

CHiLD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP



What happened to ‘welfare overhaul’?

A stocktake of implementation of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group’s 2019 recommendations

Caitlin Neuwelt-Kearns, Innes Asher
November 2020
Child Poverty Action Group

Child Poverty Action Group Inc.
PO Box 5611,
Wellesley St,
Auckland 1141
www.cpag.org.nz

About Child Poverty Action Group

Child Poverty Action Group (Inc) (CPAG) is a non-profit group formed in 1994, made up of academics, activists, practitioners and supporters. CPAG has a strong education and research skills base which enables it to contribute to better informed social policy to support children in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically children who live in poverty.

CPAG believes that the country's high rate of child poverty is not the result of economic necessity, but is due to policy neglect and a flawed ideological emphasis on economic incentives. Through research, CPAG highlights the position of tens of thousands of New Zealand children, and promotes public policies that address the underlying causes of the poverty they live in.

If you are not already supporting CPAG and you would like to make a donation to assist with ongoing work, please contact us at the address below or through our website:

www.cpag.org.nz

About the Authors

Caitlin Neuwelt-Kearns is a researcher for CPAG. She also holds a research position with the Auckland City Mission. She completed a Master of Arts in Geography with First Class Honours at the University of Auckland in 2019, and her research interests lie in issues of access to health and social services, and framings of poverty.

Innes Asher ONZM is Professor Emeritus of Paediatrics in the University of Auckland's Department of Paediatrics: Child and Youth Health, and until her retirement in September 2020 was Respiratory Paediatrician, Starship Children's Health, Auckland. She was awarded the Health Research Council Liley Medal for her research leadership, and the NZ Medical Association Chair's award for her advocacy work. She serves on the Steering Group of New Zealand's National Child and Youth Epidemiology Service. She is Chair of the Global Asthma Network and a WHO Expert on Chronic Respiratory Diseases. She was a member of the Government's Welfare Expert Advisory Group 2018-19. She has been on the Management Committee of CPAG and a CPAG Health Spokesperson since 2000.

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Associate Professor Susan St John CNZM and Janet McAllister to this report, as well as helpful information furnished by several WEAG members. Analysis and any errors remain the responsibility of the Child Poverty Action Group.

“Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time his bones are formed, his mind developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow, his name is today.”

- Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957)

Contents

Foreword.....	4
Introduction	5
Background to <i>Whakamana Tāngata</i>	7
The Coalition Government’s Response to <i>Whakamana Tāngata</i>	8
Full progress report.....	10
<i>Whakamana Tāngata</i> : the road ahead and CPAG’s recommendations	66
Conclusion.....	68
Reference list	70

Foreword

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has produced this report to offer an independent analysis of the government's response thus far to the recommendations of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG). This report reflects the views of CPAG, and is not a WEAG publication. One of the CPAG co-authors of this report, Innes Asher, was a WEAG member, and views of other WEAG members on the accuracy of this stocktake were sought in the preparation of this report, in order to inform CPAG's analysis. However, CPAG's analysis of both the *Whakamana Tāngata* recommendations, and the government's response to those recommendations, are separate to the views and analysis of WEAG as a collective.

Children are significantly impacted by the state of the welfare system, and CPAG strongly supports the majority of the recommendations of the WEAG for transformation. However, CPAG does not endorse every WEAG recommendation, and some of these points of difference are noted in Tables 3 and 4 in the main body of the report.

As discussed in more detail from page 66, CPAG strongly recommends the government prioritises implementing following WEAG recommendations as a matter of urgency:

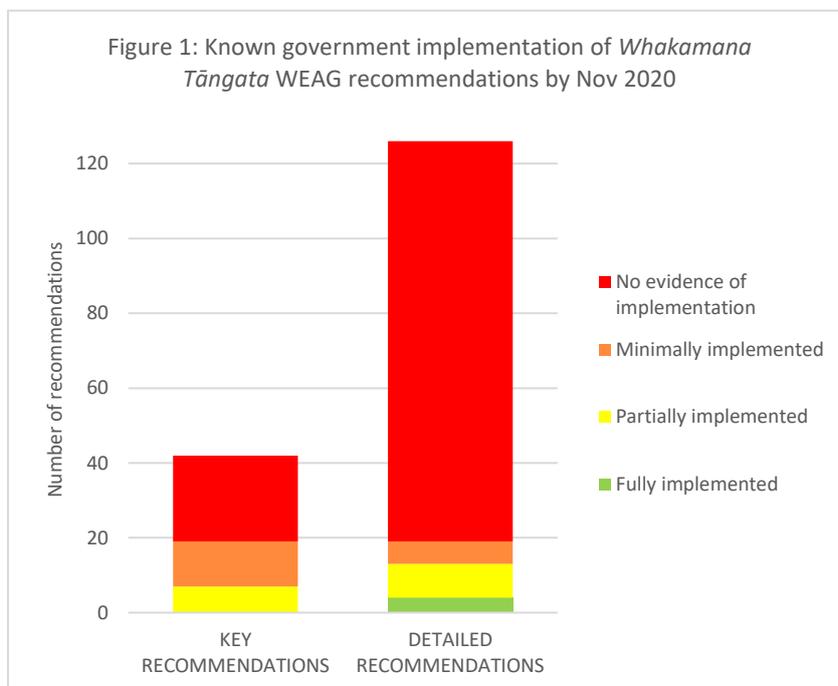
WEAG recommendations identified by CPAG as urgent priorities	Evidence of implementation thus far
1. Increase income support to adequate levels (including benefits and the Family Tax Credit); lower abatement rates in Working For Families; and establish a minimum income standard that is met by the income support system.	None
2. Ensure disability supports are adequate.	Very minimal (for employment support only; nothing for children with disability)
3. Amend the Social Security Act so that its purpose is whakamana tāngata and ensure that the welfare system fulfils the principles of this amended Act.	None
4. Accelerate public housing development.	Partial
5. Ensure income support settings have less impact on partnering decisions (NB: CPAG's view differs from WEAG's as to the appropriate definition of a relationship for the purposes of the welfare system: CPAG's view is it should be similar to that of the Property (Relationships) Act; WEAG's view is that a 6-month grace period is sufficient).	None

Executive Summary

In May 2018, the Coalition Government explicitly laid out its vision for welfare, in the Terms of Reference for the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG):

“The Government’s vision is for a welfare system that ensures people have an adequate income and standard of living, are treated with and can live in dignity and are able to participate meaningfully in their communities...”¹

Nearly two years have passed since the WEAG delivered its *Whakamana Tāngata* report explaining how the government could go about achieving this vision. However our analysis shows the government has implemented very few of WEAG’s recommendations (Figure 1). None of the 42 key recommendations, and only four of 126 detailed recommendations, have been fully implemented. It has partially implemented only 7 of the 42 key recommendations (17%), and partially or fully implemented 13 of the 126 detailed recommendations (10%).



Implementation of many of the more substantial recommendations could reasonably be expected to take *some* time in order to mitigate the risks of unexpected effects. However, while there are indications that further policy work is underway on some recommendations, the Government has not announced the specifics for any future implementation, apart from one promise to further increase benefit abatement levels at some time before the next election. When that happens, it will change the status of one key recommendation from “minimally implemented” to “partially implemented”.

When we broadly categorise the key recommendations (Table 2), those directly regarding income support (key recs 19-28) have had less implementation than average, so far: only one out of the 10 recommendations has been partially implemented; one has been

¹ New Zealand Government (2018).

minimally implemented, and eight (80%) have had no implementation at all. None of the three key recommendations related to welfare debt have been implemented at all, and only one of the four designed to assist the set-up of the new welfare system has been partially implemented. None of the WEAG's recommendations for children affected by disability have been implemented, and there is minimal progress in the health and disability section. Housing-related recommendations have fared *slightly* better, as have those to do with improving equity for Māori and for Pacific peoples, while all five recommendations regarding employment support (including those specifically for youth and those with disability and/or health conditions) have been minimally implemented.

The Government's public communications about any further plans has been limited: the key information source regarding their *Whakamana Tāngata* intentions is a 12-month-old cabinet paper.² However, it may give some hope that the intended achievement timeline for many substantive recommendations was given as "next two to four years" in November 2019 – namely, within the current 2020-2022 electoral term.

Children cannot wait for more resources, as their minds, emotions, bodies are constantly developing and are often permanently adversely affected by chronic stress and lack of essentials. Our inadequate and ineffective welfare system continues to entrench poverty for children in households relying on income support. The adverse impacts on these children and families are not only immediate in terms of health and wellbeing, they also have lasting effects on their lives and society, constraining their futures; downstream costs in areas of health, education and justice alone are huge.³ The intention of a welfare overhaul was to ensure that everyone "has a standard of living and income that enables them to live in dignity and participate in their communities", and to lift "children and their families out of poverty"⁴; a baseline that all New Zealand children deserve. Given the Coalition Government's child poverty reduction focus,⁵ and the fact that WEAG identified that people receiving welfare payments are living "desperate lives" due to "seriously inadequate incomes",⁶ the progress on implementation appears unjustifiably slow.

CPAG plans to repeat this analysis of WEAG implementation in future; we hope next time we will be reporting that progress and plans have accelerated in this current electoral term.

Introduction

The 2019 Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy sets out the government's vision that Aotearoa New Zealand ought to be "best place in the world for children and young people".⁷ If we are to achieve this vision, families require adequate resources so they can participate meaningfully in their communities, and so children can thrive and reach their full potential.

The Coalition Government acknowledged that a well-functioning welfare system is essential for this vision by setting up the WEAG in 2018 to undertake a 'broad-ranging' review of the

² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

³ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

⁴ New Zealand Government (2017).

⁵ Ardern (2017).

⁶ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

⁷ DPMC (2019).

welfare system and advise the government on its future. While the brief to WEAG was wider than child poverty alone, it explicitly stated that “this Government acknowledges that an improved social welfare system is also an important lever to achieve one of its main priorities of improving the wellbeing of children, especially those who are economically disadvantaged, and to reduce the rates of children experiencing poverty”.⁸

This report provides an overview of progress to date on the implementation of WEAG’s welfare overhaul recommendations. We table each “key” and “detailed” recommendation, and provide a progress report for each. Using a child-focussed lens we conclude that the expected and necessary transformative welfare overhaul has yet to be delivered. In particular, we highlight the disparities between political promise and actual evidence of implementation. Following a discussion of the background to *Whakamana Tāngata* and the government’s response, we discuss CPAG’s recommended priorities for the next three years in accelerating welfare overhaul and implementing the WEAG’s recommendations.

Background to *Whakamana Tāngata*

In 2017, as part of a Confidence and Supply Agreement between the Labour Party and the Green Party, the Coalition Government committed to overhauling the welfare system. In this Agreement, it was noted that:

“The Green Party supports a transformative Government which implements the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In this parliamentary term, the Green Party has a number of priorities to progress the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Labour-led Government shares and will support these priorities.”⁹

One of these priorities ‘shared and supported’ by the Labour-led Government was:

“Overhaul the welfare system, ensure access to entitlements, remove excessive sanctions and review Working For Families so that everyone has a standard of living and income that enables them to live in dignity and participate in their communities, and lifts children and their families out of poverty.”¹⁰

In order to evaluate the current system and inform this welfare overhaul, the Coalition Government established the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) in May 2018.¹¹ The Terms of Reference for the WEAG, a document approved by Cabinet following Ministerial consultation, outlined an ambitious vision:

“The Government’s vision is for a welfare system that ensures people have an adequate income and standard of living, are treated with and can live in dignity and are able to participate meaningfully in their communities... ..to achieve one of its main priorities of improving the wellbeing of childrenand to reduce the rates of children experiencing poverty...”¹²

⁸ New Zealand Government (2018).

⁹ New Zealand Government (2017).

¹⁰ New Zealand Government (2017).

¹¹ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2018).

¹² New Zealand Government (2018).

This commitment to a welfare overhaul reflected a government-level recognition of the inadequacy of current social security settings. Support is difficult to access, requiring people to meet onerous obligations, and the level of assistance provided is often inadequate for meeting people’s basic needs.¹³

The Coalition Government’s Families Package, which began on 1 July 2018 (three months after the formation of WEAG), gave some assistance to low-income families with children; yet the WEAG’s consultation, which largely took place after that date, did not find sufficient alleviation of “desperate need”. CPAG has modelled the Families Package for its impact on the poorest children and found it fell well short of what is required to release children and their families from poverty.¹⁴

In February 2019, the WEAG delivered its consensus report *Whakamana Tāngata – Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand*, based on evidence gathered by experts, in wide consultation with individuals, communities, and employees of Work and Income.¹⁵ Their report highlighted that the current social security system is no longer fit for purpose, with “many New Zealanders lead[ing] desperate lives with seriously inadequate incomes”.¹⁶ It called for urgent welfare overhaul, acknowledging that the system is unsatisfactory at best, and damaging at worst.¹⁷ It delivered 42 key and 126 detailed recommendations, laying out a framework for welfare overhaul for the Coalition Government.

In light of the Coalition Government’s emphasis on child poverty reduction, the WEAG highlighted the implications of welfare design for children. A background paper to *Whakamana Tāngata*, entitled *The income support system*, noted that 168,275 dependent children were living in families receiving main benefits in March 2018,¹⁸ constituting approximately 14 percent of all children and young people aged 19 years and under. In the WEAG’s second key recommendation, the principles to guide the design and operation of the welfare system include “keep children paramount”.¹⁹ It is because the welfare system has such a significant impact on the wellbeing of so many children that CPAG wishes to chart the progress of the government in overhauling the welfare system.

The Coalition Government’s Response to *Whakamana Tāngata*

The Minister for Social Development, Carmel Sepuloni, publicly released *Whakamana Tāngata* on 3 May 2019, assisted by Minister for Children Tracey Martin (NZ First) and Greens Co-Leader Marama Davidson, at Hub West in Auckland. At the event Sepuloni made only minor pre-2019 Budget WEAG-related announcements,²⁰ one of which was a reiteration of an earlier pre-2017-election Labour promise (the removal of sanctions for not naming the co-parent). Altogether, the government’s three WEAG launch announcements amounted to a spend that was noted later to be roughly one percent of the WEAG’s

¹³ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

¹⁴ St John & So (2018).

¹⁵ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

¹⁶ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b), pp. 7.

¹⁷ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

¹⁸ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019a).

¹⁹ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b), pp. 192.

²⁰ Sepuloni (2019).

recommended total spend.²¹ Since then, the government’s Covid-19 response in 2020 included some further stopgap measures, which are noted in our audit below. However as we highlight, many of these are minor and/or temporary measures.

A summary of progress on implementation of key and detailed recommendations as of October 2020 is provided in Table 1, with a more detailed assessment in Tables 2 & 3 (Key Recommendations) and 4 (Detailed Recommendations). We acknowledge that our audit can only account for evidence of implementation which is in the public domain, and that in some instances, work to implement the WEAG’s recommendations will be underway that is not yet documented publicly (for instance, Minister Sepuloni’s office on 9 October 2020 advised that “currently work is already underway to address around 22 recommendations from the Welfare Expert Advisory Group”²²). Because of the significant impact of welfare on people’s lives, we call on the current government to describe the work which is underway in more detail, and to state its planned implementation schedule.

Table 1: Summary of implementation progress of Whakamana Tāngata recommendations as of October 2020

STATUS	KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS
Fully implemented	0	4
Partially implemented	7	9
Minimally implemented	12	6
No evidence of implementation	23	107
TOTAL	42	126

Public discussions of the Coalition Government’s implementation progress on the recommendations of *Whakamana Tāngata* have often been confused, vague and/or (often unwittingly) misleading. This provided some of the impetus for the production of this audit. The Coalition Government explicitly acknowledged that the report contained 42 key and 126 detailed recommendations,²³ and yet discussion of implementation by both politicians and media has frequently overlooked the detailed recommendations.

For instance, news reporting in November 2019 suggested that the initial announcements following the report’s release reflected implementation of ‘three of 42’ recommendations.²⁴ In fact, these three steps (outlined below) reflected *minimal implementation of three* of 42 key recommendations (see Table 3), or *minimal implementation of two* key recommendations and *full implementation of one* detailed recommendation, of which there are 126 (see Table 4). The three steps initially announced were: funding extra frontline Ministry of Social Development (MSD) staff to focus more on employment; repealing Section 192 to remove the requirement to reduce the sole parent benefit of people who do not name the other parent of their child; and an increase to abatement thresholds.²⁵

²¹ Coughlan (2019).

²² Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

²³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

²⁴ Palmer (2019).

²⁵ Ministry of Social Development (n.d.).

Announcing 263 extra frontline staff for employment was a small step towards resourcing chronically underfunded frontline MSD services, while Section 192 was one of only eight sanctions and obligations recommended for removal (and its removal had already been promised by Labour, as noted above), and the increase to abatement thresholds that was implemented fell far short of the WEAG's recommendations.

Further to misleading media reporting, it appears that the Labour Party overstated its progress in undertaking the welfare overhaul prescribed by the WEAG. During the first Vote 2020 TVNZ Leaders Debate (22 September) in the lead-up to the election, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said "We've implemented 22 of the recommendations so far and we have seen that the changes that we've made have already made a big difference."²⁶ However, in a response to a CPAG follow-up email to the office of the Minister for Social Development, CPAG was informed as follows:

*"I can confirm that currently work is already underway to address around 22 recommendations from the Welfare Expert Advisory Group. These are: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 27, 29, 32, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40 and 42."*²⁷

Thus the Prime Minister stated the government had implemented 22 recommendations, a statement which the Minister's Office qualified as meaning work is 'already underway' to address 22 recommendations. According to our analysis, there is evidence of full implementation of none of the key recommendations, with seven partially implemented, and 12 minimally implemented (see Tables 2 & 3). Hyperbolic claims of progress in implementing the WEAG's recommendations do a disservice to the tens of thousands of New Zealanders who must continue to make ends meet with inadequate support. In CPAG's view, *Whakamana Tāngata* received a lukewarm response from the Coalition Government. We saw no evidence that public discussion of the report was sought or encouraged by the government. The piecemeal progress since *Whakamana Tāngata* has arguably not reflected the intent of a welfare overhaul at all, as the Green Party themselves highlighted in May 2020.²⁸ Given the Coalition Government's child poverty reduction focus,²⁹ and the fact that WEAG identified that people receiving welfare payments are living "desperate lives" due to "seriously inadequate incomes",³⁰ the progress on implementation of the recommendations appears unjustifiably slow.

Full progress report

The following tables provide full detail on each of the WEAG's 42 key recommendations (Tables 2 & 3) and 126 detailed recommendations (Table 4), as well as describing the government's reported response to these recommendations, and evidence of progress in implementation. We have scored the government's implementation using four classifications; full implementation, partial implementation, minimal implementation, and no evidence of implementation.

²⁶ TVNZ (2020). 1:20:59

²⁷ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

²⁸ McCulloch (2020).

²⁹ Ardern (2017).

³⁰ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

Table 2: Key Recommendations Assessment – One-Page Summary

Key Recommendation		Evidence of implementation	
1	Amend Social Security Act Purpose & Principles	None	Set Up
2	Welfare System Principles	None	
3	Cross-ministerial approach to WEAG implementation & monitoring	Partial (!)	
4	Design a welfare system to fulfil the new purpose and principles	None	
5	Report information on key outcomes for welfare recipients	Minimal	
6	Staff competencies to achieve greater equity for Māori	Partial	Māori/ Pacific
7	Chief Executive of MSD accountable to iwi and to Māori	None	
8	Cultural responsiveness to Pacific People	Partial	
9	Additional ways to improve outcomes for Māori	Partial	
10	Mutual expectations between MSD and welfare recipients	None (!)	Behaviour
11	Remove some obligations and sanctions	Minimal *	
12	Staff KPIs etc, & complaints processes uphold new purpose.	Minimal *	
13	Sole parents in part-time work when youngest child is 6yo not 3yo	None	
14	Prioritise benefit debt reduction through sustainable repayments	None (!)	Debt
15	Benefit debt treated in the same way as taxpayer debt	None	
16	Cross-govt approach to managing debt to govt agencies	None	
17	Endorse MSD approach to fraud. Natural justice & independent review	Minimal	
18	Better support for people exiting prisons	None	
19	Principles to redesign income support	None	Income Support
20	Increase main benefits 12% - 47% and increase abatement thresholds	Minimal #	
21	Indexing of all income support payments	Partial	
22	Consider introducing a Living Alone Payment	None	
23	Raise family assistance, remove discrimination, intro Earned Inc Credit	None	
24	Reform supplementary & hardship assistance	None	
25	Research a minimum income standard within 2 years (of Feb 2019)	None	
26	Increase incomes to adequate levels as per minimum income standard	None	
27	Pass on all child support collected to receiving carers	None	
28	Reduce impact of relationship status on income support levels	None	
29	Substantially increase public housing; effort to end homelessness	Partial	Housing
30	Home ownership & tenure options for low and low-middle incomes.	Minimal	
31	Increase capacity of third-sector community-based housing providers	None	
32	Laws & regs re healthy homes, security, housing quality, accessibility etc	Partial	
33	Subsidise housing costs for people on low incomes	None	
34	Affordable housing support incl ownership & papakāinga housing.	Minimal	
35	Effective MSD employment service	Minimal*	Work
36	Coherent Labour market, employment & training policies across govt	Minimal	
37	Strengthen MSD redundancy support	Minimal	
38	No more compulsory money mgmt in Youth Service; positive focus	None	Yth
39	Evidence-based strengths-building approaches to support young people	Minimal	
40	Better support for people with health conditions and disabilities	Minimal	H&D
41	Relationship between MSD, ACC & the health and disability system	None	
42	Assist community orgs to provide volunteering opportunities	None	

(!) = The govt's stated assessment differs from CPAG's: full not partial, or partial rather than none.

* = The govt's stated assessment is 'partial'

= Assessment will change to 'partial' when 2020 election promise re benefit abatement is enacted

Table 3: Full list of the WEAG’s Key Recommendations and the Coalition Government’s implementation progress as of November 2020

#	Key Recommendation	Associated Detailed Rec/s (if any)	What the Coalition Government 2017-20 reported	Evidence of implementation
1.	<p>Amend the Social Security Act 2018 to state that anyone exercising power under the Act have regard to the following purpose and values. The purpose of the welfare system is to whakamana tāngata and ensure a dignified life by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing financial security and social security sufficient for an adequate standard of living • supporting people to achieve their potential for learning, caring or volunteering, and earning through good and appropriate work. <p>The welfare system is underpinned by Kia Piki Ake Te Mana Tangata, including kaupapa Māori values of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manaakitanga – caring with dignity and respect • ōhanga – economics • whanaungatanga – treasuring kinship ties and relationships • kotahitanga – unity • takatūtanga – preparedness • kaitiakitanga – guardianship. 	Nil	<p>The Government is not claiming implementation of this recommendation, stating in November 2019 that addressing Key Recommendation 1 is part of their ‘medium and longer-term’ work programme. They have said that “significant policy work, including cross-agency coordination and external engagement, is required to underpin amendments to the purposes and principles of the Act”.³¹</p>	No evidence of implementation.

³¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

2.	<p>Use the following principles to guide the design and operation of the welfare system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be person-centred and wellbeing focused. • Keep children paramount. • Value whānau and families. • Treat people with dignity, respect and compassion. • Provide an income sufficient for an adequate standard of living. • Provide full and correct entitlements. • Deliver support that is easy to access, timely and appropriate. • Provide an employment service that supports people into good and appropriate work. • Support the provision of housing that is affordable, secure, of good quality and appropriate for the person (and their family or whānau). • Promote mutual expectations. • Aim for equitable outcomes. • Build and maintain effective links with other parts of government. • Be sustainable. 	Nil	<p>The Government is not claiming implementation of this recommendation, stating in November 2019 that addressing Key Recommendation 2 is part of their ‘medium and longer-term’ work programme. They have stated that “a working policy framework is in place to guide the welfare overhaul”.³²</p>	No evidence of implementation.
3.	<p>Establish a cross-ministerial approach to implement and monitor the effectiveness of the implementation and impact on outcomes of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group’s recommendations (across welfare, health, housing, justice, education and employment) that is cognisant of responsibilities under Te Tiriti</p>	Nil	<p>The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 3 has been implemented; “the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee will oversee the welfare overhaul work”.³⁰ It stated that “evaluation of the welfare overhaul, or specific initiatives under the welfare</p>	<p>Partially implemented.</p> <p>The Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee has been meeting to agree on the Government’s response to the WEAG report. However, we are yet to see evidence of monitoring and</p>

³² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) and involves users of the welfare system.		overhaul programme, will be evaluated as appropriate.”	evaluation of the impact of outcomes from this implementation.
4.	Direct the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development to design and implement a welfare system that will fulfil the new purpose and principles of the amended Social Security Act, is cognisant of responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and involves users of the system.	Nil	The Government is not claiming implementation of this recommendation, stating in November 2019 that addressing Key Recommendation 4 is part of their ‘medium and longer-term’ work programme. They have stated that “the Government will continue to be mindful of any implications of the current public sector reform work in public sector governance.” ³³	No evidence of implementation.
5.	Direct the Ministry of Social Development and Inland Revenue to publish yearly, whether as part of their Annual Reports or Statement of Intent, or as a standalone report, information on key outcomes for those interacting with the welfare system, including information about full and correct entitlements, take-up rates of payments, employment outcomes, the impact of employment supports and services, and after-tax and abatement earnings. Measures should include: • full and correct entitlement for all who are eligible by ethnicity, gender, location, health conditions and	Nil	The Government has stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key Recommendation 5. ³⁴ In 2019, they stated that “some work is underway and is being prepared for publication but further work and significant investment in data collection and modelling is required and will take time to build into robust measures”. ³⁵ In March 2020, Minister Sepuloni stated that “In response to recommendation 5, to implement better reporting, “we are regularly monitoring the longer-term	Minimal implementation. While Minister Sepuloni has responded to this recommendation by stating that the Government is ‘regularly monitoring’ employment outcomes for people coming off-benefit, this data collection is only one of the eight measures recommended by WEAG.

³³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

³⁴ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

³⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2019c).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disabilities, and number and age of dependent children (0–17 years) • take-up rates of payments by ethnicity, gender, location, health conditions and disabilities, and number and age of dependent children (0–17 years) • employment outcomes by benefit type, ethnicity, gender, location, health conditions and disabilities, • age, and duration off benefit (3, 6 and 12 months) • impact of employment supports and services on outcomes by ethnicity, gender, location, health • conditions and disabilities, and number and age of dependent children (0–17 years) • after-tax and abatement earnings for those receiving financial support from Inland Revenue or the Ministry of Social Development by ethnicity, gender, location, health conditions and disabilities, and number and age of dependent children (0–17 years). 		<p>employment outcomes of people leaving the benefit system."³⁶</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Embed the competencies required to achieve greater equity for Māori in the job descriptions, key performance indicators and performance reviews of the Ministry of Social Development’s management and staff.</p>	<p>Nil</p>	<p>The Government has stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key Recommendation 6 by MSD through its Te Pae Tawhiti and Te Pae Tata workstreams.³⁷ It has said that "MSD will develop a range of indicators and measurements to monitor progress,</p>	<p>Partial implementation through the Te Pae Tawhiti and Te Pae Tata workstreams. No evidence that competencies required to achieve greater equity for Māori have been embedded into job descriptions, key performance</p>

³⁶ New Zealand Parliament (2020).

³⁷ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

			alongside feedback from people and whānau.”	indicators and performance reviews of MSD’s management and staff.
7.	Include in the amended Social Security Act specific requirements for the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development to be accountable to iwi (as recognised collectives) and to Māori (as individuals, whānau and communities) for achieving equitable wellbeing outcomes for Māori from the welfare system.	Nil	The Government is not claiming implementation of this recommendation, stating in November 2019 that addressing Key Recommendation 7 is part of their ‘medium and longer-term’ work programme. They have stated that “This work will be progressed alongside the purposes and principles work, given the complexities of accountability arrangements.” ³⁸	No evidence of implementation.
8.	Direct the Ministry of Social Development to commit to building its cultural responsiveness to Pacific People, to achieve equitable outcomes for Pacific People engaging with the welfare system . Cultural responsiveness includes having an awareness of cultural obligations experienced by Pacific People around contributions for weddings, funerals and other critical cultural events and taking account of the nuances within diverse Pacific communities.	Nil	The Government has stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key Recommendation 8. ³⁹ They have stated that “MSD continues to partner with Pacific communities to develop community-led initiatives that boost wellbeing and prevent violence as part of Pasefika Proud. MSD’s work with Pacific people includes the establishment of a Pacific Steering Group and Pacific Reference Group to inform and support the development of the Pacific Strategy and to also provide guidance on other matters related to Pacific people.” ³⁶	Partially implemented. The Pacific Steering Group and Reference Group were established in February 2019 and informed Pacific Prosperity, a strategy and action plan released in Oct 2019. ⁴⁰ This was the first national-level strategy and action plan for Pacific peoples, and was developed in consultation with Pacific communities. With this framework in place, there is more of a mandate for MSD to be culturally responsive in its practices. However Pacific People engaging with the welfare system have not yet seen

³⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

³⁹ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Social Development (2019d).

				improvements in cultural responsiveness; their needs are escalating in response to COVID-19 impacts. ⁴¹
9.	<p>The Welfare Expert Advisory Group recommends, in addition to the recommendations elsewhere that will improve outcomes for Māori, the Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports the Ministry of Social Development to continue to shift towards whakamana tāngata – to build the mana of others and uplift them in a way that honours their dignity • supports the Ministry of Social Development to continue to review and evaluate, with Māori, the services the Ministry delivers to ensure they are effective in improving outcomes for Māori • works with Māori to consider other effective ways of delivering welfare services and funding that are informed by Te Ao Māori, including longer-term, whānau-centred, strengths-based initiatives. 	Nil	<p>The Government has stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key Recommendation 9.⁴² They have stated that “the notion of whakamana tāngata is built into the working policy framework for the welfare overhaul programme”, and that “innovative partnerships between MSD and whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori are being explored through the Treaty settlement process as well as locally-led initiatives”.⁴³ They have stated that this work is also being undertaken through Te Pae Tata, Te Pae Tawhiti, Te Mahere Reo and Te Matapihi.</p>	Partial implementation through the Te Pae Tawhiti and Te Pae Tata workstreams.
10.	<p>Develop a mutual expectations framework to govern interactions between the Ministry of Social Development and those who interact with the welfare system.</p>	Nil	<p>The Government stated that Key Recommendation 10 had been ‘partial implemented’ in Nov 2019.⁴¹ It has stated that it “supports the principle of mutual expectations in the relationship between MSD and its clients”, and that it has “already started work to ensure clients are</p>	<p>No evidence of implementation.</p> <p>No evidence that a mutual expectations framework has been developed. However, the number of sanctions imposed on benefit recipients decreased by 28% between 2017 and 2019, and due to the lifting</p>

⁴¹ Dr Collin Tukuitonga, email, November 18, 2020.

⁴² Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

⁴³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

			treated with dignity and respect, and this work will continue”.	of work-related obligations during lockdown, this figure dropped 98 percent to 160 in the June 2020 quarter. ⁴⁴ This decrease resulted in reduced stress and anxiety for benefit recipients as reported in a recent survey. ⁴⁵ However this reprieve is temporary: in the September 2020 quarter, the number of sanctions again started to increase.
11.	Remove some obligations and sanctions (for example, pre-benefit activities, warrants to arrest sanctions, social obligations, drug-testing sanctions, 52-week reapplication requirements, sanctions for not naming the other parent, the subsequent child work obligation, and the mandatory work ability assessment for people with health conditions or disabilities).	Detailed Recs 2-9 (see Table 4)	The Government stated that Key Recommendation 11 had been ‘partial implemented’ in Nov 2019. ⁴⁶ It removed Section 192 (sanctions for not naming the other parent), and committed to removing the subsequent child sanction in Nov 2021. ⁴⁷ It has stated that “further advice will be sought on the 52 week reapplication and the drug-testing sanction”, and “further exploration of other sanctions and obligations suggested by the WEAG for removal will continue in the short-term.” ⁴⁸	Minimal implementation. One of eight sanctions and obligations recommended for removal by the WEAG has been removed at the time of writing (Nov 2020), with one further scheduled for removal in Nov 2021. No progress on the remaining six sanctions and obligations.
12.	Improve outcomes by ensuring the public-facing, frontline service is consistent with the new purpose and principles through sufficient resourcing (for example, staffing, support and	Detailed Recs 10-19 (see Table 4)	The Government stated that Key Recommendation 12 had been ‘partially	Minimal implementation. The announcement of new work-focussed frontline staff in Budget

⁴⁴ Ministry of Social Development (2020c).

⁴⁵ Humpage & Neuwelt-Kearns (2020).

⁴⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁴⁷ Sepuloni (2020).

⁴⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	services), an appropriate performance framework, and complaints and disputes processes.		<p>implemented' in November 2019.⁴⁹ In Budget 2019, the Government announced 263 new frontline staff to focus on 'helping more people into meaningful and sustainable work' as part of its pre-budget announcements following the release of the WEAG report.</p> <p>The Government has also stated that this work "will be progressed as the work on purposes and principles develops", and that "further work is underway to realign MSD's frontline services".</p>	2019 is positive; however, given that the WEAG reported (after consultation with staff and welfare recipients) that MSD has a "severely under-resourced workforce", ⁵⁰ significant work remains to ensure frontline services have sufficient time with clients and have access to skills and systems training. Further, there have been no observable improvements to complaints or disputes processes.
13.	Assist recipients of Sole Parent Support to return to part-time work when their youngest child is 6 years old (subject to supports being available, such as good quality childcare) instead of the current 3 years. Support but not require all sole parents to return to work when their youngest child is under 6 years old.	Nil	The Government has reported that Key Recommendation 13 is part of its 'medium and longer-term work programme'. ⁵¹ It has stated that "further work on supports and obligations on sole parents needs to be considered alongside work on mutual expectations."	No evidence of implementation.
14.	Continue to prioritise a reduction in outstanding benefit debt through sustainable repayments, and minimise the creation of overpayments, including reviewing recoverable hardship assistance and current practice, to be more consistent with whakamana tāngata.	Detailed Recs 20-24 (see Table 4)	The Government stated that Key Recommendation 14 had been partially implemented, reporting that work is 'already underway' to address a reduction in outstanding beneficiary debt at MSD	No evidence of implementation.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁵⁰ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

⁵¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

			and alongside cross-government work on debt. ⁴⁷	
15.	Align the regulations and practice around benefit debt so that it is treated in substantially the same way as Inland Revenue treats taxpayer debt.	Detailed Recs 20-24 (see Table 4)	The Government has reported that Key Recommendation 15 aligns with an ongoing cross-government review which looks to streamline approaches to debt across government. ⁴⁷ It stated that over the 'longer-term', officials will consider seeking alignment of approaches to interest and penalty rates, as well as approaches to write-off, across agencies.	No evidence of implementation.
16.	Instigate a cross-government approach to managing debt to government agencies.	Detailed Recs 20-24 (see Table 4)	The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 16 aligns with an ongoing a cross-government review which looks to streamline approaches to debt across government. ⁵² It stated that over the 'longer-term', officials will consider seeking alignment of approaches to interest and penalty rates, as well as approaches to write-off, across agencies.	No evidence of implementation.
17.	Endorse the Ministry of Social Development's three-tiered approach to responding to fraud allegation: intervene, facilitate and, as a last resort, investigate. Apply the principles of natural justice in all steps, and, if the outcome is disputed, permit a review independent of the Ministry of Social Development.	Detailed Recs 25-27 (see Table 4).	The Government claims that 'work is underway' to implement Key Recommendation 17. ⁵³ It has stated that "the Government endorses MSD's approach to fraud as suggested here and will continue to ensure fraud is handled appropriately."	Minimal implementation. The three-tiered approach to managing fraud activity was implemented between November 2018 and February 2019 and remains in place, ⁵⁴ and the Government has stated that it endorses MSD's

⁵² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁵³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁵⁴ Ministry of Social Development (2019c).

				approach. ⁵⁵ However, appeals continue to be referred to the Benefits Review Committee, which is not independent of MSD and thus contravenes the principles of natural justice.
18.	Enhance and improve the support for people exiting prisons, including increasing the Steps to Freedom grant, and ensuring that any person who leaves prison has appropriate identification and is engaged with specialised care and supportive housing initiatives. Move practices around prisoner integration out of the 'pilot' stage and draw on evaluation data to embed integrated support for these individuals.	Detailed Recs 28-32 (see Table 4).	The Government claims that work is underway to partially implement Key Recommendation 18. ⁵⁶ They state that they are "working towards improving the support for people exiting prisons", with work "underway between MSD and Corrections to progress specific proposals."	No evidence of implementation. The Government's announcements on this in May 2019 emphasised pre-existing work on the Supporting Offenders into Employment scheme. ⁵⁷
19.	Adopt the following 10 principles to redesign the income support system. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income support is adequate for meaningful participation in the community, and this support is maintained over time. Income support ensures people are always better off in paid work and high effective marginal tax rates are avoided as much as possible. Main benefits cover a larger proportion of people's living costs than they do currently (reducing reliance on other assistance). 	Detailed Recs 33-39 (see Table 4).	The Government has stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 19 is part of its medium and longer-term work programme. ⁵⁸ It stated that "improving financial support will continue to be a key focus throughout the welfare overhaul work programme", and that the "10 principles proposed by the WEAG will provide a starting point for advice around income support settings."	No evidence of implementation.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁵⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁵⁷ Ministry of Social Development (2019b).

⁵⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-related payments follow the child and can be apportioned with shared care. • Payments for specific costs provide support that is adequate, appropriately designed and easy to access. • Changes to income support reduce disincentives to form relationships. • The income support system proactively supports people to access their full and correct entitlements and promotes these entitlements to the broader population. • The income support system is easy to access and provides timely support, including to people transitioning in and out of the system. • The income support system is as simple as possible balanced against the need to provide adequate support for people in a variety of circumstances at a reasonable cost to government. • People are treated with dignity and respect when accessing this support. 			
20.	<p>Reform main benefits by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing main benefits by between 12% and 47% as set out in Chapter 7, Table 2, page 99 • increasing the abatement thresholds for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jobseeker Support to \$150 a week - Sole Parent Support and Supported Living Payment to \$150 a week and \$250 a week. 	Nil	A Nov 2019 cabinet paper stated that this Key Recommendation had been fully implemented, or would be fully implemented through the Budget 2019 initiatives. ⁵⁹ The Government stated that it had “announced an increase in the abatement threshold”, and “further	<p>Minimal implementation.</p> <p>While a \$25 increase to benefit levels (shared for couples) was announced in response to the initial March 2020 Covid-19 lockdown,⁶⁰ effective 1 April 2020, this increase falls far short of the WEAG’s recommendations. According to Michael Fletcher, the</p>

⁵⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁶⁰ Beehive.govt.nz. (2020a).

			consideration is required regarding main benefit levels and abatement thresholds".	<p>\$25 March increase reflected between a 6.4 and 10 percent increase.⁶¹</p> <p>While Budget 2019 included an announcement of graduated increases to abatement thresholds, these similarly fall short of the WEAG’s recommendations. As of 1 April 2020, the abatement threshold for Jobseeker Support was \$90, and the two threshold for Sole Parents and Supported Living Payment were \$115 and \$215.⁶² By 1 April 2023, these are still set to only be \$105, \$130 and \$230 respectively, short of what the WEAG has recommended. The Labour Party made a 2020 pre-election promise to raise abatement thresholds to \$160 a week for Jobseeker and \$250 for Sole Parent Support and Supported Living Payment; however, these have not yet been scheduled with a timeline.⁶³</p>
21.	Fully index all income support payments and thresholds annually to movements in average wages or prices, whichever is the greater. Index Accommodation Supplement rates to movements in housing costs.	Nil	The Government stated that Key Recommendation 21 had been partially implemented, reporting that it “announced in Budget 2019 that main benefits would be indexed to increases in average wages from 1 April 2020. This	Partially implemented. Main benefits have been indexed to wages, which is a welcome and important structural change.

⁶¹ Fletcher (2020).

⁶² New Zealand Government. (2019b).

⁶³ Wade (2020).

			implements the intent of this recommendation.” ⁶⁴ They have also stated that “further consideration of indexation of income support payments is required.”	However no parts of Working For Families have been indexed to wages – all are “income support payments”. Accommodation Supplement rates have not been indexed to movements in housing costs (In CPAG’s view, indexing the AS to movements in housing costs may exacerbate rising rents and therefore needs further consideration.)
22.	Consider introducing a Living Alone Payment that contributes to the additional costs of adults living alone (without another adult) on a low income.	Nil	The Government has reported that Key Recommendation 22 is part of its ‘medium to longer-term work programme’. In response to this recommendation, it has stated that “further consideration of the income support system is required”. ⁶⁵	No evidence of implementation. In CPAG’s view, the introduction of a Living Alone Payment is not a priority for children in poverty.
23.	Reform Working for Families and other tax credits by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing the Family Tax Credit to \$170 a week for the eldest child and to \$120 a week for subsequent children • increasing the abatement threshold for the Family Tax Credit and changing the abatement rate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 10% on family annual incomes between \$48,000 and \$65,000 – 15% on family annual incomes between \$65,000 and \$160,000 	Nil	The Government has reported that Key Recommendation 23 is part of its ‘medium to longer-term work programme’. In response to this recommendation, it stated that it “has invested significantly in families, with \$5.5 billion of investment through the Families Package targeted at low- and middle-income families. ... Work will continue on Working for Families, as an integral part of the income support system, its potential to reduce child	No evidence of implementation. While the Families Package reached those supported by a benefit, the WEAG recommendations post-date the Families Package implementation. The increased Family Tax Credit recommended by WEAG would go to all families for their children, whether they are in, or not in, paid work, at the same time the In-Work Tax Credit

⁶⁴ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁶⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 50% on family annual incomes in excess of \$160,000 • replacing the In-Work Tax Credit, Minimum Family Tax Credit and Independent Earner Tax Credit with a new Earned Income Tax Credit • introducing an Earned Income Tax Credit of up to \$50 a week for people with and without children and with a couple-based income test • making the Best Start Tax Credit universal for all children aged under 3 years. 		poverty and reflect the value this Government sees in caregiving.” ⁶⁶	<p>is removed, a change long sought by CPAG.</p> <p>CPAG does not view the establishment of an Earned Income Tax Credit as a priority for children in poverty.</p>
24.	Reform supplementary assistance and hardship assistance so they are adequate, appropriately designed and easy to access.	Detailed Recs 40-43 (see Table 4).	The Government has reported that implementation of Key Recommendation 24 is part of its ‘medium and longer-term work programme’, stating that “further consideration of supplementary report is required”. ⁶⁷	No evidence of implementation.
25.	Require the Ministry of Social Development to, within 2 years, complete work, including commissioning independent research and focus groups, to establish a minimum income standard for New Zealand (with 5-year reviews).		The Government has reported that implementation of Key Recommendation 25 is part of its ‘medium and longer-term work programme’, stating that “further consideration of a minimum income standard is required”. ⁶⁸	No evidence of implementation.
26.	Increase, as soon as possible, overall income support to levels adequate for meaningful participation in the community, as defined by the minimum income standard (which reflects different family circumstances, for example, children, disabilities and regional area) and	Nil	The Government has reported that implementation of Key Recommendation 26 is part of its ‘medium and longer-term work programme’, stating that “further consideration of income support levels and indexation is required.” ⁶⁹	No evidence of implementation.

⁶⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁶⁷ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁶⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁶⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	maintain this level of support through appropriate indexation.			
27.	Pass on all child support collected to receiving carers, including for recipients of Unsupported Child's Benefit.	Nil	The Government stated that "work is already underway on the inequity around child support for parents depending on whether or not they receive a main benefit". ⁷⁰	No evidence of implementation.
28.	Move income support settings over time to be more neutral on the impact of being in a relationship in the nature of marriage.	Detailed Recs 62-65 (see Table 4).	The Government has reported that implementation of Key Recommendation 28 is part of its 'medium and longer-term work programme', stating that "this will be considered as part of the further advice on income support settings". ⁷¹	No evidence of implementation.
29.	Urgently expand and accelerate Government efforts to substantially increase public housing on an industrial scale and continue urgent efforts to end homelessness.	Nil	The Government has stated that work is 'already underway' to address Key Recommendation 29. ⁷² It stated, "There have been a range of initiatives implemented to begin to address housing need in our communities, including more public housing, expanding and strengthening the Housing First programme, more Transitional Housing places throughout New Zealand, and initiatives to fill urgent gaps in our current system of support to prevent and respond to homelessness." ⁷³	Partially implemented. The Government has urgently expanded and accelerated the building of state houses: 3,558 state houses built since June 2018, ⁷⁴ which places it on track to meet its target of 6,400 in four years. ⁷⁵ However, given that the public housing wait list was at 19,438 at the end of July 2020, ⁷⁶ the scale of

⁷⁰ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁷¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁷² Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

⁷³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁷⁴ Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (n.d.).

⁷⁵ RNZ (2018).

⁷⁶ Cooke (2020).

				<p>building is disproportionately low compared to the scale of need.</p> <p>The Government released a cross-agency Homelessness Action Plan backed by \$300 million of new government funding.⁷⁷ This includes 1,000 additional transitional housing places by the end of 2020 and funding housing supply delivered by Māori. However, as the Plan itself highlights, preventing homelessness also requires efforts to improve the ability of individuals and whānau to afford rents in the private market.⁷⁸ There is significant work yet to be done in ensuring private rentals are affordable.</p>
30.	Increase the range of home ownership and tenure options for people on low and low–middle incomes.	Detailed Recs 85-87 (see Table 4).	The Government has stated that partial implementation of Key Recommendation 30 is being ‘actively considered’. ⁷⁹ In Nov 2019 it stated that “the Government has recently announced the housing reset which includes new ways for people to become home owners”. ⁸⁰	<p>Minimally implemented.</p> <p>The Government expects that the Progressive Home Ownership scheme will help between 1,500 and 4,000 households, with priority given to Māori, Pacific peoples, and families with children.⁸¹ However, this is inadequate given the scale of the housing crisis, and the extent of</p>

⁷⁷ Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2020a).

⁷⁸ Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2020a).

⁷⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁸⁰ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁸¹ Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2020b).

				inequity for Māori and Pacific peoples. Significant work remains to be done to ensure home ownership is affordable for more New Zealanders.
31.	Increase the capacity of third-sector community-based housing providers.	Nil	The Government has stated that consideration of Key Recommendation 31 is part of another government review or policy programme. ⁸² It stated that “there have been a range of initiatives implemented to begin to address housing need in our communities, including more public housing, expanding and strengthening the Housing First programme, more Transitional Housing places throughout New Zealand, and initiatives to fill urgent gaps in our current system of support to prevent and respond to homelessness.”	No evidence of implementation.
32.	Develop and enact laws and regulations to ensure healthy homes and housing security, decent standards of housing quality, universal design, and accessibility.	Nil	The Government has stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 32 is underway. ⁸³ It reported that “This Government introduced the Healthy Homes Guarantee Act 2017 and the Healthy Homes Standards and work is progressing on the Residential Tenancies Act 1986”. ⁸⁴	Partially implemented. Changes have made incremental improvements to protect tenants, however further work is needed to tighten regulations to ensure people have access to accessible, healthy homes.

⁸² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁸³ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

⁸⁴ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

				The 2017 Healthy Homes Guarantee Act sets heating and insulation requirements. In August 2020 the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act came into force. This amendment means that rent increases are limited to once every 12 months. ⁸⁵ Further changes apply from 11 February 2021, including preventing landlords from ending a periodic tenancy without 90 days’ notice, and banning rental bidding. A temporary rent increase freeze was applied in 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak, but was lifted on 25 September. ⁸⁶
33.	Subsidise housing costs for people on low incomes (in addition to raising main benefit rates to provide an adequate income) and ensure the combination of changes to housing support and abatement rates make households better off.	Nil	The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 33 is part of its ‘medium to longer-term work programme’. ⁸⁷ It reported that “the Minister for Housing will be undertaking further work to consider the WEAG recommendations”. ⁸⁸	No evidence of implementation.
34.	Improve access to affordable, suitable housing support for people on low and low–middle incomes, including a range of affordable home-ownership products and papakāinga housing.	Detailed Recs 88-92 (see Table 4)	In November 2019 the Government stated that Key Recommendation 34 was being “actively considered”. ⁸⁹ It stated that “the Government has recently announced the	Minimally implemented. The Government expects that the Progressive Home Ownership scheme will help between 1,500 and 4,000 households, with priority given to

⁸⁵ Tenancy Services (2020).

⁸⁶ Tenancy Services (2020).

⁸⁷ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁸⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁸⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

			housing reset which includes new ways for people to become home owners”.	Māori, Pacific peoples, and families with children. ⁹⁰ However, this is inadequate given the scale of the housing crisis, and the extent of inequity for Māori and Pacific peoples, significant work remains to be done to ensure home ownership is affordable for more New Zealanders.
35.	Establish an effective employment service of the Ministry of Social Development so it is better able to assist people to obtain and keep good, sustainable work.	Detailed Recs 88-92 (see Table 4)	The Government is claiming partial implementation of Key Recommendation 35. ⁹¹ In response to this recommendation, they have highlighted the following Budget 2019 initiatives: “new frontline staff to help support people into meaningful work”, “boosting Mana in Mahi to extend places available for young people to access an apprenticeship or industry training qualification and be provided with pastoral care to support them to transition into and stay in work”, and “additional funding to support disabled people and people with health conditions into employment through Oranga Mahi, disability Employment Services and Support Funds”. ⁹²	Minimal implementation. The announcement of 263 new work-focused frontline staff in Budget 2019 is positive, however given longstanding under-resourcing of MSD’s frontline services, ⁹³ further investment will be required to develop a an effective employment service. The extension of places in the Mana in Mahi programme announced in Budget 2019, from 150 to 2,000 places, still falls short of the initial announcement of 4,000 places in 2018. ⁹⁴
36.	Revamp active labour market, labour market, employment and training policies across	Detailed Recs 93-	The Government has stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key	Minimal implementation.

⁹⁰ Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2020b).

⁹¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁹² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁹³ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

⁹⁴ 1News (2019).

	government to make them more coherent and effective.	97 (see Table 4).	<p>Recommendation 36.⁹⁵ In August 2019, the Government released an All-of-Government Employment Strategy and Youth Employment Action Plan. The Government has stated that a review of Active Labour Market Programmes is being undertaken, led jointly by Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, MSD and Ministry of Education.⁹⁶</p> <p>In June 2020, the Government announced the establishment of 15 Independent Regional Skills Leadership Groups to facilitate a coordinated regional and central government response to the disruption caused by Covid-19.⁹⁷</p>	A review of Active Labour Market Programmes is being undertaken, and Regional Skills Leadership Groups are welcomed. However evidence of greater coherence and effectiveness is awaited.
37.	Strengthen the Ministry of Social Development's redundancy support policies to better support displaced workers.	Detailed Recs 98-100 (see Table 4)	<p>In November 2019, the Government stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 37 is part of their 'medium to long-term work programme.'⁹⁸</p> <p>In 2020, the Government removed stand-down periods as a response to Covid-19, for those eligible for a benefit between 23 March 2020 and 24 July 2021.⁹⁹ They also announced free</p>	<p>Minimal implementation.</p> <p>Some progress has been made in response to Covid-19, but many measures are temporary. The Covid-19 Income Relief Payment for those who lost work from 1 March 2020 due to Covid-19 was paid to people irrespective of their partner earnings (up to \$2,000 per week),¹⁰¹ temporarily strengthening support for</p>

⁹⁵ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

⁹⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁹⁷ Jackson (2020).

⁹⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

⁹⁹ Work and Income (2020b).

¹⁰¹ Beehive.govt.nz (2020b).

			trades training for 2.5 years from 1 July 2020 in response to Covid-19. ¹⁰⁰	<p>many displaced workers whose partners were still earning. However, this has not applied to core benefits, and was only a temporary measure.</p> <p>More redundancy support programmes have been rolled out in response to Covid-19, however measures such as free trades training and the removal of stand down periods are not permanent measures.</p>
38.	Abolish, in the Youth Service, compulsory money management, and separate case management from youth mentoring so it is consistent with and has a positive youth development focus.	Detailed Recs 101-104 (see Table 4)	The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 38 is part of its ‘medium to longer-term work programme’. ¹⁰² It has stated that “The Government is making operational improvements to the Youth Service as a result of the Youth Service review and further work is underway on other potential changes to policy settings.”	No evidence of implementation.
39.	Use evidence-based approaches that support young people to be learning, earning and, where young people are parents, caring. These approaches need to build on the strengths of young people and provide a basis for their long-term engagement with the changing world of work.	Detailed Recs 101-104 (see Table 4)	The Government has stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 39 is ‘already underway’. ¹⁰³ In response to this recommendation it has highlighted MSD’s Mana in Mahi programme, which received a funding boost in Budget 2019, as well as the 2019 Youth Employment Action Plan, released as part of the	<p>Minimal implementation.</p> <p>In 2018, when Mana in Mahi was launched, the Government stated that ‘up to 4,000’ places would be created.¹⁰⁵ However, the funding boost announced to Mana in Mahi as part of Budget 2019 was stated to</p>

¹⁰⁰ Tertiary Education Commission (2020).

¹⁰² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁰³ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

¹⁰⁵ Moir (2018).

			<p>Employment Strategy. It has said that “work is also underway to engage with youth and youth Service providers”.¹⁰⁴</p>	<p>extend the places available ‘from 150 up to 2000’.¹⁰⁶ Given that the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) increased by 13,000 between the June 2019 and June 2020 quarters,¹⁰⁷ it is clear that such an initiative requires significant scaling up, particularly in light of Covid-19.</p> <p>The Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund announced in 2020 in response to Covid-19 is likely to support some young people into apprenticeships, however this fund is only temporary, expiring in December 2022.¹⁰⁸</p> <p>While the 2019 Youth Employment Action Plan lays out pathways for action in this space, it is too early to evaluate progress in implementation.</p>
40.	<p>Improve the health and wellbeing of people with health conditions and disabilities, along with carers of people with health conditions and disabilities who interact with the welfare system by:</p>	<p>Detailed Recs 105-122 (see Table 4)</p>	<p>The Government has stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key Recommendation 40.¹⁰⁹ In November 2019, it stated that “further work will be undertaken to improve support and</p>	<p>Minimal implementation.</p> <p>Budget 2019 saw additional funding to support disabled people and people with health conditions into</p>

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁰⁶ 1 News (2019).

¹⁰⁷ Stats NZ (2020).

¹⁰⁸ Tertiary Education Commission (2020).

¹⁰⁹ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing financial support that is adequate to live a life with dignity and is equitable across the social sector • implementing evidence-based approaches to support engagement in good, suitable work and the community where this is possible • implementing strategies to prevent work-limiting health conditions and disabilities. 		<p>services for people with health conditions and disabilities and their carers” including a focus on “improving income supports, as well as employment services available”.¹¹⁰ In response, it has also stated that “consideration is required of how an expanded employment service will meet the needs of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions”, and that it is looking at “changing employer attitudes about these groups and considering what tailored support could be required”.</p>	<p>employment through Oranga Mahi, disability Employment Services and Support Funds.¹¹¹ A Disability Employment Action Plan was released in July 2020, with a work programme laid out for 2020-2022.¹¹² It is too early to evaluate progress in this area.</p> <p>Income supports for people with health conditions and disabilities (both core and supplementary entitlements) have not been improved and remain inadequate.</p>
41.	<p>Include in the scope of the New Zealand Health and Disability System Review the relationship between the health and disability system and the accident compensation scheme and how the relationship between these and the welfare system could be changed to improve outcomes for people with health conditions and disabilities and carers.</p>	<p>Detailed Rec 113 (see Table 4)</p>	<p>The Government has stated that consideration of this Key Recommendation is part of ‘another government review or programme’.¹¹³ It has stated that “further consideration is required of opportunities for greater alignment between the health, welfare system and the ACC system.”</p>	<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
42.	<p>Direct the Ministry of Social Development to develop the capacity and capability to engage with, promote and fund community organisations to provide wide-ranging opportunities for volunteers and people</p>	<p>Detailed Rec 123 (see Table 4)</p>	<p>The Government has stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key Recommendation 42.¹¹⁴ It has stated that “the Social Wellbeing Board has been commissioned to explore NGO contracting and relationships across government”, and</p>	<p>No evidence of implementation.</p> <p>Public debate over the role of volunteering for recipients of income</p>

¹¹⁰ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹¹¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹¹² Ministry of Social Development (2020b).

¹¹³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹¹⁴ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

	<p>receiving benefits to be meaningfully engaged in their communities.</p>		<p>“work is underway at MSD to consider how it can increase its role working with communities and the community sector” as well as to consider “how MSD can better support volunteers”.¹¹⁵</p>	<p>support has taken place,¹¹⁶ but no concrete progress in this space.</p>
--	--	--	---	---

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹¹⁶ Robson (2020).

Table 4: Full list of the WEAG’s Detailed Recommendations and the Coalition Government’s implementation progress as of November 2020

Theme	Detailed Recommendation (<i>N.B. numbers are our own, but reflect the order in which they appear in the WEAG report</i>)	Relevant Key Rec(s) and or Chapter(s) (if any)	What the Coalition Government 2017-20 reported	Evidence of action
Mutual expectations framework	1. Reform the obligations and sanctions regime into a system of mutual expectations and responsibilities, apply these according to the circumstances of the individual and in a way that is consistent with the proposed purpose, principles and values. Strong checks to mitigate potential negative impacts on individuals and their families will be required. This new approach is strongly connected to improving wellbeing and supporting the increased skills and labour market capacity of the individual and family or whānau.	Key Rec 10; Ch 6	The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 10 is being partially implemented, reporting that they have “already started work to ensure clients are treated with dignity and respect, and this work will continue”. ¹¹⁷	No evidence of implementation. Continual reports of clients not being treated with dignity and respect, and sanctions and obligations continue to be implemented without strong checks on the wider implications of these rules on children and whānau.

¹¹⁷ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

Obligations and sanctions removal	2. Remove the requirement to complete specific activities before a benefit is granted (pre-benefit activities)	Key Rec 11; Ch 6	The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 11 is being partially implemented. ¹¹⁸ They have stated that they will review the role of sanctions in the welfare system, and continue to explore WEAG's suggestions of sanction removal.	No evidence of implementation. This requirement remains in place.
	3. Remove the sanction where benefit payments stop if people have a warrant out for their arrest, and continue data matching with the Ministry of Justice and take a proactive supportive approach to contacting these people		The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 11 is being partially implemented. ¹¹⁹ They have stated that they will review the role of sanctions in the welfare system, and continue to explore WEAG's suggestions of sanction removal.	No evidence of implementation. This sanction remains in place.
	4. Remove social obligations that require people receiving a benefit to take all reasonable steps to have their children enrolled with a medical practice, be up to date with their Wellchild/Tamariki Ora checks and be attending early childhood education or school		The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 11 is being partially implemented. ¹²⁰ They have stated that they will review the role of sanctions in the welfare system, and continue to explore WEAG's suggestions of sanction removal.	No evidence of implementation. These obligations remain in place.

¹¹⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹¹⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹²⁰ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	5. Remove pre-employment drug testing and provide specialised support for people with substance use disorders		The Government has stated that “further advice” will be sought on the drug-testing sanction. ¹²¹	No evidence of implementation. This requirement remains in place.
	6. Remove the mandatory work ability assessment for people with health conditions or a disability and link workability assessments to return to work plans		The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 11 is being partially implemented. ¹²² They have stated that they will review the role of sanctions in the welfare system, and continue to explore WEAG’s suggestions of sanction removal.	No evidence of implementation. This obligation remains in place.
	7. Remove the requirement to reapply for a benefit every 52 weeks – MSD is expected to provide full and correct entitlements through regular reviews (at least annually)		The Government has stated that “further advice” will be sought on the 52-week reapplication requirement. ¹²³	No evidence of implementation. This obligation remains in place.
	8. Remove work obligations when an additional child is included in a benefit (the subsequent child rule)		In July 2020, the Government announced that the subsequent child policy would be removed. This comes into effect in November 2021. ¹²⁴	Partially implemented. The removal of this policy has been scheduled for November 2021. However, the delay of 16 months from announcement means many more children will be unnecessarily disadvantaged by this punitive sanction due to the wait.

¹²¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹²² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹²³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹²⁴ New Zealand Government (2020).

	9. Remove the sanction on not naming another parent (was section 70A in the Social Security Act 1964 and is now section 192 of the Social Security Act 2018).		In May 2019, the Government announced that they would be abolishing the sanction for solo mothers who refuse to name the father of their child. ¹²⁵ This policy came into effect on 1 April 2020.	Partially implemented. This sanction has been removed, but the requirement to apply for Child Support has not been removed.
Resourcing and other processes of the public-facing, frontline service are consistent with the new purpose and principles	10. Resource frontline services to the level required to achieve outcomes as a priority.	Key Rec 12; Ch 6	The Government has stated partial implementation of Key Recommendation 12. ¹²⁶ In 2019, the Government announced 263 new frontline staff to focus on ‘helping more people into meaningful and sustainable work’ as part of its pre-budget announcements following the release of the WEAG report. ¹²⁷ The Government has also stated that this work “will be progressed as the work on purposes and principles develops”, and that “further work is underway to realign MSD’s frontline services”. ¹²⁸	Minimally implemented. Given that the WEAG reported based on consultation with staff and welfare recipients that MSD has a “severely under-resourced workforce”, ¹²⁹ significant work remains to ensure frontline services have sufficient time with clients and have access to skills and systems training. Further, increases in resourcing have been centred only on those frontline staff who are focussed on getting people into work, rather than all frontline services.
	11. Implement an ongoing, comprehensive, active and agile staff training strategy.			No evidence of implementation.

¹²⁵ New Zealand Government (2019c).

¹²⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹²⁷ New Zealand Government (2019c).

¹²⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹²⁹ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

	<p>12. Adopt an improved and accessible complaints process that is measured by a satisfactory restoration of the relationship between the parties.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>13. Make the review process simpler, speedier and more accessible, and ensure the principle of natural justice is observed.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>14. Make a further hearing at the Social Security Appeal Authority available to those who take an unsuccessful claim to the Medical Appeals Board.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>15. Assign people likely to be in long-term receipt of a benefit or with complex needs a dedicated case manager, and give such case managers small caseloads so they can adequately address the wellbeing of the person in need and their family or whānau.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>16. Resource the workforce adequately, and streamline systems in consultation with the frontline workforce to improve work flow and recipient service experience.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>17. Put people at the centre of decision making, seek feedback from staff about how system changes affect their roles, and empower staff to work proactively</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>

	to enhance the mana of benefit recipients			
	18. Provide multiple channels for service so applicants can access assistance through whichever channel they are most comfortable using.			No evidence of implementation.
	19. Take a Whānau Ora-type approach where the complexity of a person’s situation means multiple agencies are involved and skilled navigators support the person’s interactions with the agencies and community organisations.			No evidence of implementation.
Ways to minimise the creation of overpayments and reduce overall indebtedness	20. Review all hardship payments and ensure eligibility is in line with the new purpose and principles of the Social Security Act.	Key Recs 14, 15 and 16; Ch 6	The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 14 is being partially implemented, stating that work is ‘already underway’ to address a reduction in outstanding beneficiary debt through sustainable repayments, reviewing recoverable assistance, and minimising the creation of overpayments. ¹³⁰ It has stated that Key Recommendations 15 and 16 are being considered ‘as part of another government review or policy programme’.	No evidence of implementation.
	21. Give MSD the mandate to improve, simplify and redesign practice around income declarations.			No evidence of implementation.
	22. Increase funding for community initiatives that promote financial literacy and for debt reduction, such as no interest, no fee and debt consolidation loans.			No evidence of implementation.
	23. Introduce a scheme of incentivising benefit debt repayment, such as a Matched			No evidence of implementation.

¹³⁰ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	Debt Reduction Scheme, to reduce outstanding benefit debt.			
	24. Review internal performance measures relating to debt, to bring them in line with the new purpose and principles.			No evidence of implementation.
Minimising the small amount of fraud	25. Endorse MSD's three-tiered approach towards alleged fraud.	Key Rec 17; Ch 6	The Government stated that work is underway to implement Key Recommendation 17. They have stated that "the Government endorses MSD's approach to fraud as suggested here and will continue to ensure fraud is handled appropriately." ¹³¹	Fully implemented.
	26. Introduce independent review proceedings prior to a Benefit Review Committee for prosecution investigations.			No evidence of implementation.
	27. Explore and align prosecution practice with Inland Revenue's approach to prosecution.			No evidence of implementation.
Improving the service provided to people released from prison	28. Scale up the Supporting Offenders into Employment intervention and MSD's reintegration efforts, in conjunction with the Department of Corrections.	Key Rec 18; Ch 6	The Government stated that work is underway to partially implement Key Recommendation 18. They state that they are "working towards improving the support for people exiting	No evidence of implementation. The Government's announcements on this in May 2019 emphasised pre-existing work on the Supporting Offenders into Employment scheme. ¹³⁵

¹³¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹³² Ministry of Social Development (2019c).

¹³³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹³⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2019b).

	29. Pastoral care for people released from prison should be increased.		prisons”, with work “underway between MSD and Corrections to progress specific proposals.” ¹³⁴	No evidence of implementation.
	30. Review and increase the current value of the Steps to Freedom grant, to ensure it is adequate for basic living costs, including housing.			No evidence of implementation.
	31. Monitor and ensure prisoners have the appropriate documentation to obtain income support or work on release (for example, an official form of identification, a driver’s licence, bank account, contact details).			No evidence of implementation.
	32. Consider continuing housing cost assistance for people entering prison for a short period, on remand or in custody.			No evidence of implementation.
Main benefits	33. Remove youth rates of main benefits. Increase Jobseeker Support for under 24 years living away from home (and the rate of Youth Payment) to match the rate for people 25 and older, and increase Supported Living Payment for 16–17 year-olds to the rate for people aged 18 and over.	Key Rec 19; Ch 7	The Government has stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 19 is part of its medium and longer-term work programme. ¹³⁶ It stated that “improving financial support will continue to be a key focus throughout the welfare overhaul work programme”.	No evidence of implementation.
	34. Remove initial income stand-down periods.			Partial evidence of progress.

¹³⁴ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹³⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

				In 2020, the Government removed stand-down periods as a response to Covid-19, for those eligible for a benefit between 23 March 2020 and 24 July 2021. ¹³⁷ However, at present this is a temporary measure and will expire in 2021.
	35. Remove the 13-week non-entitlement period for voluntary unemployment.			No evidence of implementation.
	36. Remove the 30-hour rule.			No evidence of implementation.
	37. Introduce individual entitlement to Jobseeker Support while retaining a couple-based income test.			No evidence of implementation.
	38. Keep sole parents on Sole Parent Support until their youngest child turns 18 (rather than switching them to Jobseeker Support once their youngest child turns 14).			No evidence of implementation.
	39. Consider changing the name of Jobseeker Support – Health Condition or Disability to better reflect people’s needs (for example, Health Support).			No evidence of implementation.
Hardship assistance	40. Increase income and asset limits to allow a larger proportion of low-income working people to access payments.	Key Rec 24; Ch 7	The Government has stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 24 is part of its ‘medium and longer-	No evidence of implementation.

¹³⁷ Work and Income (2020b).

	41. Review and increase grant limits so they cover current costs, including for emergency dental treatment.		term work programme’, stating that “further consideration of supplementary report is required”. ¹³⁸	No evidence of implementation.
	42. Make a larger proportion of payments non-recoverable (for example, those for the costs of school uniforms).			No evidence of implementation.
	43. Review the Temporary Additional Support formula, including the accommodation loading and maximum amount, so it adequately covers costs.			No evidence of implementation.
Income definition	44. Align definitions of income and assets with those established by Inland Revenue, unless there are clear and robust reasons for a different definition.			No evidence of implementation.
	45. Treat earnings-related compensation from ACC the same as other income from work in the benefit system.			No evidence of implementation.
	46. Review how income is measured and allocated to people, including assessment periods – especially in the treatment of lump-sum payments, retrospective payments, joint investments and annual business income.			No evidence of implementation.

¹³⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

Family Tax Credit	47. Align shared care rules for the Family Tax Credit with child support – 35% of care.	Ch 7	In relation to Key Recommendation 23, which concerns the Working for Families package, the Government has said “Work will continue on Working for Families, as an integral part of the income support system, its potential to reduce child poverty and reflect the value this Government sees in caregiving.” ¹³⁹	No evidence of implementation.
	48. Extend the 4 weeks ‘terminal payment’ to the Family Tax Credit.			No evidence of implementation.
	49. Consider how increases in the Family Tax Credit should impact on the rates of Unsupported Child’s Benefit and Orphan’s Benefit.			No evidence of implementation.
Best Start Tax Credit	50. Consider changing the interaction between Best Start and Paid Parental Leave to avoid overpayments.	Ch 7	No Government response to this Detailed Recommendation.	No evidence of implementation.
Child Tax Credit	51. Repeal the Child Tax Credit	Ch 7	No Government response to this Detailed Recommendation.	No evidence of implementation.
Childcare Assistance	52. Change the definition of income to remove other non-taxable transfer payments (for example, Accommodation Supplement, Disability Allowance and Temporary Additional Support).	Ch 7	In November 2019 the Government stated that there are “significant opportunities to improve Childcare Assistance” and that “the adequacy of this	No evidence of implementation.

¹³⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	53. Improve take-up by promoting greater awareness to working families, alongside Inland Revenue (given its role in administering Working for Families).		support for parents has reduced over time”. ¹⁴⁰ Minister Sepuloni stated that she would be “seeking further advice on how we can improve access to Childcare Assistance in the short term, with a further broader review to be considered in the long-term”. She stated that she does not expect to seek Cabinet decisions on this review of childcare assistance settings for “several years”.	No evidence of implementation.
	54. Review subsidy rates (and their interaction with minimum session times in childcare and Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) services), to determine if they are adequately subsidising costs, and increase the rates if they are inadequate.			No evidence of implementation.
	55. Consider increasing income thresholds to provide greater subsidisation of childcare costs for low- and middle-income working families, so that effective marginal tax rates for these families are not too high.			No evidence of implementation.
Child support	56. Treat child support received as income for benefit abatement (already income for the Family Tax Credit).	Ch 7	In relation to Key Recommendation 27, which states that all child support should be passed onto carers, the Government has stated that “Work is already underway on the inequity around child support for parents depending	No evidence of implementation.
	57. Treat child support paid as a reduction in income for benefit abatement (already a reduction in income for the Family Tax Credit).			No evidence of implementation.

¹⁴⁰ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	58. Remove compulsory application for child support (except for recipients of Unsupported Child's Benefit).		on whether or not they receive a main benefit." ¹⁴¹	No evidence of implementation.
	59. Shorten the application form and make more application options available (for example, online).			No evidence of implementation.
	60. Review the expenditure table to reflect changes in Family Tax Credit payments.			No evidence of implementation.
Shared care	61. Align shared and split care rules for main and supplementary payments with the Family Tax Credit and child support.	Ch 7	The Government has stated in November 2019 that they "intend to seek further advice on recognising split-care and shared care arrangements in the welfare system". ¹⁴²	No evidence of implementation.
Ensuring benefit settings have less impact on partnering decisions	62. Allow a 6-month period (rather than the current 6 weeks) after people move in together as a couple before a relationship is deemed to exist for the purposes of determining benefit eligibility.	Key Rec 28; Ch 7	The Government has stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 28 is part of its medium and longer-term work programme. ¹⁴³ It has stated that this "will be considered as part of further advice on income support settings".	No evidence of implementation.
	63. Do not deem two people who do not live together as being in a relationship for the purposes of welfare support.			No evidence of implementation.
	64. Investigate other moves towards greater neutrality in respect of relationship status, including			No evidence of implementation.

¹⁴¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁴² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁴³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	<p>increased individualisation of benefit entitlement, bringing the couple rate of benefit closer to two times the single rate, and improving alignment between the approach taken by MSD and in other legislation.</p>			
	<p>65. Consider introducing a short-term entitlement (for example, 6 months) to a main benefit for partnered people who lose their jobs or incomes (due to redundancy, a health condition or disability, or a health condition or disability of a dependent child) through an earnings disregard of their partner’s income (up to a cap of around \$48,000 a year) for this period.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p> <p>It is relevant to note that the Covid-19 Income Relief Payment for those who lost work from 1 March 2020 was paid to people irrespective of their partner earnings (up to \$2,000 per week),¹⁴⁴ temporarily strengthening support for displaced workers whose partners were still earning. However, this has not applied to main benefits, and was only a temporary measure.</p>
Subsidising housing costs for those on low incomes	<p>66. Improve housing subsidies by extending the period from 2 months to 6 months before income-related rent for public housing is increased after the tenant moves into employment</p>	Key Rec 33; Ch 8	The Government has stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 33 is part of its medium and longer-term work programme. Minister Sepuloni stated in November 2019 that housing subsidies are part of the longer-term work	No evidence of implementation.
	<p>67. Improve housing subsidies by changing the way</p>			No evidence of implementation.

¹⁴⁴ Beehive.govt.nz. (2020b).

	<p>Accommodation Supplement payments are calculated, so indexing maintains relativity with housing costs, and removing differences between renters and homeowners.</p>			
	<p>68. For the Accommodation Supplement, increase the maxima to the median regional rental rates (for the latest year available).</p>		<p>programme. She expressed that “this work will require significant considerable time and resource, due to the level of complexity involved in making structural changes to housing subsidies, the need to consider the wider context of income support, and the impact of potential changes.”¹⁴⁵</p>	<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>69. For the Accommodation Supplement, review the maxima and the area locations annually to maintain the value of the payments with changes in median rental rates in different parts of the country over time.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>70. For the Accommodation Supplement, decrease the co-payment rate from 30% to 25% (that is, increase the Government contribution from 70% to 75%).</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>71. For the Accommodation Supplement, decrease the entry threshold for homeowners from 30% to 25% to align with renters.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>72. Allow people who are studying (and meet the criteria for Student Allowance) but who do not receive Student Allowance,</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>

¹⁴⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	to apply for Accommodation Supplement.			
	73. Increase the cash asset limit on Accommodation Supplement to \$42,700, to align with the cash asset limit for social housing.			No evidence of implementation.
	74. Index the Accommodation Supplement cash asset limit to maintain relativity over time.			No evidence of implementation.
	75. Remove the cash asset abatement test for Accommodation Supplement.			No evidence of implementation.
	76. Amend the definition of cash asset for the Accommodation Supplement to exclude the proceeds from the sale of a house, for a reasonable period, to allow the person to re-enter the housing market, taking account of any special requirements or modifications the person or their family may require to a house.			No evidence of implementation.
	77. Improve the take-up rate of Accommodation Supplement and Temporary Additional Support for non-benefit recipients through greater cooperation with Inland Revenue, better use of its information, and increased publicity and proactive activity.			No evidence of implementation.
	78. Increase the flexibility in the requirement to review and			No evidence of implementation.

	<p>renew Temporary Additional Support when assessments relate to housing costs, with reviews between 3 and 12 months tailored to individual circumstances, and accordingly rename, such as ‘Tailored Additional Support’.</p>			
	<p>79. Ensure the combination of changes to housing support and abatement rates, alongside other income support, make low- and low–middle income households substantially better off.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
<p>Government to undertake further work</p>	<p>80. Determine the impact on low-income households of maintaining levels of Accommodation Supplement for a reasonable period for beneficiaries who move into full-time work, so they are well supported to remain in work and able to clear debts and build savings, similar to the recommendation on income-related rent subsidy.</p>	<p>Ch 8</p>	<p>As stated above, reviewing housing subsidies is part of the Government’s longer-term work plan. There have been no Government announcements specific to these Detailed Recommendations.</p>	<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>81. Change the way Accommodation Supplement payments are calculated to move away from family size to being based on the number of bedrooms, including allowing bedroom space for a disability support person and for</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>

	children in shared custody, and determine the impact of this change on low-income households.			
	82. Review the level of the cash asset limit for the income-related rent subsidy and Accommodation Supplement, to maintain the principle that it allows people to save for a mortgage deposit for a median-priced house.			No evidence of implementation.
	83. Review, as the supply-side measures increase and affordability improves, the roles of MSD, Housing New Zealand and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to consider whether an integrated, single-agency approach to housing might be preferable.			No evidence of implementation.
	84. Review the housing assessment and allocation process so there is an appropriate balance between placing locals waiting to be housed and high-needs households from outside the region.			No evidence of implementation.
Home ownership and tenure options and ending homelessness	85. Consider facilitating innovative thinking and action to increase home ownership through rent-to-buy schemes, shared equity schemes, low-interest rate loans	Key Recs 30, 31 and	The Government has stated that partial implementation of Key Recommendation 30 – that homeownership and tenure options for those on lower	Partial implementation of Detailed Recommendation 85 noted through the Progressive Home Ownership Fund.

	or fixed mortgages, microfinancing and similar	34; Ch 8	incomes are increased – is being actively considered. ¹⁴⁶	
	86. Request Housing New Zealand to develop affordable options for tenants to purchase their state house.		In 2020, the Government launched a \$400 million Progressive Home Ownership Fund to help between 1,500 and 4,000 families buy their own homes, with the specific aim to address affordability for Māori, Pacific peoples, and families with children.	No evidence of implementation. Since 2015 a Tenant Home Ownership scheme has been in place that offers a grant of 10 percent, up to a maximum of \$20,000, towards the purchase price of selected Kāinga Ora houses, excluding those in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton and Tauranga. ¹⁴⁷
	87. These approaches must be based on achieving equity in housing outcomes, including ownership, for Māori and Pacific People. This should result in culturally appropriate rental and ownership housing, including household size and function, and include papakāinga options.			Partial implementation. The Progressive Home Ownership Fund, specifically aims to address affordability for Māori, Pacific peoples and families with children.
An effective employment service	88. Institute a new operating model that provides people at risk of poor labour market outcomes (including Māori, Pacific People, people with health conditions or disabilities, and people whose	Key Recs 35 and 36; Ch 9	The Government has stated that Key Recommendation 35 is being partial implementation of Key Recommendation 35, ¹⁴⁸ which calls for establishing an effective employment service of	Partial implementation. Budget 2019 initiatives suggest partial implementation, including additional funding to support people with health conditions and

¹⁴⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁴⁷ Kāinga Ora (2020).

¹⁴⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	jobs have been made redundant) with proactive and sustained support to obtain good, sustainable work.		<p>MSD. The Government has also stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key Recommendation 36,¹⁴⁹ which calls for a revamp of active labour market, employment and training policies across government.</p> <p>In Budget 2019, the Government announced 263 new frontline staff at MSD with the sole "focus of helping more people into meaningful and sustainable work".¹⁵⁰ The Government also announced additional funding to support disabled people and people with health conditions into employment.¹⁵¹ As part of its medium to long-term work programme, the Government has also stated that it will “focus on better supporting people into employment and valuing underpaid work”.</p>	disabled people into employment through Oranga Mahi, disability Employment Services and Support Funds.
	89. Increase significantly investment (with appropriate monitoring and reporting) in active labour market programmes.			No evidence of implementation.
	90. Establish a dedicated deputy Chief Executive for employment in MSD.			No evidence of implementation.
	91. Provide sufficient numbers of well-trained, well-resourced, regional labour market managers and specialist employment case managers in MSD.			Minimal implementation. Given longstanding under-resourcing of MSD’s frontline services, ¹⁵² further investment will be required beyond the hiring of 263 new frontline staff.
	92. Provide public employment services to people at risk of becoming unemployed.			No evidence of implementation.
Revamp of Active Labour Market	93. Review a whole-of-government approach to labour market,	Key Recs 35	In August 2019, the Government released an All-of-Government	Full implementation.

¹⁴⁹ Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

¹⁵⁰ New Zealand Government (2019c).

¹⁵¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁵² Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

Programmes, labour market and training policies	training and vocational education (with MSD as an integral partner) with MBIE, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry of Pacific Peoples, Tertiary Education Commission, Careers New Zealand, polytechnics, industry training organisations, and regional and local government.	and 36; Ch 9	Employment Strategy and Youth Employment Action Plan. The Government has stated that a review of Active Labour Market Programmes is being undertaken, led jointly by Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, MSD and Ministry of Education. ¹⁵³	The Government initiated an All-of-Government Employment Strategy in 2019 and a review of Active Labour Market Programmes. It has undertaken a complete review of Vocational Education (RoVE) through the Ministry of Education and Tertiary Education Commission. ¹⁵⁶
	94. Establish national and regional advisory groups of the social partners (government-business-union), iwi and regional and local government to implement employment and active labour market policies at a national and regional level.		In June 2020, the Government announced the establishment of 15 Independent Regional Skills Leadership Groups to facilitate a coordinated regional and central government response to the disruption caused by Covid-19. ¹⁵⁴	Full implementation. The Government announced Independent Regional Skills Leadership Groups in June 2020.
	95. Resource and develop a portfolio of labour market programmes that is driven by local labour market conditions, evidence based, and informed by all relevant national and local labour market data.		The Government has nodded towards developing MSD’s employment services as part of its ‘medium-term’ plan. They have also stated that they will be looking “more extensively at how to build strengths and address barriers for people experiencing difficulty in the labour market, with a strong	Partial implementation. Budget 2019 included the extension of places available through Mana in Mahi for young people to access an apprenticeship or industry training qualification. The Government is continuing to develop a portfolio of labour market programmes, especially as a response to Covid-19.

¹⁵³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁵⁴ Jackson (2020).

¹⁵⁶ Tertiary Education Commission (2020a).

	<p>96. Access the best international data and programmes so New Zealand is well placed for a future labour market in which more people might more frequently transition in and out of work and where there is a greater need to support workers to re-skill or up-skill due to displacement or moving in or out of casual work.</p>		<p>focus on Māori, disabled people, people with health conditions and Pacific people.”¹⁵⁵</p>	<p>Partially implemented.</p> <p>Review of active labour market programmes was undertaken and advice was to be provided to Ministers in early 2020 as part of this ‘multi-year work programme’.</p> <p>The Government is making progress on accessing the best international data and programmes for people more frequently transitioning in and out of work, and has established a Just Transition Unit within MBIE,¹⁵⁷ as well as a tripartite Future of Work programme supported by the Treasury.¹⁵⁸</p>
	<p>97. Make labour market programmes and work far more accessible for disabled people.</p>			<p>Minimal implementation.</p> <p>Budget 2019 initiatives suggest minimal implementation, including additional funding to support people with health conditions and disabled people into employment through Oranga Mahi, disability Employment Services and Support Funds. However this</p>

¹⁵⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁵⁷ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (2020).

¹⁵⁸ The Treasury (2020).

				falls short of making labour market programmes and work far more accessible for disabled people.
Loss of employment	98. Establish a short-term (for example, 6 months) benefit for partnered people who lose their jobs or incomes (for example, due to redundancy) through an earnings disregard of their partner's income (up to a cap) for this period (see the Detailed Recommendations table in chapter 7).	Key Rec 37; Ch 9	<p>In November 2019, the Government stated that implementation of Key Recommendation 37 is part of their 'medium to long-term work programme.'¹⁵⁹</p> <p>In 2020, the Government removed stand-down periods as a response to Covid-19, for those eligible for a benefit between 23 March 2020 and 24 July 2021.¹⁶⁰ They also announced free trades training for 2.5 years from 1 July 2020 in response to Covid-19.¹⁶¹</p>	Minimal implementation. The 12-week Covid Income Relief Payment partially fulfilled this recommendation for those who lost work on or after 1 March 2020, by disregarding partner income up to a high cap, however this measure was only temporary and was not extended to all on core benefits.
	99. Adequately fund redundancy support programmes, which include a suite of free or subsidised training and education courses, for workers who experience redundancy.			Minimal implementation. The free trades training announced in response to Covid-19 is not a permanent measure.
	100. Ensure people can resume benefits readily (to allow for unpredictable changes in income and to provide people with confidence to take up employment), including removal of income stand-down periods.			Minimal implementation. The Government's removal of stand-down periods during Covid-19 is not permanent.

¹⁵⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁶⁰ Work and Income (2020b).

¹⁶¹ Tertiary Education Commission (2020).

Young people supported to be earning, learning and, where they are parents, caring	101. Increase investment in well-coordinated and youth development-focused programmes to help young people into education, training, alternative employment opportunities or volunteering.	Key Recs 38 and 39; Ch 9	In November 2019 the Government stated that it was 'partially implementing' Key Recommendation 39, which calls for the use of evidence-based approaches to support young people to be learning, earning, and caring. Key Recommendation 38, which calls for changes to Youth Service, was part of its medium to long-term work programme. ¹⁶² In August 2019, the Government released a Youth Employment Action Plan as part of its Employment Strategy. ¹⁶³ It has also continued to develop MSD's Mana in Mahi programme, which has engaged directly with youth to inform the design and policy setting phase. ¹⁶⁴	No evidence of implementation.
	102. Tailor youth initiatives to their communities.			No evidence of implementation.
	103. Take an evidence-based approach, informed by the voices of young people and building on the strengths of young people, and provide a basis for their long-term engagement with the changing world of work.			No evidence of implementation.
	104. Provide assistance with a specific focus on the needs of rangatahi Māori, Pacific youth and young people with health conditions or disabilities, to provide more equitable outcomes and success for these groups of young people.			No evidence of implementation.
Improving income	105. For main benefits, consider increasing financial support for	Key Recs 40	In November 2019 the Government stated that	No evidence of implementation.

¹⁶² Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁶³ New Zealand Government (2019a).

¹⁶⁴ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

support for people in the welfare system with health conditions or disabilities and carers of people with health conditions or disabilities	people affected by health conditions and disabilities not due to an accident to be equivalent to that provided by the accident compensation scheme. Treat people with similar levels of disability – whether caused by illness or injury – similarly. Link this support to relevant employment support where work is a possibility.	and 41; Ch 10	improving supports and services for disabled people, people with health conditions and disabilities and their carers is part of the Government’s ‘medium-term’ work programme. ¹⁶⁵ The Government has said that “further work will be undertaken to improve support and services for people with health conditions and disabilities and their carers”, “primarily focused on improving income supports, as well as employment services available.” This will include a review of entitlements and eligibility settings. ¹⁶⁶	
	106. Introduce time-limited individual entitlement for income and employment support for low-income families suffering from health shocks (see the eligibility section of the detailed income support recommendations, page 118).			No evidence of implementation.
	107. Consider transferring to New Zealand Superannuation people on Supported Living Payment who are so unwell or disabled that there is no foreseeable chance they will come off the benefit during their life.			No evidence of implementation.
	108. Align the abatement rate of non-blind disabled people receiving Supported Living			No evidence of implementation.

¹⁶⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁶⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	<p>Payment with that of the blind, to address the current inequity.</p>			
	<p>109. Redesign supplementary assistance for people with health conditions or disabilities, so it is easier to access and more accurately covers the costs of having the health condition or disability.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>110. Increase the level of income support provided by Disability Allowance with three rates (low, medium and high) related to the degree of burden of disability or care needed.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>111. Increase the level of income support provided by Child Disability Allowance, and introduce three rates (low, medium and high) related to the degree of burden of disability or care needed.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>112. Direct the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Health to clarify where responsibility for covering the cost to individuals of health conditions and disabilities should lie and make this transparent, known to the public, and accessible.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>

	<p>113. Include in the New Zealand Health and Disability System Review how cost and other barriers can be reduced so people on low incomes can access primary care, dental care, alcohol and other drug services, mental healthcare, secondary care, and vision and hearing services.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p> <p>Costs discussed in the Review but no in-depth discussion of how these cost-related barriers can be reduced.</p>
	<p>114. De-couple Supported Living Payment Carer from Supported Living Payment, and create a carers benefit that continues to be paid at the same rate as Supported Living Payment. This allows more flexibility in the provision of non-financial support.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>115. Introduce an annual carers payment to help meet the additional costs associated with care.</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
<p>Implementing in the welfare system a comprehensive approach to support the suitable employment of people with</p>	<p>116. Support the suitable employment of people with health conditions and disabilities, and carers, through early intervention with the right level of support</p>	<p>Key Recs 40 and 41; Ch10</p>	<p>In November 2019 the Government stated that improving supports and services for disabled people, people with health conditions and disabilities and their carers is part of the</p>	<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>
	<p>117. Support the suitable employment of people with health conditions and disabilities,</p>			<p>No evidence of implementation.</p>

health conditions and disabilities and carers of people with health conditions and disabilities	and carers, through support for part-time work	Government’s ‘medium-term’ work programme. ¹⁶⁷		
	118. Support the suitable employment of people with health conditions and disabilities, and carers, through evidence-based integrated employment and health supports and services		Budget 2019 saw additional funding to support disabled people and people with health conditions into employment through Oranga Mahi, disability Employment Services and Support Funds. ¹⁶⁸ The Government has also stated that “consideration is required of how an expanded employment service will meet the needs of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions”, as well as consideration of “changing employer attitudes about these groups” and developing ‘tailored support’. ¹⁶⁹	No evidence of implementation.
	119. Support the suitable employment of people with health conditions and disabilities, and carers, through improved access to health supports and services to support return to work, with particular support for people with mental health problems or chronic conditions		Partial implementation.	Funding was increased for supporting employment for those with health conditions and disabilities in Budget 2019 through Oranga Mahi, disability Employment Services and Support Funds.
	120. Support the suitable employment of people with health conditions and disabilities, and carers, through easy re-entry to a benefit if employment ends		No evidence of implementation.	
	121. Support the suitable employment of people with health conditions and disabilities, and carers, through support for employers to take on or retain people with health conditions		No evidence of implementation.	

¹⁶⁷ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁶⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁶⁹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

	<p>and disabilities and carers (for example, wage subsidies and workplace accommodations).</p> <p>122. Support the recommendations of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction and the 2018 OECD report Mental Health and Work: New Zealand, because of the large proportion of people receiving health and disability benefits whose primary barrier to work is a mental health condition.</p>			<p>Full implementation.</p> <p>The Government has committed to transform the mental health system as recommended in He Ara Oranga – Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction.¹⁷⁰ It has also supported the need to improve outcomes for people with mental health and addiction needs according to the findings of the OECD’s Mental Health and Work report.¹⁷¹</p>
<p>Meaningful community participation to promote wellbeing</p>	<p>123. Work with the Ministry of Health to ensure those who are unlikely to ever engage in paid work are supported to participate meaningfully in their communities.</p>	<p>Key Rec 42; Chapter 10</p>	<p>The Government has stated that work is ‘already underway’ to address Key Recommendation 42.¹⁷²</p> <p>In November 2019, the Government reported that “the Social Wellbeing Board has been commissioned to explore NGO contracting and relationships across government”. It also</p>	<p>No evidence of implementation.</p> <p>Public debate over the role of volunteering for recipients of income support has taken place,¹⁷⁴ but no observable progress in this space.</p>

¹⁷⁰ Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (2020).

¹⁷¹ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁷² Ministerial advisor email, October 9, 2020.

¹⁷⁴ Robson (2020).

			stated that work is ‘underway’ to explore how MSD can increase its role working with the community sector, and better support volunteering. ¹⁷³	
Prevention and harm reduction	124. Work to eliminate people’s negative experiences with MSD, which worsen mental distress, by changing the way MSD interacts with people in line with our proposed purpose, principles and values.	Chapter 10		No evidence of implementation.
	125. Oversee and coordinate cross-government responses to improving social wellbeing, including tackling the social determinants of poor health and disability.			No evidence of implementation. Despite the ‘wellbeing approach’ of the Coalition Government, and its world-first ‘Wellbeing Budget’, ¹⁷⁵ policies to address this recommendation have not been implemented.
	126. Enhance cross-government investment in prevention and resilience-building activities for young people and people in workplaces.			No evidence of implementation.

¹⁷³ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁷⁵ The Treasury (2019).

Whakamana Tāngata: the road ahead and CPAG's recommendations

Many changes that would ensure that families and whānau receiving income support have a dignified standard of living have been relegated to the Government's "medium and longer-term work programme".¹⁷⁶ There is immediate, severe need, and children cannot wait. The pressing need of children has been recognised for a long time, as evidenced by the Child Poverty Reduction Act, and the Terms of Reference for the WEAG stated that "There is growing homelessness and complex housing demands alongside rates of poverty that are too high."¹⁷⁷ Yet, there appears to have been little urgency in the Coalition Government's approach to implementation.

Minister Sepuloni stated of the WEAG report in May 2019, "The wider systematic changes suggested in the report will require a 3 to 5 year work programme and are likely to take upwards of 10 years to achieve and embed."¹⁷⁸ A 10-year time frame for welfare reform is unreasonable and inappropriate given the scale of urgent need, and given the WEAG's finding that the "Current welfare system is no longer fit for purpose and needs fundamental change".¹⁷⁹ With the Labour Government now in its second term, elected by an overwhelming majority, the mandate for welfare overhaul is stronger than ever. The time has passed for incremental tweaks, and urgent systemic transformation is needed in order to fulfil its promise of welfare overhaul. Now that Labour has three more years to govern, it has the time required to implement some of this "fundamental change", unimpeded by the need to negotiate with coalition partners.

In CPAG' 2019 response to *Whakamana Tāngata*, "The experts can all agree"¹⁸⁰, we highlighted the alignment of many of the WEAG's recommendations with our own policy asks. In what follows, we highlight what we see to be some of the most urgent areas for the government's attention and action over the next three years:

- **Increase benefit levels and the Family Tax Credit; lower abatement rates in Working For Families; and establish a minimum income standard that is met by the income support system (Key Recommendations 20, 23, 25, 26)**

The increases in the 2018 Families Package and the 2020 benefit increase of \$25 per week are steps, but inadequate to meet the income needs of children and their whānau and families. Income support benefits need to be increased to the level WEAG recommended.

Children's wellbeing depends on Working for Families, and the Family Tax Credit needs to be increased and the In-Work Tax Credit absorbed into it. Working for Families Tax Credits (which are income) need to be indexed to wages. Abatement rates within Working for Families need to be lowered to 20%.

Income support must be adjusted to enable an adequate income. And analysis must be done to so that income support is adjusted to keep pace with this adequate income standard.

¹⁷⁶ Ministry of Social Development (2019a).

¹⁷⁷ New Zealand Government (2018).

¹⁷⁸ Ministry of Social Development (2019b).

¹⁷⁹ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b), pp. 5.

¹⁸⁰ CPAG (2019X)

- **Ensure disability supports are adequate (Key Recommendation 40, Detailed Recommendations 109-115)**

None of the WEAG's recommendations for children affected by disability have been implemented.

CPAG has recently confirmed the inadequacy of current income support for disabled children and children living in households with disabled whānau, and the many barriers associated with accessing support.¹⁸¹

Income supports must be easy to access.

Income supports must enable people to appropriately cover the direct and indirect costs associated with having a disability.

- **Amend the Social Security Act and ensure that the welfare system fulfils the principles of this amended Act (Key Recommendations 1, 2 and 4 which have not yet been implemented):**

Getting the foundations right will ensure the Act is compatible with the WEAG recommendations and the government's vision – and will facilitate its realisation. The current Act is a barrier. We urge full implementation of these recommendations:

***“Recommendation 1:** Amend the Social Security Act 2018 to state that anyone exercising power under the Act have regard to the following purpose and values.*

The purpose of the welfare system is to whakamana tāngata and ensure a dignified life by: providing financial security and social security sufficient for an adequate standard of living

supporting people to achieve their potential for learning, caring or volunteering, and earning through good and appropriate work

The welfare system is underpinned by Kia Piki Ake Te Mana Tangata, including kaupapa Māori values of:

- *manaakitanga – caring with dignity and respect*
- *ōhanga – economics*
- *whanaungatanga – treasuring kinship ties and relationships*
- *kotahitanga – unity*
- *takatūtanga – preparedness*
- *kaitiakitanga – guardianship.*

***Recommendation 2:** Use the following principles to guide the design and operation of the welfare system.*

- *Be person-centred and wellbeing focused.*
- *Keep children paramount.*
- *Value whānau and families.*
- *Treat people with dignity, respect and compassion.*
- *Provide an income sufficient for an adequate standard of living.*
- *Provide full and correct entitlements.*
- *Deliver support that is easy to access, timely and appropriate.*

¹⁸¹ Neuwelt-Kearns, Murray, Russell, & Lee (2020).

- *Provide an employment service that supports people into good and appropriate work.*
- *Support the provision of housing that is affordable, secure, of good quality and appropriate for the person (and their family or whānau).*
- *Promote mutual expectations.*
- *Aim for equitable outcomes.*
- *Build and maintain effective links with other parts of government.*
- *Be sustainable.*

Recommendation 4: *Direct the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development to design and implement a welfare system that will fulfil the new purpose and principles of the amended Social Security Act, is cognisant of responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and involves users of the system.*¹⁸²

- **Accelerate public housing development (Key Recommendation 29)**

Housing costs and a lack of housing significantly exacerbate child poverty in Aotearoa. Unstable, insecure, overcrowded housing circumstances cause significant stress for families, with adverse social and educational outcomes for children.¹⁸³

The current rate of building state housing, while an improvement, is insufficient. The public housing register has exponentially increased, with demand increasing by 55 percent between August 2019 and August 2020 to 20,385 households.¹⁸⁴ 43 percent of households on the register in June 2020 had children.¹⁸⁵

- **Change relationship rules so that relationship status (and relationship status changes) have less of an effect on individuals' income entitlements (Key Recommendation 28, Detailed Recommendations 63 to 65)**

The definition of a relationship for the purposes of the welfare system needs to be changed: CPAG's view is it should be similar to that of the Property (Relationships) Act; WEAG's view is that a 6-month grace period is sufficient after a couple starts living together (rather than the current six weeks). In addition, if an individual earns a low income, this should not affect their partner's welfare entitlements. This would align eligibility for core benefits with eligibility for the Covid Income Relief Payment, which demonstrated MSD's ability to administer benefits individually. This individualisation would enable parents to make independent decisions about relationship formation without fear of retribution.

Conclusion

The Coalition Government achieved little of its stated aim to overhaul the welfare system. We call on the newly elected 2020 Labour Government to concretely deliver on its Election Manifesto statement that "Labour will continue overhauling our welfare system" with one

¹⁸² Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2020b), pp. 19-20.

¹⁸³ Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty (2012).

¹⁸⁴ Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2020c).

¹⁸⁵ Ministry of Social Development (2020a).

of three priority goals being “income adequacy so families that depend on the benefit are not living in poverty”.¹⁸⁶

This report has laid out progress to date in implementing the WEAG’s recommendations following the release of *Whakamana Tāngata*. While the Prime Minister claimed in the lead up to the 2020 election to have implemented 22 recommendations, our audit suggests that none of the 42 key recommendations have been fully implemented, with only 19 having been partially or minimally implemented. Of the 126 detailed recommendations, only four have been fully implemented. Such progress does not reflect welfare overhaul, but rather a small number of incremental changes that, on their own, are not an appropriate response to the severity and urgency of need of many New Zealanders, and especially children.

Children cannot wait for more resources, as their minds, emotions, bodies are constantly developing and are often permanently adversely affected by toxic stress and lack of essentials. Our inadequate and ineffective welfare system continues to entrench poverty for children. The stress for these children and families not only has immediate adverse impacts for their wellbeing, but has lasting effects on their lives and society; downstream costs in areas of health, education and justice alone are huge.¹⁸⁷ The intention of a welfare overhaul was to ensure that everyone has a standard of living and income that is conducive to their participation in society, and enables them to live with dignity,¹⁸⁸ a baseline that all New Zealand children deserve.

¹⁸⁶ Labour (2020).

¹⁸⁷ Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b).

¹⁸⁸ New Zealand Government (2017).

Reference list

- 1News (2019). Training scheme Mana in Mahi gets \$49.9 million boost. TVNZ 13 Aug 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/training-scheme-maha-in-mahi-gets-49-9-million-boost>
- Ardern, J. (2017). Speech from the Throne. *New Zealand Government*. Retrieved from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-throne-2017>
- Beehive.govt.nz. (2020a). Income support factsheet. Retrieved from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-03/Income%20support%20factsheet.pdf>
- Beehive.govt.nz. (2020b). COVID-19 Income Relief Payment – Q&A. Retrieved from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-05/COVID-19%20Income%20Relief%20Payment%20Q%20and%20A%20FINAL.pdf>
- Castles, F. G. (1996). Needs-based strategies of social protection in Australia and New Zealand. *Welfare states in transition: National adaptations in global economies*, 88-115.
- Child Poverty Action Group (2019). The Experts Can All Agree. Retrieved from <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/EMBARGOED%20MONDAY%2023%20SEPT%20-%20cpag%20MEDIA%20BRIEFING.pdf>
- Cooke, H. (2020). Election 2020: Public housing wait list nears 20,000 applicants. *Stuff* 21 Sept 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/300112537/election-2020-public-housing-wait-list-nears-20000-applicants>
- Cotterell, G., St John, S., Dale, M. C. & So, Y. (2017). Further fraying of the welfare safety net. *Child Poverty Action Group*. Retrieved from <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/171208%20CPAG%20further%20fraying%20of%20the%20welfare%20safety%20WEB.pdf>
- Coughlan, T. (2019). Where to next for dead welfare report?. *Newsroom* 20 May 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/where-to-next-for-dead-welfare-report>
- DPMC, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, (2019). *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy: Summary Document 2019*. Retrieved from <https://childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-08/summary-child-youth-wellbeing-2019.pdf>
- Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty (2012). Child Poverty in New Zealand: What you told us. *Office of the Children's Commissioner*. Retrieved from <https://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/EAG/Consultation/What-you-told-us.pdf>
- Fletcher, M. (2020). The case for a huge Covid-19 benefit reform. *The Spinoff* 24 March 2020. Retrieved from <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/24-03-2020/the-case-for-a-huge-covid-19-benefit-reform/>
- Gromada, A., Rees, G. & Chzhen, Y. (2020). Worlds of Influence: Understanding What Shapes Child Well-being in Rich countries. *Unicef*. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/1140-worlds-of-influence-understanding-what-shapes-child-well-being-in-rich-countries.html>
- Healey, O. & Curtin, J. (2019). 'Relationship status' and the Welfare System in Aotearoa New Zealand. Retrieved from https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/1907%20Repartnering%20Report%20PPI_CPAG%20Final%20July.pdf
- Humpage, L. & Neuwelt-Kearns, C. (2020). *Income support in the wake of Covid-19: survey*. Retrieved from <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/EMBARGOED%20MONDAY%2023%20SEPT%20-%20cpag%20MEDIA%20BRIEFING.pdf>
- Jackson, W. (2020). Regional Skills Leadership Groups to be eyes and ears for labour market recovery. *Beehive.govt.nz*. Retrieved from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/regional-skills-leadership-groups-be-eyes-and-ears-labour-market-recovery>

- Kāinga Ora (2020). Tenant Home Ownership Programme. Retrieved from <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/assets/Home-ownership/Brochures-and-forms/HNZ16297-Tenant-Home-Ownership-Jan-2020.pdf>
- Labour (2020). Social Development & Employment: Our Plan. Retrieved from <https://www.labour.org.nz/socialdevelopment>
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (2020). He Ara Oranga – Mānuka Takoto, Kawea Ake / Upholding the Wero Laid in He Ara Oranga. Retrieved from <https://www.mhwc.govt.nz/interim-report/>
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (2020). Just Transition. Retrieved from <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-development/just-transition/#just-transitions-unit>
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (n.d.). The Government Housing Programme Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://www.hud.govt.nz/news-and-resources/statistics-and-research/government-build-programme-housing-dashboard/>
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2020a). Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. Retrieved from <https://www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Community-and-Public-Housing/Support-for-people-in-need/Homelessness-Action-Plan/271a3c7d79/Homelessness-Action-Plan.pdf>
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2020b). Progressive Home Ownership. Retrieved from <https://www.hud.govt.nz/residential-housing/progressive-home-ownership/>
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (2020c). August 2020: Public Housing Monthly Update. Retrieved from <https://www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Community-and-Public-Housing/Follow-our-progress/Monthly-Dashboards-2020/August-2020-monthly-update.pdf>
- Ministry of Social Development (n.d.). Welfare Expert Advisory Group Report. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/weag/index.html>
- Ministry of Social Development (2019a). Welfare Overhaul: Update on Progress and Long-Term Plan (November 2019). Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/welfare-overhaul-update/cabinet-paper-welfare-overhaul-update-on-progress-and-long-term-plan.pdf>
- Ministry of Social Development (2019b). Welfare Overhaul: Update on Progress and Next Steps (May 2019). Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/weag-report-release/cabinet-paper-welfare-overhaul-advice-from-the-welfare-expert-advisor....pdf>
- Ministry of Social Development (2019c). Official Information Response 20 Sept 2019. Retrieved from <http://msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2019/september/20190920-msd-overpayment-and-fraud-investigations-over-the-past-five-years.pdf>
- Ministry of Social Development (2019d). Pacific Prosperity: Our People, Our Solutions, Our Future. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/strategies/pacific-strategy/pacific-prosperity-our-people-our-solutions-our-future-english-version.pdf>
- Ministry of Social Development (2020a). Housing Register. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/index.html>
- Ministry of Social Development (2020b). Working Matters. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/what-we-can-do/disability-services/disability-employment-action-plan/working-matters-2020-spreads.pdf>
- Ministry of Social Development (2020c). Benefit Fact Sheets. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html>

- McCulloch, C. (2020). Green Party says Labour broke promise to overhaul welfare system. *RNZ* 26 May 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/417512/green-party-says-labour-broke-promise-to-overhaul-welfare-system>
- Moir, J. (2018). Mana in Mahi scheme announced for youth in the dole. *RNZ* 11 Aug 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/363717/mana-in-mahi-scheme-announced-for-youth-on-the-dole>
- Murray, S. (2018). Breaking the link between disability and child and whanau poverty. *Policy Quarterly*, 14(4).
- Neuwelt-Kearns, C., Murray, S., Russell, J. & Lee, J. (2020). 'Living well'? Children with disability need far greater income support in Aotearoa. *Child Poverty Action Group*. Retrieved from <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/Living%20Well%20Children%20with%20disability%20need%20far%20greater%20income%20support%20in%20Aotearoa%20Sept%202020%20%281%29.pdf>
- New Zealand Government (2017). Confidence & Supply Agreement: New Zealand Labour Party & Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand. Retrieved from https://www.parliament.nz/media/4487/nzlp_gp_c_s_agreement.pdf
- New Zealand Government (2018). Terms of Reference for the Welfare Expert Advisory Group. Retrieved from https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-05/WEAG%20Terms%20of%20Reference_0.pdf
- New Zealand Government (2019). Our Youth Employment Action Plan. Retrieved from <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/6613-our-youth-employment-action-plan>
- New Zealand Government (2019a). Supporting people into work and income security. *Scoop*. Retrieved from <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA1905/S00034/supporting-people-into-work-and-income-security.htm>
- New Zealand Government (2019b). Wellbeing Budget 2019: Rebuilding work-focussed case management. Retrieved from <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/factsheets/budget/factsheet-extra-msd-staff-2019.pdf>
- New Zealand Government (2020). Punitive Child Policy From Welfare System To Put Children First. *Scoop*. Retrieved from <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA2007/S00288/government-removes-another-punitive-child-policy-from-welfare-system-to-put-children-first.htm>
- New Zealand Parliament (2020). Hansard (Debates): Sepuloni, Carmel. Retrieved from https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/HansS_20200305_053400000/sepuloni-carmel
- Palmer, S. (2019). Carmel Sepuloni defends not boosting benefits. *Newshub* 23 Nov 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2019/11/carmel-sepuloni-defends-not-boosting-benefits.html>
- RNZ (2018). Govt plans to build 6400 new state homes within four years. *RNZ* 24 Aug 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/364835/govt-plans-to-build-6400-new-state-homes-within-four-years>
- Robson, S. (2020). Cautious approach taken to avoid beneficiary volunteering becoming 'work for the dole' scheme. *RNZ* 2 Sept 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/425029/cautious-approach-taken-to-avoid-beneficiary-volunteering-becoming-work-for-the-dole-scheme>
- Sepuloni, C. (2020). Government removes another punitive child policy from welfare system to put children first. *Beehive.govt.nz*. Retrieved from <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-removes-another-punitive-child-policy-welfare-system-put-children-first>
- Stats NZ (2020). Labour market statistics: June 2020 quarter. Retrieved from <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-june-2020-quarter>
- St John, S. & So, Y. (2018). Will children get the help they need? An analysis of effectiveness of policies for children in the worst poverty in 2018. *Child Poverty Action Group*. Retrieved from

- <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/Backgrounders/180509%20CPAG%20Analysis%20Child%20poverty%20policies%20FINAL2.pdf>
- Tenancy Services (2020). Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2020 now in force. Retrieved from <https://www.tenancy.govt.nz/about-tenancy-services/news/residential-tenancies-amendment-act-2020-now-in-force/>
- Tertiary Education Commission (2020a). Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE). Retrieved from <https://www.tec.govt.nz/rove/reform-of-vocational-education/>
- Tertiary Education Commission (2020b). Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund (free trades training). Retrieved from <https://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/funding-and-performance/funding/fund-finder/targeted-training-and-apprenticeship-fund/>
- The Treasury (2019). The Wellbeing Budget. Retrieved from <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-06/b19-wellbeing-budget.pdf>
- The Treasury (2020). Future of Work Tripartite Forum. Retrieved from <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/future-work-tripartite-forum>
- Wade, A. (2020). Election 2020: Labour unveils \$1b plan for the welfare system. *NZ Herald* 12 Sept 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/election-2020-labour-unveils-1b-plan-for-the-welfare-system/UCJUK2Y7HOK3IA27UDO2PPRV24/>
- Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2018). About the WEAG. Retrieved from <http://www.weag.govt.nz/about-the-weag/>
- Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019a). *The income support system: Background paper*. Retrieved from <http://www.weag.govt.nz/assets/documents/WEAG-report/background-documents/757c27caff/Income-support-system-040319.pdf>
- Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019b). *Whakamana Tāngata: Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand*. Retrieved from <http://www.weag.govt.nz/assets/documents/WEAG-report/aed960c3ce/WEAG-Report.pdf>
- Work and Income (2020b). Stand-down periods. Retrieved from <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/online-services/apply/what-is-a-stand-down.html#null>