



Safeguarding Children

Tiakina ngā tamariki

ANNUAL SUMMARY
2025





Tēnā koutou e hoa mā,

As you read this, I am thinking of you, the person who chose to open this because you care about children. Whether you are a funder, partner, client, colleague or quiet supporter cheering us on, you are part of our Safeguarding Children whānau.

Safeguarding Children only exists because people like you choose, in big and small ways, to do something. To learn. To ask hard questions. To change how things are done in your own corner of the world. I am deeply grateful for that.

The last year has been both sobering and quietly hopeful. The data in this summary is hard to look at; more children harmed, more families under strain, more young people struggling with their mental health. The stories behind those numbers are heartbreaking, and they are the reason Safeguarding Children exists.

At the same time, I see something else growing across Aotearoa New Zealand: a safeguarding community that is stronger, more connected and more determined than ever. Every training completed, every policy strengthened and every difficult conversation a teacher, nurse, coach or volunteer has because of our work, is a small act of courage that adds up to real protection for children.

This year we have seen that courage in many places:

- In the principals, teachers, health professionals, social workers, sports coaches, kaimahi, faith leaders and volunteers who keep turning up to learn how to recognise and respond to abuse and neglect.
- In parents and caregivers willing to “start the chat early” about online safety, even when they feel unsure or overwhelmed.
- In leaders who are prepared to ask; “Are the children in our care truly safe, and how would we know?”

As a small specialist charity with a big vision, we feel the weight of the sobering truth about child safety in this country every day. We also see, very clearly, that child abuse is preventable when adults are equipped, connected and supported. That belief has guided everything you will read in the pages that follow, including Child Safeguarding Week, our advocacy on mandatory safeguarding standards, and the thousands of people who engaged with our training and resources this year.



Being named a semi-finalist for the Mitre 10 New Zealand Community of the Year Award was a special moment for our team. Not because of the recognition itself, but because it affirmed something we strongly believe - safeguarding is community work. That semi-finalist acknowledgement belongs to you. If you are reading this, you are part of a living network of safeguarding champions stretching across homes, schools, services, clubs and communities.

I am also deeply proud of our team and Board, whose dedication sits quietly behind every webinar, e-learning course, policy consultation and advocacy submission. They carry heavy stories, sit with complex situations and still bring care, professionalism and hope to the work. This year we have farewelled some much-loved colleagues and welcomed new ones who will help us grow our advocacy, strengthen our digital capability and reach even more communities. Each person leaves a fingerprint on this kaupapa.

My hope is that as you move through this annual summary, you will see not just what Safeguarding Children has done, but what you have helped to make possible. Every partnership formed, every person you have encouraged to “do the training”, every time you have spoken up for a child, it all matters. Children are safer because adults like you are choosing not to look away.

Thank you for walking with us in 2025, for your trust, your honesty about the challenges, and your belief that we can do better for our children and young people. Please keep holding us to a high standard, keep asking the hard questions, and keep standing with us as we push for systems, organisations and communities where every child is safe, seen and heard.

Together, we really can make a difference.



Willow Duffy

**Founding Member | CEO
Safeguarding Children**



Our Purpose & Vision

Empowering communities, protecting children

Our Purpose

Safeguarding Children empowers New Zealand to safeguard and protect children from abuse and neglect through guidance, training and advocacy.

The team at Safeguarding Children are passionate advocates for the safety and wellbeing of children. Too many children in Aotearoa New Zealand experience abuse and neglect. We are driven to change this through education and sharing our expertise in safeguarding and child protection. The more people we can bring along on this journey, the better our chance of achieving our vision.

Our Vision

The children and young people of Aotearoa New Zealand are safe from abuse and neglect.

Imagine a world where confidence replaces fear, stability supersedes crisis, and children are given the safety and care they deserve. Safeguarding Children aims to equip those caring for children - family, community and organisations - with the knowledge, tools and strategies to support this.

Together, we can make a difference!



The Sobering Truth

Understanding the state of child safety in Aotearoa



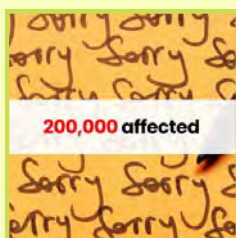
Violence against children is increasing – there has been a sharp increase in hospital admissions due to abuse and neglect, rising to **the highest number in at least a decade in 2024**. Around **350 children** ended up in emergency hospitals as a result of assault, abuse or neglect. That's almost one child a day.

(Salvation Army Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit, 2025)



Oranga Tamariki received **95,422 reports of concern in 2024**, a **34.5% increase** on the previous year.

(Oranga Tamariki, 2025)



The New Zealand government issued a formal apology in 2024 to survivors of abuse in state and faith-based care, acknowledging failures over the past seven decades, with an estimated **200,000 children and vulnerable adults affected**.



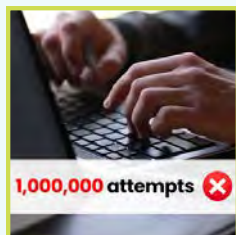
UNICEF ranks New Zealand **last place for child and youth mental health** - with the highest suicide rate of 36 wealthiest countries.

(UNICEF Innocenti, 2025)



On average, a **child is killed every 4 - 5 weeks**, a rate 7.3 x higher than the UK.

(cited by Mana Mokopuna using Police admin data, 2025 and Global Burden of Disease dataset, 2023)



Over **one million attempts** to access **child sexual exploitation and abuse material** were blocked in 2024.

(Department of Internal Affairs, Digital Child Exploitation Team, 2024)



Families are under financial strain - **one in four households with children** often or sometimes went without food in 2024.

(Salvation Army Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit, 2025)

Engagement

A snapshot of our impact across Aotearoa



Mitre 10 New Zealand Community of the Year – Semi-Finalist

Safeguarding Children is honoured to have been recognised as a semi-finalist for the Mitre 10 New Zealand Community of the Year Award (Ngā Pou Whirinaki o te Tau). This national award celebrates groups who foster kotahitanga, strengthen community wellbeing, and show how collective action can create real and lasting change.



Our Nelson-based team; five of our eight kaimahi

Being named a semi-finalist acknowledges the nationwide safeguarding community we have helped grow; thousands of people across Aotearoa who are standing together to protect children and create safer environments for them to thrive. It reflects the shared commitment of our partners, supporters, trained professionals and volunteers who contribute to this movement every day.

Everyone reading this annual summary is part of that community. Your support, advocacy and day-to-day actions have helped build this network of child safeguarding champions, and this recognition belongs to you.

As we move into the next stage of judging, this acknowledgement reinforces that safeguarding is at the heart of strong communities. Winning this award would shine a national spotlight on child safety, elevate the voices of those working to prevent harm, and help strengthen the commitment to safeguarding across every organisation, service and community in Aotearoa. Together, we can make a difference.

Engagement

Continued...



Child Safeguarding Week 2025

Now in its fifth year, Child Safeguarding Week has become a nationally recognised campaign focused on protecting children and supporting those who care for them. Launched in 2021 and led by Safeguarding Children, the week brings communities together each September to strengthen safeguarding understanding and practice across Aotearoa.

Our 2025 theme, Parenting in a Digital World, responded to the complex and fast-evolving online risks facing children. As many parents and caregivers feel unsure about how to keep their children safe online, this year's campaign encouraged families to "start the chat early" and offered clear, practical support to navigate the digital world with confidence.

Throughout the week, we delivered a range of free learning opportunities, including:

- A new free e-learning course on screen time, digital distraction, child development and early signs of harm (still available on our website)
- A live webinar with Netsafe: *Understanding Cyberbullying and Online Safety for Tweens and Teens*
- A recorded webinar: *Children's Privacy Rights in the Digital Age*
- Four podcasts covering online privacy, peer-to-peer harm, digital balance and practical parenting strategies, along with an expert panel discussion

Child Safeguarding Week continues to grow as a national platform for awareness, education and action. By equipping families and communities with up-to-date knowledge and practical strategies, we are helping build a safer digital world for every child in Aotearoa.

Engagement

Continued...



Podcasts: our growing library of safeguarding conversations

Our podcast series continued to grow in 2025, offering accessible conversations that help families, professionals and communities strengthen safeguarding practice. These episodes bring together experts, practitioners and advocates to explore the issues that shape children's safety and wellbeing, and to offer practical, evidence-informed guidance.

Alongside the episodes released this year, we continue to build a trusted library of safeguarding conversations. The full collection is available for parents, caregivers, educators, organisations and community leaders who want to deepen their knowledge.

Our current podcast library includes:

- Introduction to Safeguarding Children
- Protecting Children in New Zealand and Overseas
- Rights of the Child
- Individuals with Harmful Sexual Behaviour Can Change
- The Gaps in Governance in Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Empowerment Trust: Positive Learning Experiences to Empower Children
- Willow Duffy's Journey in Child Safeguarding
- Unpacking the NZ Abuse in State and Faith-Based Care Final Report (Parts 1 and 2)
- Scams, Screens and Safety: Netsafe's Mission to Keep Kids Safe Online
- Youth Experiences of Peer-to-Peer Harm in Online Spaces
- The Role Schools Play in Safeguarding Students Online
- Parenting in the Digital Age
- A Silent Cry for Help: Gloria Masters on the Global Hand Sign



All episodes can be streamed at safeguardingchildren.org.nz/podcast or on your preferred podcast platform.

Advocacy

Championing change that protects children

Malachi Subecz review findings accepted by government

In October, the government announced that it had accepted all 14 recommendations in the Dame Karen Poutasi review into the children's system response to abuse, initiated after the death of five-year-old Malachi Subecz. The review showed serious gaps across the system. It found that some people tried to act but were not listened to, others were unsure and did nothing and some knew but chose not to act.

Accepting the recommendations is an important step towards the systemic change needed to keep children safe. The changes include stronger information sharing, a mandatory reporting regime, compulsory training for frontline staff, and ensuring children whose sole parent is in prison or on remand are visible and supported.

Safeguarding Children continues to advocate for children like Malachi, who rely on the adults around them to notice and act. For real progress, the recommended changes must take hold in schools, health services, sport, community organisations and beyond. High quality mandatory training is a crucial piece of the puzzle, to ensure adults know how to recognise and respond to signs of abuse and neglect early.

This must sit alongside clear procedures, confident reporting and a culture where every child is seen and heard. We stand ready to support this work and help make these changes a reality.



Advocacy

Continued...



Dear Children Campaign

Safeguarding Children was proud to stand alongside the Children's Commissioner, Dr Claire Achmad, at the December launch of Protecting Our Mokopuna and the national advocacy campaign - Dear Children. This kaupapa calls on every adult in Aotearoa to take responsibility for protecting our children and ensuring their voices are heard.

Dr Achmad's message was clear and urgent. In Aotearoa, a child is killed by homicide every four to five weeks. Too many children continue to grow up with abuse, fear and the impacts of family violence. The Commissioner reminded us that child safety cannot sit on the shoulders of one agency or sector. It is a shared responsibility - held by neighbours, whānau, professionals, communities and our nation as a whole.



At Safeguarding Children, we see every day how much difference safe adults, strong systems and early support can make. We stand with Mana Mokopuna in calling for real and lasting change, and we wholeheartedly endorse the call for every adult in Aotearoa to commit to protecting our mokopuna.

The Dear Children campaign invites all of us to listen to children, act early when something feels wrong and refuse to look away. It asks adults to speak up for children, especially when children are unable to speak for themselves.

We encourage everyone to learn more about the kaupapa and sign the letter at www.dearchildren.co.nz. By sharing and supporting this movement, we strengthen a collective voice that says: every child deserves to be safe, seen and heard.

Advocacy

Continued...



Driving for Legislative Change: In April, Safeguarding Children CEO, Willow Duffy spoke to Radio New Zealand on a lack of standards and guidance for charities around safeguarding children in their care. The history of child abuse within charities is concerning, and currently only those who receive government funding need to comply with the Children's Act 2014. The abuse of several young boys by a Destiny Church youth leader, shows the urgent need for comprehensive child safe standards embedded in legislation. Such frameworks ensure accountability and safety across all organisations working with children, regardless of how they are funded.

Shaping National Standards: This year we contributed to the NZQA Family Violence Micro-Credentials Framework, helping define national standards for training providers in the family violence and child protection space.

Safeguarding in Education: Schools are in a unique position to identify signs of abuse and neglect, given their regular contact with children and young people. This year we travelled to Auckland to speak to 50 school principals, on the importance of child protection training in schools. We continue championing for compulsory child protection training, to ensure consistency across schools and support teachers in providing the best care for our children.

Community Engagement: Safeguarding consultants presented at the Te Ohu Whāngaia Te Waka-ā-Māui Community Connections event, sharing our expertise on information sharing with 140 professionals from government and community organisations.

Global Connections: Safeguarding Children CEO, Willow Duffy, represents New Zealand at the Five Countries Child Sexual Abuse Working Group. This contributes to an international and cross-sector approach to strengthen responses to evolving harms; including the rise of AI-generated child sexual abuse material and financially motivated sexual extortion, livestreaming and grooming.

Online Harm Submission: In a submission made to the Education and Workforce Committee's inquiry into online harm, we stressed the urgency of modernising New Zealand's safeguarding laws and responding to emerging online risks to children.

Education

Key education insights from the year



Nationally recognised training

Safeguarding Children have been accepted into the **National Family Violence Directory**. We had to meet clear standards and have our training independently reviewed by external experts to be included, giving organisations and individuals added confidence in the quality of our courses.

We are now an Affiliated Supporter of **Te Kupenga Whakaoti Mahi Patunga/National Network of Family Violence Services**, a national body representing a range of specialist services across Aotearoa New Zealand.

2025 Training Statistics

We continue to diversify our revenue through e-learning course creation for other organisations.

14,252
e-learning courses completed

- 28** Live webinars
- 50** Face-to-face trainings
- 1607** Live webinar & face-to-face attendees
- 940** Accessed free training thanks to funders
- 8** Organisations host our course on their LMS

89,031 PEOPLE 
trained to date

Education

Feedback from our learners

e-learning

"This is compulsory training but it was eye-opening as an allied healthcare worker to see the statistics around abuse and neglect. This to me is fundamental to start thinking in a frame of 'it could happen here'. This course is therefore for everyone, and that is why I would recommend it."

"It covered the importance of protecting tamariki, recognising the signs of abuse, understanding our responsibilities, and knowing how to respond and report concerns appropriately. This learning was eye-opening and reminded me that safeguarding tamariki is a shared responsibility for our whole kōhanga whānau."

"I found the training excellent. Interesting and well produced... It made me think more deeply about abuse and how children rely on adults to protect and support them."

face-to-face

"The presenters were amazing and very engaging. The content is very important for everyone to understand no matter where you work. Safeguarding Children is one of the best trainings I have been to in regard to keeping me engaged."

"I gave a 10 because I think this information is beneficial to ALL ECE and Primary teachers as by safeguarding our tamariki it will hopefully push parents in Aotearoa to be better. It will show tamariki they are valued, we see/hear them and we care about them so we will do what we can to help them. I also believe it will help management in these schools and centres create and follow better procedures."

webinar

"I have done other child protection focused PD before, and your content aligned much better with our policy to have the child at the centre of everything we do."

"Extremely useful in our education setting for the leadership team to build confidence and awareness."

"I think it was a great training - has opened my eyes to the gaps in our organisation that need to be filled."

Education

Safeguarding in early childhood education



Ōtautahi based Safeguarding Consultant, Jessica McQuoid, continued to strengthen safeguarding practice across early childhood services nationwide. Her work supported ECE centres, home-based services and Kōhanga Reo to build their capability in safeguarding and child protection. This included training kaiako (teachers) and leaders in what safeguarding means and looks like in practice. Services were guided to develop robust child protection policies and procedures, strengthen Codes of Conduct, safety check all workers, respond confidently to concerns and embed ways of working that centre the voices and experiences of children.

Across Christchurch, Auckland, Hamilton, Invercargill and Nelson, Jessica delivered tailored training and consultancy to help teams recognise signs of abuse and neglect, understand how bias can shape decision-making and learn how to raise concerns. She also supported services to practise confident, non-judgmental conversations with parents, understand the role of early intervention and develop clear, workable processes for responding to allegations and managing issues as they arise. Several services returned for further support to embed their learning in practice, including rewriting their Child Protection policies, updating procedures and providing additional training for educators.

Looking ahead...

Work will continue into 2026, with a number of centres requesting training and consultancy. This includes training for kaiako from all Kōhanga Reo across Christchurch and Dunedin.

Poipoia te kākano kia puāwai – nurture the seed and it will bloom



“This training has deepened my commitment to being a vigilant, empathetic, and proactive educator who prioritizes the safety of every child under my care.”

“The training emphasised the importance of early intervention, safeguards, and collaborative approaches, equipping me with practical tools to communicate sensitively with whānau, colleagues, and other agencies.”

“One of the most impactful parts of the training was learning how to identify early signs of abuse and neglect - both physical and emotional.”

“Understanding these subtle indicators was eye-opening and made me realise how important it is to be observant and sensitive to changes in a child's behaviour or demeanour.”

“My biggest learning from this training is the importance of being proactive and confident when it comes to safeguarding children. I now understand the steps to take when I have concerns.”

“The most useful thing is being more confident in my knowledge about safeguarding. If I ever face a child protection issue and I'm not sure what to do, I know where to go for guidance.”

Community Reach

Expanding training access in Northland & Bay of Plenty



Building resilience in Northland

In March, Safeguarding Consultants, Ruth Browning and Jessica McQuoid, travelled to Te Tai Tokerau to deliver four sessions of Applied Child Protection Training. In response to the high demand seen for our level one training in Northland last year, we sought lottery funding to make this training accessible and affordable for those in the region. This enabled us to run four fully booked events in Kaikohe, Kaitiaia, Whangārei and Kerikeri.

We had a wide variety of organisations attending - teachers, counsellors, psychologists, youth workers, family violence workers, ECE staff and managers, sports coaches, whānau workers, caregivers and many more.

In an area with high unemployment, poverty, family violence/child abuse rates, these frontline workers are resourceful and working hard to create safer communities. The training reinforced our commitment to 'doing with, not to', where communities are empowered to use research and evidence, to build on their long-established ways of doing things.



Increasing access through Wright Family Foundation funding

In response to the strong demand for training in Northland, and to honour our commitment to making training accessible to those who need it, we sought funding from the Wright Family Foundation.

This support enabled us to offer a range of free online courses to people living in Northland and the Bay of Plenty.

To date, almost 300 courses have been taken up in each region. This means more adults able to identify and respond to abuse, and safer organisations and communities across both regions.

People

Honouring contributions & celebrating new beginnings

We acknowledge and thank the team members who moved on this year and recognise the significant impact they made at Safeguarding Children. Each person leaves a lasting mark on our kaupapa.

As we look ahead, we are strengthened by the skills and experience our newer team members bring.



Ben Watson, our Digital Projects Coordinator, brings strong experience in journalism, not-for-profit communications and digital content creation. He leads the development of our e-learning platform, working closely with subject matter experts to produce high-quality online courses that support adults to keep children safe.

Eve Malcolm, our Marketing Lead, brings creativity, strategic insight and experience from marketing roles across Australia, the United Kingdom and Aotearoa. She is focused on amplifying Safeguarding Children's mission and helping connect more people with the knowledge and tools they need to safeguard tamariki.



Governance

Board of Trustees

Our Board of Trustees is a group of people who are deeply concerned about child neglect and abuse and are utterly committed to stopping it. They have strong backgrounds in governance, business, research, finances and child protection. They understand the barriers and are determined to overcome them to make Aotearoa New Zealand a better place for all children.



Detective Neil Kitchen (Chair)

Neil is a Detective who joined the Police in the United Kingdom in 1985, specialising in Intelligence and Organised Crime detection. He transferred to the New Zealand Police in 2008, working for two years in Auckland before transferring to Nelson. He has chosen to work in the area of child protection over the past few years. His work has included dealing with victims and offenders both adult and children and their families, coordinating a multi-agency approach, which engages health professionals, Oranga Tamariki, victim support groups, the legal profession and the Police. Whilst accepting child protection work is difficult and challenging, Neil says the work is, without doubt, the most rewarding of his career.



Chris Meade

Chris is a business person who runs her own consultancy. She is involved in a new business start-up and devotes one-third of her time to the not-for-profit world. She has had over 25 years of experience in business, working as an HR professional and whilst at Downer, as Executive General Manager of Human Resources, she volunteered through VSA for an assignment in Timor Leste. This experience changed her life. Her passion for people in the world of work has extended to a passion for how people in the face of adversity can best live their lives. She is delighted to be part of the Safeguarding Children Team and be part of a group of professionals who so wholeheartedly believe in keeping tamariki safe and focus their efforts so effectively.

Governance

Board of Trustees continued...



Lisa Jennings

Lisa is the acting site manager for Oranga Tamariki in Nelson. She grew up in England and qualified as a social worker there in 2001. Lisa developed a passion for child protection whilst studying and immediately sought a job in that field after qualifying. She worked as a statutory child protection social worker for 6 years in an old mining town before deciding that she needed some sun and a beach which resulted in her and her family moving to Nelson in 2008. Since this time Lisa has worked for what was then Child, Youth and Family and is now Oranga Tamariki initially as a social worker for the first 9 years and then as a social work supervisor for 4 years before stepping into the acting site manager role in 2020. Lisa joined the Board because she wanted to be involved with an organisation who actively and successfully work to prevent harm to children.



Timothy Houston

Tim is the Manager of the Digital Child Exploitation Team at the Department of Internal Affairs. This is a specialised unit responsible for the detection, investigation, prosecution, and prevention relating to online child sexual exploitation imagery. He has been with the Department of Internal Affairs since 2014, and prior to this was an Investigator with the New Zealand Customs Service for 11 years. While at Customs, Tim was a founding member of the Child Exploitation Operations Team. Tim is a staunch child protection advocate and is proud to be part of the Safeguarding Children Team.



Nick McDonnell

Nick is a public policy professional having worked across the government, aviation, NGO and technology sectors. He presently leads the trust and safety function for a global crime intelligence technology company that works closely with law enforcement in multiple countries. Nick is admitted to the New Zealand bar as a barrister and solicitor and hold degrees in politics, laws and public administration from New Zealand, US and UK universities. Nick is passionate about child safety, especially how we might improve government systems to protect children and ensure New Zealand is keeping up with the rest of the world in this crucial, yet under resourced, area of harm prevention. Nick lives in Sydney and travels to NZ regularly.

Governance

Board of Trustees continued...



Colin Usherwood

Colin operates a consultancy business that provides advice and support on the areas of HR, management, strategy, and governance reporting services to a wide range of organisations. Colin's previous work experience includes holding roles in both the public sector and private sector. These roles have covered areas including HR, strategy, economics, taxation, and board reporting. Colin has a Bachelor of Commerce (Economics) from Otago University and is a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD). Colin is passionate about giving back to the community and believes being involved in the not-for-profit sector in a governance role is a way of making a positive contribution.



Nathan Davis

Nathan is the General Manager for Pathways and Real in Te Waipounamu (a Mental Health NGO Provider to Adults and Young People in Residential and Community settings). He brings a passion for wellness and supporting people to achieve successes and be their best selves whatever their age. As a registered nurse, Nathan has worked across a range of paediatric and mental health clinical roles during his career. Most of his previous mental health nursing and leadership roles have been in inpatient services in Nelson. Alongside these roles he has also been involved with professional standards in nursing through the Health Practitioner's Disciplinary Tribunal for the Nursing Council. Nathan has also been the chair and a trustee for the Board of Waimea College in Richmond. Nathan is passionate about the mental health system being responsive to people's needs. He believes every child should be safe in all the places they are living, learning and sharing spaces. They should be able to grow and thrive with safe and supportive adults. So that they too, can be safe in all their relationships with others.

Thank you!

Partners who make our work possible



Safeguarding Children, a little charity with a BIG vision!

The Safeguarding Children team are passionate in our belief that together we can make a difference in preventing child abuse and neglect. We recognise that our charity could not do this work without the valuable support we receive from our board, community, funders, sponsors, clients and other child advocates. Thank you for being part of our safeguarding and child protection journey in 2025!

FUNDERS



SPONSORS



Together
we are making
difference!

