

Children's Policy

Vision

All children experience a joyful childhood and the best possible start to life.

Values and Principles

- *Care*: Children have the best opportunities in life when their whānau can provide them with aroha and emotional and material support. All children should be connected with their whānau, surrounded by love and respect, generosity and care, and have every opportunity to be healthy.
- *Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi*: Tamariki Māori have the right to be respected as tangata whenua and effective systems should be in place for their benefit. Their contribution should be recognised and encouraged and their culture allowed to thrive.
- *Ecological Wisdom*: Children and future generations should all have access to clean air and water, safe food and thriving ecosystems.
- *Social Responsibility*: Government has a crucial role in supporting parents and other caregivers in providing for their children, and in creating policies that put children first. The Government has a responsibility to protect the rights of marginalized and disadvantaged children.
- *Appropriate Decision-Making*: Children have valuable perspectives, and should be supported in their own initiatives and encouraged to participate in decisions affecting their lives, future, communities and the environment. Children should be supported to develop to their full potential, and become responsible, compassionate, engaged citizens.
- *Non-Violence*: All children have the right to be treated with respect and dignity, and they must be protected from all forms of abuse.
- *Diversity*: The cultural and gender identities of our diverse tamariki should be honoured and celebrated.
- *Learning*: Children should experience a childhood of exploration and discovery, including through a quality formal education.

Summary

The Green Party will reform social support services to enable equitable access for all whānau, extend paid parental leave, reform Working for Families and lift minimum wage

entitlements to eliminate child poverty in Aotearoa. We will promote greater collaboration across Government for the benefit of children, and support effective solutions to keep children from harm.

Strategic Priorities

The Green Party's strategic goals include:

"As a Party we strive to create a more connected, compassionate and equal Aotearoa, free from structural biases that discriminate against groups and individuals."

Actions in this policy that will help achieve this include:

- Support the co-design with tangata whenua of an evidence-based nationwide child wellbeing strategy that cements children's rights, including the rights of tamariki and rangatahi Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (1.3)
- Ensure that legislation, policy and practice meet Aotearoa New Zealand's human rights obligations under the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) and that the UNCROC's recommendations are fully implemented. (1.4)
- Work with marginalised peoples, including children, to uphold their rights. (1.8)
- Improve and ensure equitable access to social services for children with additional needs and their whānau, focused on both early intervention and continued support, including adequate resourcing of and access to respite services for parents. (2.1)
- Support by Māori, for Māori solutions, that enable tamariki to stay with whānau (...). (4.1)
- Review and reform the Child Support system to ensure it operates in a way to best benefit children and young people. (3.3)

Connected Policies

When whānau and communities thrive, children thrive. Improving children's lives requires lifting incomes at all levels (see our [Household Livelihoods](#) Policy), and supporting parents in and outside of work (see our [Workforce](#) and [Women's](#) Policies). protecting the wellbeing of the natural world and supporting their deep connection with it (see our [Environmental Protection](#), [Climate Change](#), and [Conservation](#) Policies). See also our [Education](#), [Health](#), [Housing and Sustainable Communities](#), [Justice](#), and [Youth](#) Policies.

Policy Positions

1. A Cross-Government Approach to Child Wellbeing

Issues

Policies and systems focussed on child wellbeing are fragmented across Government. The Green Party supports a cross-governmental approach to child wellbeing, ensuring alignment between plans and strategies prepared by all relevant agencies.

Actions

- 1.1. Ensure that the Children's Commissioner is adequately funded, retains their independence and advocacy role, and takes on responsibility for promoting the understanding of the rights of tamariki and rangatahi under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- 1.2. Reestablish independent monitoring powers for the Children's Commissioner.
- 1.3. Support the co-design with tangata whenua of an evidence-based nationwide child wellbeing strategy that cements children's rights, including the rights of tamariki and rangatahi Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- 1.4. Ensure that legislation, policy and practice meet Aotearoa New Zealand's human rights obligations under the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) and that the UNCROC's recommendations are fully implemented.
- 1.5. Establish the use of child interest analysis in all government policy and planning.
- 1.6. Protect the right of every child to their name, nationality, and preservation of identity.
- 1.7. Establish effective systems for the development and coordination of services for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, in partnership with tamariki and rangatahi, whānau, hapū, and iwi.
- 1.8. Work with marginalised peoples, including children, to uphold their rights..
- 1.9. Oppose the incarceration of children regardless of citizenship status (see also our [Justice](#) Policy).
- 1.10. Ensure that all children are able to engage with the natural world, including through providing immersive environmental education activities in parks and reserves.

2. A Child-centred Approach to Services

Issues

Social services, such as early childhood education, are often unaffordable for parents. All children should have equitable access to high quality social services that enable them to have the best educational and social start in life.

Actions

- 2.1. Improve and ensure equitable access to social services for children with additional needs and their whānau, focused on both early intervention and continued support, including adequate resourcing of and access to respite services for parents.
- 2.2. Recognise the social value of early childcare services, including care provided through playcentres and kōhanga reo, including by developing a funding model that promotes high standards of care, allows flexibility for parents, increases accessibility and affordability for families and ensures fair wages for early childcare teachers (see our [Education](#) Policy).
- 2.3. Ensure all children have access to safe public spaces to play.
- 2.4. Support local communities to provide a wide range of extracurricular activities to all children.
- 2.5. Support universal availability of effective parenting and child development programmes, and ensure these are culturally appropriate and support connections between whānau.
- 2.6. Support the development of initiatives which promote children's full citizenship and participation in their communities.

3. Child Poverty Alleviation

Issues

Child poverty levels are at unacceptably high levels in Aotearoa. Poverty in childhood has long-term impacts on people's wellbeing.

Actions

- 3.1. Introduce a universal child payment, increase the minimum wage and base benefit levels, extend paid parental leave, and increase benefit levels (see our [Workforce](#) and [Household Livelihood](#) Policies).
- 3.2. Review and reform family assistance policies, and remove discriminatory policies to ensure family assistance rates are related to family income rather than parental employment status.
- 3.3. Review and reform the Child Support system to ensure it operates in a way to best benefit children and young people.
- 3.4. Guarantee child support for children and young people in low-income families through advanced payments.
- 3.5. Support community-led provision of safe and healthy food in schools (see our [Food](#) Policy).
- 3.6. Support free budgeting services for parents and primary caregivers.

4. Manaakitanga mō ngā Whānau Katoa - Care for all Families

Issues

The Green Party is concerned about the State removal of children from their whānau, and failures to keep children safe. We need a new approach to children at risk of harm.

Actions

- 4.1. Support by Māori, for Māori solutions, that enable tamariki to stay with whānau, including:
 - 4.1.1. Support hapū, iwi and Māori community organisations to provide effective social support services for at-risk children and families, recognising the need for these to be culturally appropriate and non-coercive; and
 - 4.1.2. Implement Waitangi Tribunal recommendations relating to Oranga Tamariki.
- 4.2. Invest in effective programmes and Government policies that aim to:
 - 4.2.1. Minimise the number of children being born into unsafe situations;
 - 4.2.2. Establish positive parent support services that work to resolve underlying causes of harm; and
 - 4.2.3. Improve the outcomes of children removed from the care of their families, recognising the additional needs of these children in recovering from trauma, and the importance of ensuring they are safe and supported through to adulthood.
- 4.3. Overhaul adoption and other laws relating to the care of children to reflect the diversity of Rainbow families.
- 4.4. Ensure that children who hold part-time jobs to contribute to their households are provided with sufficient and timely support to continue their education.