specific suggestions from Tick for Kids* for keeping children, young people and their families at the centre of every aspect of the Government's response to COVID-19

We urge the Government to:

- Create a central coordination, advocacy and liaison function (for example by designating a Children's COVID-19 response lead) responsible for ensuring the visibility and priority of children's needs and an all-agencies approach throughout the Government's response to COVID-19.
- Ensure that each government department and agency involved in the response also has a designated children's lead (including for core children's agencies as well as MBIE, Police and Defence, Justice, Corrections etc).
- Include explicit reference to children in government response updates and its overall communications strategy.
- Ensure that Māori and Pacific tamariki and whānau, those in the care of the State, those with disabilities and those in the poorest households get additional resourcing and support as a priority. This includes increases in children's benefits, the Child Disability Allowance and greater support for caregivers, Whānau Ora, Ministry of Education Learning Support staff, and for those working with children experiencing family violence.
- Use the recovery phase to support the transformation of services so that they genuinely meet the needs of tamariki and whānau. For example, this includes reviewing the fundamentals of the Early Learning Action Plan and accelerating investment in a high-quality early education system that is fit-for-purpose to better support all children and their learning post the COVID-19 lockdown.

* Tick for Kids is a coalition of Aotearoa New Zealand's leading organisations and individuals working together to make children's rights and interests a central focus of policy makers.

Tick for Kids Coalition

List of the 35 organisations and individuals supporting this letter

Akospace Primary School
Barbara Lambourn
Barnardos New Zealand
Birthright New Zealand
Bronwyn Bayne
Bryan Bruce
CCS Disability Action
Charlotte Robertson
Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)
Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa
Department of Public Health, University of Otago Wellington
Dr Mike Bedford, ECE Reform
Graduate Women Wellington
IHC New Zealand
International Play Association Aotearoa New Zealand
Janet Peters
Mahitahi Hauora PHE
New Zealand Child and Youth Epidemiology Service
NZEI Te Riu Roa
New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU)
Paediatric Society of New Zealand
Parent Help
Peace Movement Aotearoa
Pillars
Plunket whānau āwhina
Public Health Association of New Zealand
Safeguarding Children Tiakina ngā tamariki
Save the Children New Zealand
Sir Ian Hassall
Social Service Providers Aotearoa Inc. (SSPA)
Spend My Super
The College of Public Health Medicine
University of Otago Children's Issues Centre
Variety
YouthLaw Aotearoa