

Children's Action Plan
Directorate

Children's Workforce Core Competencies – Draft Framework

Abridged Version January 2016



Children's Action Plan

Identifying, Supporting and
Protecting Vulnerable Children

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Overview

Children have a right to have all their needs met and to be safe from abuse and neglect.

A better future for vulnerable children is at the heart of the [2012 Children's Action Plan](#), which was informed by submissions from almost 10,000 New Zealanders - including children.

Fundamental to achieving better outcomes for vulnerable children is changing how we work. The children's workforce needs to work together in partnership with families and whānau of children who are vulnerable, so that these children thrive, belong and achieve.

The Children's Action Plan contains a number of initiatives to build workforce capability. One of these is the development of national children's workforce core competency framework.

The framework will support the children's workforce in developing a standard set of skills, values and knowledge so they can identify, support and protect vulnerable children.

It won't replace existing specialist and professional standards and frameworks. Instead it will sit alongside and complement these in a way that unifies and reinforces common understandings and ways of working.

We want the very best framework to support professionals and practitioners – for the ultimate benefit of children – so we are consulting with employers, employees, representative bodies, non-government organisations, education and training providers, regulatory and professional bodies and trade unions.

Feedback and ideas from across the workforce will shape the final framework and how it is implemented.

The path already travelled

The Children's Action Plan Directorate has established a Framework Design Team to identify and refine common core-competencies. Our cross-sector team from the Ministries of Health, Justice, Education and Social Development as well as the NZ Police and Te Puni Kōkiri is supporting the project, and a Practitioners Advisory Group is providing a practical focus. The result - a draft core competency framework.

The path ahead

The draft core competency framework will be field tested in five communities, including some currently working with Children's Teams. These forums will include meetings to discuss the framework and workshops to encourage dialogue and discussion about the feedback received.

We will also be engaging with the key national representative and professional bodies, to seek their feedback on the draft core competency framework.

The purpose of the draft Core Competency Framework

The vision described in the White Paper for Vulnerable Children and the Children's Action Plan asks us to change how we're working. The four critical shifts we want to enable and encourage are:

- **Critical shift 1:** A shift from 'siloed' expertise within strict professional boundaries to all people that work with children seeing themselves as part of one children's workforce, with a shared base of knowledge, skills and values.
- **Critical shift 2:** A shift from child protection being seen as one agency's responsibility to increased understanding that child protection is the core duty of all children's workers.
- **Critical shift 3:** A shift from an individually competent workforce to a workforce that is able to work together until positive outcomes are achieved for children.
- **Critical shift 4:** A shift from interventions driven by the needs of services to effective strengths-based partnerships with children, family, whānau and caregivers driven by culturally competent and child-centred approaches.

While decisions about the final content of the Framework, and how it will be implemented, are still to be made, we have identified four broad ways the Framework could benefit the children's workforce and deliver these critical shifts we have identified.

Having *core* competencies explicitly identifies the capabilities needed across the children's workforce to improve the outcomes of vulnerable children.

Common competencies will help us use the same language, build trust across professions, and share skills and knowledge.

Having a framework to establish *mandatory* competencies (e.g., included in qualifications, minimum standards, professional development and legalisation) will help us build the capability of the workforce over time.

Measuring competencies will give us better insight into our areas of strength, and where we need to direct our resources to support development.

There is still more work to be done before the core competency framework is finalised, but we hope to discuss each of these potential benefits during our consultation.

Who the framework could be for

The White Paper for Vulnerable Children took an expansive approach to defining the children's workforce.

Children's workforce: everyone in organisations working with and for children and young people – that is, those who plan, manage, and deliver services (including volunteers who have charge of children).

This recognised that protecting children and ensuring that their needs are met is the responsibility of more than just specialists – Consequently, it is envisaged that the framework would include tiers of competence so as to reflect the different levels of skills and knowledge required of all the workers who make up the children's workforce.

Detailed explanations of the five tiers are provided below:

Tier	Explanation
A0	<p><u>Children's workforce foundational tier</u></p> <p>The foundational competencies for all members of the children's workforce (including those who plan, manage and deliver services) who may have the opportunity to identify and respond to the needs of children through their work, or to support or enable others to do so. May also be relevant to members of the wider community who are not part of the children's workforce.</p>
A1	<p><u>Children's workforce practitioner tier</u></p> <p>The practice competencies necessary for members of the children's workforce who have regular direct contact with children to work together to support the needs of those who are vulnerable. May also be relevant for those who work with or provide services to adults who are parents, whānau, family and caregivers, where there is an opportunity to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of children.</p>
B	<p><u>Children's workforce advanced practitioner tier</u></p> <p>Additional competencies that build on the foundational practice tier. Competencies essential for those who are in senior practice positions in organisations providing services to children. As with the practitioner tier, these competencies may also be relevant to senior practitioners within services for adults who are parents, whānau, family and caregivers, where there are regular opportunities to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of children.</p>
C	<p><u>Children's workforce management tier</u></p> <p>Additional competencies for operational managers within organisations that provide services to children, or services for adults who are parents, whānau, family and caregivers, where there are regular opportunities to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of children. Intended to both stand alone, and to build from the other tiers – this reflects the different backgrounds of management within different sectors.</p>

Tier	Explanation
D	<p><u>Children’s workforce leadership tier</u></p> <p>Competencies for organisational leaders. Competencies essential for those in leadership positions within organisations that provide services to children or services to adults who are parents, whānau, family and caregivers where there are regular opportunities to identify and respond to concerns about the wellbeing of children. Intended to both stand alone, and to build from the other tiers – this reflects the different backgrounds of leaders within different sectors.</p>

Whether these tiers are meaningful, and representative of genuine differences between roles within the children’s workforce, is one of the things we hope to explore through the field test.

We also recognise that the boundaries between roles may vary between and across sectors – for example, the line between management and leadership is blurred in many organisations. Learning about how this works in practice will be key to informing the options we consider for implementation.

Balancing aspiration and realism

The draft framework is aspirational, as we believe strongly that we need to have a national conversation that is both bold and brave. This means the framework is comprehensive, and contains a number of competency descriptors that would represent a significant change for many parts of the workforce.

However, we also recognise that the framework needs to be realistic and achievable. A key purpose of our field test is to engage with practitioners and identify which competencies are:

- Accurate descriptors of what can already be expected of the workforce and can form a foundation for further growth.
- Aspirational, but achievable with the proper investment and prioritisation within the current structures and systems that support the children’s workforce.
- Aspirational, but not realistic within the current structures and systems that support the children’s workforce.

This information will then shape what competencies are included in the final framework. It will also provide context for conversations about options for implementing the framework, including what the possible dividends of different levels of investment in capability may be.

Key terminology

Another purpose of the field test of the draft core competency framework is to lead a cross-sector discussion about the meaning of certain common words and phrases, so that the final framework can assist the workforce to use the same language, and support collaboration.

The table below provides an overview of the key concepts and language used throughout the framework.

Phrase	Explanation
Core competency	A description of the skills, knowledge and values needed for all children's workers to achieve the best outcomes for children and their parents, families, whānau and caregivers.
Knowledge	Areas of understanding or awareness that children's workers will possess that inform their practice.
Skills	Abilities needed by children's workers to demonstrate effective practice.
Values	Individual characteristics, including guiding principles and beliefs, that the children's worker will demonstrate through their practice.
Children's workforce	Everyone in organisations working with and for children and young people – that is, those who plan, manage, and deliver services (including volunteers who have charge of children).
Child	Every child, mokopuna, and young person aged under 18 years.
Paramouncy principle	The principle that the welfare and best interests of a child must be the first and paramount consideration when making decisions that may affect their welfare.
Child-centred practice	Professional practice that priorities responsiveness of the needs of the child. Includes early intervention, appreciation of the developmental needs of children, providing children with opportunities to participate decision-making, and promoting a collaborative approach.
Parents, family, whānau and caregivers	Those people in the child's life who they should be able to trust and rely on to love and protect them, recognising that family structures and the significant adults in children's lives can vary, and that it is important not to rely on assumptions about family structures or arrangements.
Vulnerable children	Children who are at significant risk of harm to their wellbeing now and into the future as a consequence of the environment in which they are being raised and, in some cases, due to their own complex needs. Environmental factors that influence child vulnerability include not having their basic emotional, physical, social, developmental and/or cultural needs met at home or in their wider community.
Child protection	Activities carried out to ensure that children are safe in cases where there is suspected abuse or neglect or the risk of abuse or neglect. This definition recognises the role that organisations play in promoting the wellbeing of children and responding to their vulnerability.

Phrase	Explanation
Cultures of child protection	An organisational or community culture that is open and accountable, understands the needs of children, makes their safety and security paramount and works in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of vulnerable children.
Strengths-based practice	Professional practice that emphasises self-determination and strengths, viewing clients as agents with resilience, rather than passive receivers of services.
Collaboration	A general term to describe the range of working practices (for example, communication, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration) that occur within multi-agency responses to vulnerability.

The content of the framework

How the framework is structured

The draft competency framework is broken down into six high-level domains. These are:

- Be culturally competent
- Work collaboratively and share information
- Identify needs and respond to vulnerability
- Engage parents, family, whānau and caregivers
- Engage children
- Act in the best interests of children

Each of these six domains also has a number of subdomains. Within each domain the competencies are layered by tier (as described in Section 1 above). Not every subdomain has competencies at each tier, but every domain does.

Each competency is a descriptor of a desired skill, knowledge or attitude that a competent worker at the appropriate tier would possess if they were effective at responding to the needs of vulnerable children.

Overview of the six domains

Below is a high-level overview of each of the domains in the draft Core Competency framework. For each domain there is a list of the subdomains within that domain, a vision statement that describes the outcomes that we want the children’s workforce to achieve by including this domain, and a summary of selected descriptors, to create a profile of the competent worker.

Domain: Be culturally competent		
Subdomains	Our vision	Profile of a worker competent in this domain
Understand diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand Work with diversity and difference Work with Māori	A children’s workforce that takes into account cultural perspectives, to engage and work with children and their parents, family, whānau and caregivers to understand and respond to their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises and respects diversity within Aotearoa New Zealand. • Communicates and engages in culturally appropriate and inclusive ways. • Reflects upon own values, and their impact on professional practice. • Cultural awareness and sensitivity underpins culturally competent practice. • Recognises bicultural partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand and is able to reinforce the value, rights and mana of Māori, underpinned by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Domain: Work collaboratively and share information		
Subdomains	Our vision	Profile of a worker competent in this domain
Work collaboratively Share Information Lead and sustain transformational change	A children’s workforce that works together until positive outcomes are achieved for children, as well as their parents, family, whānau and caregivers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a shared framework of knowledge, skills and values, and develops capability in collaborative working. • Understands the different roles, responsibilities and processes in the children’s workforce. • Networks and operates effectively and ethically in a cross-agency environment • Committed to a culture of collaboration that enables clear and decisive action for children. • Shares information in a timely and accurate manner to effectively address the needs of children. • Organisational leaders lead and sustain transformational change in practice to reflect the values, skills and knowledge described in the core competency framework.

Domain: Identify needs and respond to vulnerability

Subdomains	Our vision	Profile of a worker competent in this domain
<p>Support a culture of child protection</p> <p>Child protection policies and processes</p> <p>Understand child development</p> <p>Understand child health</p>	<p>A children's workforce that recognises vulnerable children's needs and the response that is required to prevent harm occurring, including the implications of the paramountcy principle in practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers the holistic wellbeing of the child within its wider ecological context. • Understands the importance of prevention and early intervention, alertness and preparedness to act to protect and improve children's wellbeing. • Identifies indicators of vulnerability and when children are not having their basic needs met. • Acts on unmet needs quickly and effectively and takes concerns seriously. • Committed to child protection culture and continuous improvement based on self-reflection, feedback and consideration of evidence-based practice. • Understands the child protection policies and protocols that govern their organisation and/or profession, including international and national legislation and policy to protect children

Domain: Engage parents, family, whānau and caregivers

Subdomains	Our vision	Profile of a worker competent in this domain
<p>Empower parents, family, whānau and caregivers</p> <p>Communicate effectively with parents, family, whānau and caregivers</p>	<p>A children's workforce with the interpersonal qualities and communication skills to engage with parents, family, whānau and caregivers in an honest and open manner to build positive and constructive relationships, establish a shared understanding of their situation, and collaboratively plan actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises parents, family, whānau and caregivers as the child's primary support system. • Uses interpersonal qualities and communication skills to engage effectively with parents, family, whānau and caregivers. • Maintains and strengthens, wherever possible and appropriate, the relationship between a child and their parents, families, whānau and caregivers. • Works in partnership with those that children depend on, including parents, family, whānau and caregivers to retain parental responsibility wherever possible and appropriate. • Able to communicate openly and honestly with parents, family, whānau and caregivers about concerns when this is in the best interest of the child.

Domain: Engage children

Subdomains	Our vision	Profile of a worker competent in this domain
<p>Empower children</p> <p>Communicate effectively with children</p>	<p>A children's workforce with the interpersonal qualities and communication skills to engage with children in a manner appropriate to their developmental stage and abilities, to build positive and constructive relationships, and to establish a shared understanding of their perspectives in order to plan actions.</p> <p>A children's workforce that operates in accordance with the rights of the people of New Zealand, as defined in relevant legislation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes account of children's views of themselves, their lives, their future, their family whānau and community. • Uses a developmental perspective with age-appropriate engagement and communication, assessment and actions within each child's cultural context. • Communicate with children at a level appropriate to their developmental stage and ability, using language they can understand. • Listens to children and accurately convey their perspective so that the child's voice is heard.. • Balances child-centred practice with other priorities and needs.

Domain: Act in the best interests of children

Subdomains	Our vision	Profile of a worker competent in this domain
<p>Champion the rights and interests of children</p> <p>Work in a child-centred way</p> <p>Professional conduct and continual improvement</p>	<p>A children's workforce that understands the rights and interests of children, and works in a child-centric way to act in the best interests of children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands relevant ethical codes, competency frameworks, and legalisation that govern practice and service delivery. • Promotes the rights of children and respects their dignity. • Committed to urgency when responding to children's needs and persistence to achieve outcomes. • Recognises the principle that the welfare and best interests of a child must be the first and paramount consideration when making decisions that may affect their welfare. • Able to put the child at the centre, and demonstrates child-centred decision-making that informs action, including recognising and responding to the vulnerability of children. • Works in a child-centred way. • Applies the least intrusive intervention necessary to protect vulnerable children. • Reflects upon and improves professional practice.

Structure of the draft framework

The following pages contain the detail of the core competency framework.

The competencies are separated first by tier:

- A0 – Children’s workforce foundational tier
- A1 – Children’s workforce practitioner tier
- B – Children’s workforce advanced practitioner tier
- C – Children’s workforce management tier
- D - Children’s workforce leadership tier

They are then separated by domain:

- Be culturally competent
- Work collaboratively and share information
- Identify needs and respond to vulnerability
- Engage parents, family, whānau and caregivers
- Engage children
- Act in the best interests of children

Within each domain, the competencies are further broken down by subdomain, with a series of descriptors for each subdomain (as applicable).

Whether a competency descriptor is describing something that is predominantly a skill, knowledge or value is indicated by the letters **S**, **K** and **V** respectively.

Tier A0: Children’s workforce foundational tier

Be culturally competent (Tier A0)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Understand diversity in New Zealand.</i>	Understands that New Zealand has a culturally diverse population, and that culture extends beyond ethnicity. K
	Appreciates that their cultural and belief systems influence interactions with children and their parents, family, whānau and caregivers. V
	Appreciates that positive outcomes for children and their parent’s family, whānau and caregivers are achieved when there is mutual respect and understanding. V
<i>Work with diversity and difference</i>	Recognises diversity and difference exists at both the group and individual level, and that general cultural information should not lead to stereotyping. K
	Respects diversity and difference in all their forms, including language, religion, culture, heritage, philosophy, differing ability, gender, and sexual orientation. V
	Understands and applies principles of cultural competency in relation to personal practice. K
<i>Work with Māori</i>	Knows when and where to seek help when engaging with people from diverse backgrounds. K
	Recognises bicultural partnership in New Zealand, underpinned by Te Tiriti O Waitangi, and the need to reinforce the rights of mokopuna and whānau Māori to participate in their culture, practices and language. V

Work collaboratively and share information (Tier A0)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work collaboratively</i>	Recognises that they are part of one children’s workforce if they plan, manage or deliver services to children, regardless of their role or profession. V
	Able to connect and communicate in open and honest ways. S
	Appreciates that there are diverse roles in the children’s workforce, each with their own practice expectations and standards. V
	Respect and trusts other children’s workers and the value and expertise each brings. V
	Able to network with other children’s workers to grow knowledge and improve practice. S
<i>Share information</i>	Recognises the importance of sharing information. V
<i>Lead and sustain transformational change</i>	Understands the vision of the core competency framework in supporting children’s workers to better collaborate to achieve good outcomes for vulnerable children. K

Tier A0: Children’s workforce foundational tier

Identify needs and respond to vulnerability (Tier A0)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Support a culture of child protection</i>	Recognises that the protection of children is a core duty of all children’s workers. V
	Understands the importance of prevention and that early intervention produces the best outcomes for children. K
	Able to consider the wellbeing of children holistically, including their physical, emotional, cognitive, and socio-cultural needs. S
	Able to recognise when something is not right, take steps to seek advice and support, and respond quickly and effectively when needed. S
	Recognises the importance of following-up after a referral to make sure that the issue is resolved and children don’t fall through the gaps. V
<i>Child protection policy and processes</i>	Able to judge when immediate action is needed to keep a child safe. S
	Recognises the importance of not acting on a concern alone, and the criticality of consulting with a manager, supervisor or designated person to gain support and guidance to protect children. V

Engage parents, family, whānau and caregivers (Tier A0)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Recognises that wherever possible and appropriate the relationship between a child and their parents, families, whānau and caregivers should be maintained and strengthened. V
	Recognises the value of parents, families, whānau and caregivers, and their lead role and responsibility for their children. V
<i>Communicate effectively with parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Able to communicate openly and honestly with parents, families, whānau and caregivers, treating them with dignity, respect, and integrity. S

Engage children (Tier A0)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower children</i>	Recognises that children are able to communicate, even when very young or non-verbal and treats this communication with dignity and respect. V
<i>Communicate effectively with children</i>	Able to actively listen in a calm, non-judgemental, non-threatening way using open questions, consistent with the child’s developmental stage. S

Act in the best interests of children (Tier A0)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Champion the rights and interests of children</i>	Recognises the importance of the rights of children given their dependency on adults. V
	Recognises the paramountcy principle that the child’s best interests must be the first and paramount consideration when making decisions that may affect them. V
<i>Work in a child-centred way</i>	Able to put the child at the centre and demonstrate child-centred decision-making. S
	Able to reflect and adapt responses to meet the child’s changing needs. S

Tier A1: Children’s workforce practitioner tier

Be culturally competent (Tier A1)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Understand diversity in New Zealand</i>	Understands how cultural and historic context can affect children, parents, families, whānau and caregivers, and inform effective practice in children’s work. K
<i>Work with diversity and difference</i>	Able to engage and communicate in culturally appropriate, inclusive ways. S
	Able to engage with children, parents, family, whānau and caregivers to identify cultural issues that may be relevant to their engagement with a service. S
	Able to engage with children, parents, family, whānau and caregivers to identify cultural issues that may be relevant to their engagement with the service. S
	Recognises diverse values, beliefs, theories, ideologies, paradigms, frameworks, perspectives, and worldviews. K
	Willing to reflect on the impact of their background (for example, their culture, values, and beliefs) on their practice, and adopt strategies to manage this. V
	Committed to on-going professional development in cultural competency, including awareness and practice. V
	Able to take family and whānau-based approaches where doing so is appropriate. S
	Able to engage positively with children, parents, families, whānau and caregivers from diverse backgrounds on topics that may be sensitive or challenging. ¹ S
	Understands the effects of non-verbal communication such as body language, and that different cultures use and interpret body language in different ways. K
	Able to engage with children, parents, families, whānau and caregivers using their own language, or to seek the support of a translator (who is not a family member) where required. S
<i>Work with Māori</i>	Able to recognise, nurture, and strengthen mana in others. S
	Recognises the cultural wisdom embedded in Māori ideological and philosophical beliefs. V
	Knows when to consult with kaumatua, kuia, cultural advisors or tohunga (either within or external to their organisation) to support Māori. K
	Able to use significant kupu Māori throughout interactions with Māori. S

Work collaboratively and share information (Tier A1)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work collaboratively</i>	Recognises the importance of collaborative working where it is in the best interests of the child. V
	Recognises that responsibility to children is on-going and carries across the process of referral within the ethnical and competency boundaries of their role. V
	Able to connect across the children’s workforce to create shared assessments of need, to make decisions, and to plan and deliver agreed next steps. S
	Understands different perspectives, theories and drivers across the children’s workforce, but is confident to challenge situations with considered questions. K
	Recognises the importance of continual professional development, supports the learning of others, and encourages an environment that promotes learning. V
	Actively seeks and participates in collaborative professional learning opportunities. V
	Able to seek care for themselves and to access supervision and expert advice and guidance as needed. S
	Understands their limitations and the limits of their role. K

¹For example, mental illness.

Tier A1: Children’s workforce practitioner tier

Subdomain	Descriptor
	Understands the children’s services in their community, and knows what to do (including the appropriate referral pathways) to support access. K
	Able to use common tools, processes and procedures for collaborative working. K
	Knows about the Tuituia assessment framework principles and processes. K
<i>Share information</i>	Recognises the importance of sharing information, and encouraging others to do so to achieve good outcomes for children. V
	Understands privacy legislation and policies and procedures surrounding confidentiality, consent and sharing. ² K
	Understands the importance of honest and open communication about sharing of information with the child and their parents, family, whānau or caregivers. K
	Able to appropriately seek the consent of children, parents, family, whānau or caregivers to information sharing, unless this increases the risk of harm. S
<i>Lead and sustain transformational change</i>	Understands the content of the core competency framework, and can apply the descriptors in self-assessment, and in conversations with supervisors and managers about their continuing professional development. K

Identify needs and respond to vulnerability (Tier A1)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Support a culture of child protection</i>	Able to identify children that are not having their physical, emotional, cognitive and socio-cultural needs met, and can respond quickly and effectively. K
	Understands relevant global policy and national legislation (or parts thereof) to protect children. ³ K
	Recognises their role in supporting a culture of child protection and commits to continuous improvement in their child protection practices. V
	Able to apply their organisation’s whistle blowing policy to the protection of children. S
	Able to participate in reflective supervision and encourage others to do so. S
	Able to self-reflect and seek help to prevent common problematic professional situations or behaviours. ⁴ S
<i>Child protection policies and processes</i>	Able to identify indicators of vulnerability relating to child abuse and neglect. K
	Understands the connections between child vulnerability and family and intimate partner violence, unmanaged health issues (including physical and mental health), and substance misuse. K
	Able to identify indicators of vulnerability in mother and baby.
	Able to follow national, local and organisational child protection policies and procedures, including knowing who to contact, how to access advice, and how to make a report or referral to the Police, Child, Youth and Family, or an appropriate specialist or service. S
<i>Understand child development</i>	Understands child development and how physical, emotional, sexual, cognitive and socio-cultural development progresses in children. K
	Appreciates that there are competing theories about how children develop, including the degree to which it is influenced by environmental and cultural factors. K

²For example, the Privacy Act 1993; the Child, Young Persons, and their Families Act 1989; and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994.

³ For example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, the Child, Young Persons and their Family Act 1989, the Crimes Act 1961, the Care of Children Act 2004, the Domestic Violence Act 1995, the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1989, and the Privacy Act 1993.

⁴ For example, such as collusion, desensitisation, failure to recognise disguised compliance, and detachment from child-centric practice.

Tier A1: Children’s workforce practitioner tier

Subdomain	Descriptor
	Able to consistently track children’s development to support action where there is an indicator of vulnerability. K
	Understands key points of transition for children (for example, starting school) as times to assess the holistic needs of the child and the support provided. K
	Able to interact with children in ways that support the development of their ability to think, learn, and become independent. S
<i>Understand child health</i>	Able to identify the signs and indicators of unmet health needs, ⁵ and respond appropriately, including making a referral to an appropriate specialist or service. S
	Able to identify the signs and indicators of potential substance misuse in children and respond appropriately, including making a referral to a specialist or service. S
	Able to identify to the signs and indicators of unmet mental health needs in children and respond appropriately, including making a referral to a specialist or service. S

Engage parents, family, whānau and caregivers (Tier A1)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Able to work in partnership with parents, families, whānau and caregivers to maintain parental responsibility wherever appropriate. S
	Able to directly challenge parents, families, whānau and caregivers where it is in the best interest of their child to do so. S
	Recognises the right of parents, family, whānau and caregivers to information about their children, unless it is judged to be not in the best interests of the child. V
<i>Communicate effectively with parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Able to apply the skills, knowledge and values described in the Be culturally competent domain to support effective communication with parents, family, whānau and caregivers.
	Able to create positive group dynamics, seek solutions, and demonstrate the different roles of supporting, leading and facilitating when working with groups. S
	Able to have conversations with parents, families, whānau and caregivers about personal issues or circumstances where these may be contributing to the vulnerability of their child or children. ⁶ S
	Able to engage with parents, families, whānau and caregivers about potential intimate partner or family violence, connecting this if necessary to the vulnerability of their children. S

Engage children (Tier A1)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower children</i>	Recognises the importance of presenting genuine choices to children, and being honest and open about the weight of their opinions and wishes. V
	Able to involve children in decision-making. S
	Able to help children to express what they are feeling. S
<i>Communicate effectively with children</i>	Able to apply the skills, knowledge and values described in the Be culturally competent domain to support effective communication with children.
	Understands how children’s communication skills develop. K
	Understands theories to help describe the child’s world. ⁷ K
	Able to support children with communication needs. S

⁵For example, common childhood illnesses or illnesses connected to vulnerability such as rheumatic fever, scabies.

⁶For example, health (including chronic illness or disability), mental illness, drug misuse and other

⁷For example, attachment.

Tier A1: Children’s workforce practitioner tier

Subdomain	Descriptor
	Able to effectively communicate with children across their developmental stages, meeting the needs of the individual child. ⁸ S
	Able to hold conversations at the appropriate time and place, with regular, patient, and reliable contact. S

Act in the best interests of children (Tier A1)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Champion the rights and interests of children</i>	Able to work with children in a manner that promotes their rights and respects their dignity. S
	Recognises the principle of applying the least intrusive intervention necessary to protect vulnerable children. V
	Understands all relevant regulatory and statutory requirements, policies and systems that govern practice in their sector. K
	Able to motivate and encourage children to achieve their full potential. S
<i>Work in a child-centred way</i>	Understands key principles of child-centred practice. ⁹ K
	Able to, with support as required, assess the needs of children, plan an appropriate response, and review the implementation of the planned response to check its effectiveness. S
<i>Professional conduct and continual improvement</i>	Able to use learning, theory (including both evidence-based and research-informed), and experience to reflect upon and improve professional practice. S
	Able to draw upon other’s perspectives to challenge personal thinking and assess the impact of actions, attitudes and behaviours to improve professional practice. S
	Understands all relevant codes of conduct, ethics, or practice and identifies and manages ethical dilemmas with appropriate supervision or guidance. K

⁸For example, using spoken language, visual communication, play, body and sign language.

⁹For example, early intervention, appreciation of the developmental needs of children, providing children with opportunities to participate decision-making, and promoting a collaborative approach.

Tier B: Children’s workforce advanced practitioner tier

Be culturally competent (Tier B)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work with diversity and difference</i>	Able to support colleagues to integrate cultural knowledge and understanding into their interactions with persons from diverse backgrounds to create strengths-based practice. S
	Able to support colleagues to recognise diverse values, beliefs, theories, ideologies, paradigms, frameworks, perspectives, and worldviews. S
	Able to advise colleagues on seeking cultural advisors and translators to support clients from diverse backgrounds to engage. S
	Encourages colleagues to reflect on the impact of their background on their practice, and can advise them on strategies they can adopt to manage this. S
<i>Work with Māori</i>	Understands the significance of strong meaningful human connections (tūhonotanga), the mana of their environment and sites where engagement takes place (mana o te ao turoa), and relationships with the spiritual dimension (wairuatanga) when working with Māori. K
	Understands the contribution of whakapapa, cultural narratives, and the cultural wisdom embedded in Māori ideological and philosophical beliefs, to the empowerment of Māori. K
	Respects and strengthens the voices and aspirations of Māori by championing and modelling the use of diverse Māori cultural practices. V
	Able to use Te Reo Māori throughout interactions with Māori in a respectful, brave and deliberate way. S

Work collaboratively and share information (Tier B)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work collaboratively</i>	Champions collaborative working where it is in the best interests of the child. V
	Champions on-going commitment to the children’s workforce learning community and collaborative professional learning opportunities. V
	Able to support colleagues who are children’s workers to use common tools, processes and procedures for collaborative working. S
	Understands the Tuituia assessment framework principles and processes, and can contribute to or lead an assessment as required by the needs of the child, across the framework dimensions – Mokopuna Ora, Kaitiaki Mokapuna and Te Ao Hurihuri. S
	Able to navigate organisations to access services using advocacy, negotiation, facilitation, and mediation skills. S
<i>Share information</i>	Able to support colleagues to share information in ways consistent with privacy legislation, policies and procedures, especially in difficult or challenging legal or ethical cases. S
	Able to work critically with information, ¹⁰ and to support colleagues who are children’s workers to do the same. S
<i>Lead and sustain transformational change</i>	Models the vision of the core competency framework in supporting children’s workers to better collaborate to achieve good outcomes for vulnerable children. V
	Able to support colleagues who are children’s workers to understand the content of the core competency framework, and apply the descriptors in assessment of their competencies. S

¹⁰For example, assessing relevance, bringing information sources together, and identifying gaps.

Tier B: Children’s workforce advanced practitioner tier

Identify needs and respond to vulnerability (Tier B)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Support a culture of child protection</i>	Able to encourage colleagues to identify and discuss concerns to promote early intervention and response. S
	Able to support colleagues to respond to concerns, especially in difficult or challenging cases. ¹¹ S
	Understands the policies and processes of the child protection services in their community (for example, Child, Youth and Family and the Police) to support colleagues to make a referral and formulate a plan to follow up on the outcome, even if referred to a statutory agency. K
	Able to provide reflective supervision and encourage others to do so. S
	Able to support colleagues to build good working relationships with relevant child protection services in their community. S
<i>Child protection policy and processes</i>	Understands categories of abuse and neglect and signs or indicators for each, and is able to support colleagues with this knowledge. K
	Understands specialist issues connected to abuse and neglect and is able to support colleagues with this knowledge. ¹² K
	Understands resilience factors, how these might interact with vulnerability and its indicators, and is able to support colleagues with this knowledge. K
<i>Understand child development</i>	Able to support colleagues to navigate competing theories about how children develop. S
	Able to listen carefully and respond to concerns expressed about developmental or behavioural changes, support colleagues analyse potential issues, and take appropriate responses. S
<i>Understand child health</i>	Supports colleagues to maintain an understanding of health issues (including mental health and drug misuse) in their community that may contribute to the vulnerability of children. K

Engage parents, family, whānau and caregivers (Tier B)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Able to support colleagues to respond appropriately where parents, family, whānau and carer are disengaging from their children, or where barriers to effective engagement are identified. S
	Understands how issues faced by parents, family, whānau and caregivers can impact on their parenting capacity, ¹³ and is able to support colleagues to engage in a positive and constructive manner to address these in the best interests of the child. K
	Understands issues within the community that may impact on parents’, family, whānau and caregivers’ interactions with services, ¹⁴ and is able to support colleagues with this knowledge. K
<i>Communicate effectively with parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Able to support colleagues to help parents, family, whānau and caregivers understand and interpret their child’s needs, S
	Able to support colleagues to discuss personal issues or circumstances with parents, family, whānau and caregivers where these may be contributing to the vulnerability of their child. ¹⁵ S
	Able to support colleagues to sensitively and confidently manage conflicts between the wants of parents, family, whānau and caregivers and what is in the best interests of the child. S
	Able to advise colleagues on different ways of communicating and to understand communication barriers that could affect parents, family, whānau and caregivers access to services. ¹⁶ K

¹¹For example, where a concern about a child does not amount to suspicion of abuse or neglect, or where it could be harmful to the wellbeing of the child to make a notification to the statutory agencies.

¹²For example, the problematic use of social media, grooming, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, fabricated illness, and intimate partner violence.

¹³For example, mental health issues, substance misuse, family and intimate partner violence.

¹⁴For example, poverty, housing overcrowding, social isolation.

¹⁵For example, health (including chronic illness or disability), mental illness, drug misuse and other.

¹⁶For example, poverty, cultural or faith requirements, disability, disadvantage or anxiety.

Tier B: Children’s workforce advanced practitioner tier

Engage children (Tier B)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower children</i>	Understands, and support colleagues to build their awareness, that sometimes it is necessary to go against a child’s expressed wishes to act in their best interests. K
	Understands theories to help describe the child’s world and how children’s communication skills develop, and can support colleagues with this knowledge. K
	Able to support colleagues to use the most appropriate forms of communication to meet the needs of the individual child. S
<i>Communicate effectively with children</i>	Able to support colleagues to address with children issues that are particularly sensitive or challenging. S
	Able to support colleagues to understand that children may sometimes associate or experience stigma with certain issues, such as mental health problems. S
	Know where information, advice, advocacy and support services for children are available in the community, and support colleagues to connect children to these services. K

Act in the best interests of children (Tier B)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work in a child-centred way</i>	Able to support colleagues to effectively analyse and appropriately use assessment information to develop an understanding of the risks, needs and strengths of vulnerable children. S
	Understands the elements of quality assessment of vulnerable children, ¹⁷ and can support colleagues in their assessment practice. K
	Able to use assessment processes and records to establish measurable goals for children, record these in an appropriate plan, and can support colleagues in this planning process. S
	Understands the importance of evaluation and review to supporting effective implementation and reflection on assessment and planning, and is able to support colleagues in this process. K
<i>Professional conduct and continual improvement</i>	Understands the importance of using critical inquiry and problem solving effectively in their professional practice and supervision of colleagues, and can engage with evidence and professional literature. K

¹⁷For example, child-centeredness, timeliness and purposiveness, relevance, freedom from bias, careful analysis, and clear record keeping.

Tier C: children’s workforce management tier

Be culturally competent (Tier C)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work with diversity and difference</i>	Able to support professional development in cultural competency in staff. ¹⁸ S
	Able to review and monitor programmes and services they manage for cultural relevancy and appropriateness, and can modify service delivery in response to evaluations. S
	Able to use the knowledge, skills and values of staff from diverse backgrounds to sustainably build cultural competency across staff. S
	Able to support staff from diverse backgrounds to build the cultural competency of their colleagues, recognising that demands must be fair and balanced with adequate support. S
	Able to address and correct the use of inappropriate language or actions by staff. S
	Able to monitor the adequacy of resourcing of cultural protocols and services and to seek support from senior managers and organisational leaders as needed. S
	Recognises that the needs of clients from diverse backgrounds are central to engagement and intervention, not just incidental or ancillary. V
<i>Work with Māori</i>	Ensures that staff recognise and value bicultural partnership in New Zealand, underpinned by Te Tiriti O Waitangi, and the need to reinforce the rights of mokopuna and whānau Māori to participate in their culture, practices and language. V
	Able to support and encourage staff to use Te Reo Māori in their interactions with Māori. S

Work collaboratively and share information (Tier C)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work collaboratively</i>	Recognises the importance of creating an enabling environment that is supportive of collaboration where it is in the best interests of the child. V
	Able to create behavioural expectations for staff that encourages and facilitates collaboration and collaborative working. S
	Supports staff they manage to participate in the children’s workforce learning community and collaborative professional learning opportunities. V
	Able to establish and support networks across organisations to identify and implement opportunities for enhanced collaboration and professional learning. S
	Able to support staff to use common tools, processes and procedures for collaborative working. S
	Able to navigate organisational boundaries to address children’s needs, coordinate responses across services, identify and free-up resources, and create an enabling environment for collaboration. S
<i>Share information</i>	Supports a culture among staff they manage that recognises the importance of sharing information appropriately to achieve good outcomes for children. V
<i>Lead and sustain transformational change</i>	Champions the core competency framework and its vision, and sponsors and leads activities among the staff to generate buy-in and commitment. V

¹⁸For example, performance management, children’s workers supervision, and addressing of continuing education needs.

Tier C: children’s workforce management tier

Identify needs and respond to vulnerability (Tier C)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Support a culture of child protection</i>	Champions a culture of child protection and encourages staff to recognise that the protection of children is a core duty of all children’s workers. V
	Encourages the staff to respond to all concerns, especially in difficult or challenging cases. V
<i>Child protection policy and processes</i>	Able to put in place clear child protection policies and procedures that are accessible, supported with adequate training, regularly updated to reflect the changing environment, and provide information on good practice. S
	Practices safer recruitment in all hiring decisions for new children’s workers, and ensures there is on-going safety checking of current children’s workers. S
	Supports staff to have access to specialist advice, both on a regular basis and responsively, on organisational policies, handling challenging legal and ethical issues, and the management of cases involving vulnerable children. S
	Supports the children’s workers they manage to build good working relationships with relevant child protection services in their community (for example, Child, Youth and Family, the Police, other providers of specialist or universal services). S
	Supports the children’s workers they manage to receive the training, professional development opportunities, and supervision they need to effectively identify and respond to abuse, neglect and vulnerability, and act in the best interests of children. S
	Understands the processes of critical evaluation of operational child protection systems to identify gaps, and plan and deliver service improvements to support the best interests of children. K
<i>Understand child health</i>	Supports staff to maintain an understanding of specialist issues that may contribute to the vulnerability of children in their community. K
	Supports staff to maintain an understanding of health issues (including mental health and drug misuse) presenting in their community that may indicate or contribute to the vulnerability of children. K

Engage parents, family, whānau and caregivers (Tier C)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Understands when it is appropriate to advocate on behalf of parents, family, whānau and caregivers to other organisations and organisational leaders. K
	Understands the processes of critical evaluation of client service models and service standards, and ensures that the perspectives of parents, family, whānau, and caregivers are reflected. K
	Supports staff to maintain an understanding issues within the community that may impact on parents, family, whānau and caregivers interactions and experiences with services. K
<i>Communicate effectively with parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Supports staff to take a positive approach to engaging with parents, family, whānau and caregivers, recognising their role and needs, within the context of the needs of their child. S
	Models behaviours and attitudes for the children’s workers they manage that reflect how parents, family, whānau and caregivers should be treated. S
	Able to implement policies to support effective engagement of parents, family, whānau and caregivers. K

Tier C: children's workforce management tier

Engage children (Tier C)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower children</i>	Supports staff to take a positive and constructive approach to engaging with children. V
	Models behaviours and attitudes for the children's workers within their organisation that reflect how children should be treated. S
	Understands when it is appropriate to advocate on behalf of children to other organisations or organisational leaders. K
<i>Communicate effectively with children</i>	Understands the processes of critical evaluation of client service models and service standards, and ensures that the perspectives of children are reflected. K
	Able to implement policies to support effective engagement of children. K

Act in the best interests of children (Tier C)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work in a child-centred way</i>	Able to actively manage staff to deliver a child-centred service, fostering a culture of child protection, collaborative working and effective and safe practice. S
<i>Professional conduct and continual</i>	Able to work across services to identify opportunities for efficiency gains, and to mobilise resources locally to address the unmet needs of children. S
	Able to foster teamwork while managing human resources, including implementing supportive supervision methods where supervisors have a high level of knowledge in child protection. S
	Understands the importance of an organisational workforce strategy to the effective provision of collaborative children's services, and is able to develop feasible operational plans to deliver these strategies. K

Tier D: Children’s workforce leadership tier

Be culturally competent (Tier D)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Understand diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand</i>	Understands the importance of assessing organisational and children’s workers cultural competency to identify gaps and support capability development. K
<i>Work with diversity and difference</i>	Able to lead the development and implementation of organisational policies and processes that are respectful, embed culturally competent practice, and reflect the diverse backgrounds of clients. S
	Able to engage with leaders from diverse backgrounds to validate organisational and staff cultural competency, and to grow networks of influence. S
	Ensures that the perspectives of persons of diverse backgrounds are valued within the organisation. V
	Demonstrates visible leadership to encourage and support staff to effectively deliver services to clients of diverse backgrounds. V
	Models an organisational culture that recognises and supports diversity across the organisation, including throughout its hierarchy, and in its strategies and planning. V
	Able to demonstrate visible leadership on issues that impact on persons from diverse backgrounds, both within the organisation, and who are affected by the activities of the organisation. V
<i>Work with Māori</i>	Recognises Māori knowledge and tikanga, and ensures that decisions around service delivery include Māori voices and are responsive to Māori need. V
	Ensures that Māori paradigms, perspectives and worldviews are included in strategies and planning. V

Work collaboratively and share information (Tier D)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Work collaboratively</i>	Champions organisational policies and processes to encourage and facilitate appropriate collaboration where it is in the best interests of the child. V
	Champions an organisational culture of continual improvement and on-going professional learning in the tools and skills of collaboration. V
	Able to network with leaders from across the community to identify opportunities for joint planning and strategic alignment of initiatives to support collaboration, the children’s workforce learning community, and collaborative professional learning opportunities. S
	Models an organisational culture that supports the best interests of children through responsible ethical practice and clear accountability for the outcomes of children. V
<i>Lead and sustain transformational change</i>	Champions the core competency framework and its vision, and sponsors and leads activities in the wider community to generate buy-in and commitment. V
	Able to engage key stakeholders (both internal and external) to map current theories and practices that support or hinder achieving the vision of the core competencies, and identify opportunities for further organisational and multi-organisational development. S
	Able to prioritise areas for organisational development, including wider change priorities that address the deeper needs of the organisation to achieve the vision of the core competencies. S
	Able to identify and communicate an overarching theory for change to underpin their organisational and multi-organisational development approach, and gain agreement across all tiers of the organisation (practitioners, practice-leaders, and management). S

Tier D: Children’s workforce leadership tier

Subdomain	Descriptor
	Able to plan and implement change across all tiers of the organisation (practitioners, practice-leaders, and management), with each tier growing capability in their own priority areas. S
	Able to evaluate change for impact, and to lead reflection on whether adjustments are needed to achieve the vision of the core competencies. K

Identify needs and respond to vulnerability (Tier D)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Support a culture of child protection</i>	Champions an organisational culture of child protection and encourages all staff to recognise that the protection of children is a core duty of all children’s workers. V
	Champions an organisational culture where staff feel confident to challenge practice that does not take into account the protection of children and raise concerns without fear of reprisal. V
	Champions an organisational commitment to follow-up appropriately on all concerns about staff, and to not take actions in response that are contrary to a culture of child protection. ¹⁹ V
	Ensures that all recruitment of children’s workers, and on-going safety checking of current children’s workers, uses safer recruitment practices and complies with relevant legislation. K
<i>Child protection policy and processes</i>	Able to support an environment where all staff work in accordance with their organisation’s child protection policies, and other national and global policy legislation to protect children. S
	Able to network with leaders from across the community to ensure child protection policies and practices are consistent and of high quality and always comply with relevant legislation. S
	Able to support an environment where all staff are able to identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and neglect and other indicators of vulnerability, are able to take appropriate action in response, and will do so consistently. S
<i>Understand child health</i>	Ensures that their organisation’s capability development strategies take into account health issues (including mental health and drug misuse) presenting in their community that may indicate or contribute to the vulnerability of children. K
	Ensures that their organisation’s capability development strategies include an appreciation of specialist issues that may contribute to the vulnerability of children in their community. K

Engage parents, family, whānau and caregivers (Tier D)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Ensures that organisational policies and processes encourage and facilitate appropriate monitoring and evaluation of client service models and service standards, so that the perspectives of parents, family, whānau, and caregivers are reflected. K
	Ensures that strategic planning and assessments, and the identification of any long-term opportunities and challenges, best meet clients’ evolving needs, and the perspectives of parents, family, whānau, and caregivers. K
	Demonstrates visible leadership over issues within the community that may impact on parents, family, whānau and caregivers interactions and experiences with services. V
	Champions an organisational climate of trust and empowerment of parents, family, whānau and caregivers. ²⁰ V
	Champions behaviours and attitudes for the children’s workers within their organisation that reflect how parents, family, whānau and caregivers should be treated. V

¹⁹ For example, refusing to use ‘settlement agreements’ where members of children’s workers agree to resign provided that no disciplinary action is taken, and a future reference is agreed, where these are contrary to a culture of child protection

²⁰For example, by admitting own mistakes and taking responsibility, resisting undue political pressure in decision making, not abusing power or authority, and standing by decisions that are in the best interests of parents, family, whānau and caregivers even if they are unpopular.

Tier D: Children’s workforce leadership tier

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Communicate effectively with parents, family, whānau and caregivers</i>	Listens to the community on a regular basis to assess how the organisation’s interactions are received and perceived by stakeholders. K

Engage children (Tier D)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Empower children</i>	Ensures that organisational policies and processes encourage and facilitate effective engagement of children. K
	Champions behaviours and attitudes for the children’s workers within their organisation that reflect how children should be treated by the organisation. S
	Champions an organisational climate of trust and empowerment of children. S
	Leads the creation of initiatives, both within the organisation and across the community, to address issues contributing to child vulnerability, prevalent in concerns about child welfare, or that create barriers to effective assistance for children. S
<i>Communicate effectively with children</i>	Able to analyse and reflect on organisational culture and implements changes that demonstrate the value of child leadership, voice, engagement, and empowerment as appropriate. V

Act in the best interests of children (Tier D)

Subdomain	Descriptor
<i>Champion the rights and interests of children</i>	Champions an organisational culture of acting in the best interests of children, including protecting them from abuse and neglect and promoting their welfare. V
<i>Work in a child-centred way</i>	Ensures an organisational environment with clear lines of accountability and understandings about staff roles and behavioural responsibilities to act in the best interest of children. S
<i>Professional conduct and continual improvement</i>	Ensures that organisational induction, orientation and professional development programmes demonstrate commitment to acting in the best interests of children. S