

Key milestones impacting on the introduction and practice of family group conferencing

1957

Juvenile Crime Prevention section of the Police established, heralding a new way of thinking about child and youth offending

1968

Guardianship Act passed. Defined and regulated the authority of parents as guardians and established the paramountcy of the welfare of children

1972

Department of Social Welfare formed

1974

Children and Young Persons Act 1974 passed. It legally distinguished children and young people, formalised diversionary strategies through the establishment of Children's Boards, and took steps towards reforming the Children's Courts

1975

Joint Committee on Young Offenders established to understand and report on overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system

1979

International Year of the Child saw the establishment of the New Zealand Committee for Children and the National Advisory Committee on the Prevention of Child Abuse

1982

Human Rights Commission report scrutinises the Department of Social Welfare's treatment of young Māori in its residential settings. Archbishop AH Johnston identifies a number of areas requiring attention in a report on practices and procedures relating to the care and control of children and young people in Auckland social welfare institutions. The report recommended consultation with Māori representatives

1983

Matua Whaāngai launched from the Department of Māori Affairs. The focus was to take Māori out of institutions and place them into the care of whānau or iwi

1984

Māori Advisory Committee (chaired by John Rangihau) established to advise on the most appropriate means to achieve a bicultural approach to policy, planning, programmes and delivery within social welfare

1985

Māori Advisory Committee report concluded the department was racist in the institutional sense, its rules reflected dominant Pākehā society and Māori input into policy was negligible, Māori applying for department jobs were disadvantaged by the qualification requirements, and the specialist ability of Māori staff to advise and work with Māori was not recognised. Report by Women's Anti-racist Action Group concluded that institutional racism existed throughout the department in Auckland. Criminal Justice Act passed, forbidding the imprisonment of a person under the age of 16 except for more serious offences that would usually be dealt with by a judge

1988

Puao-te-ata-tu Report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Māori perspective for the Department of Social Welfare completed. The Māori Advisory Committee consulted widely throughout the motu. The report found 'a profound misunderstanding or ignorance of the place of the child in Māori society and its relationship with whānau, hapū, iwi structures' as well as institutional racism and a number of problem areas, including policy formation, service delivery, communication, and racial imbalances in staffing, appointment, promotion and training practices

1989

New Zealand signs the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act passed. The Act recognised the key role of 'families and family groups' in the process of decision-making and introduced family group conferencing within the statutory system. It outlined a process for partnering with whānau to tiaki mokopuna and supported the notion that the knowledge and strength resides within the whānau. It revolutionised the ways we respond to young offenders

2019

The name of the Act changed to the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Changes to this legislation strengthened principles to support tamariki in the context of whānau, recognised the place of tamariki within the whānau, hapū and iwi, and indicated that a family group conference could be used if we believe that holding one would best assist in formulating a plan to help the child or young person (section 18AAA)