

# E KAVEINGA



## A Cook Islands Model of Social Work Practice

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## *“Maui e, hutia te henua”*

E tuatua rongonui ki roto ite tangata Polinetia, te tuatua o Maui. Ko Maui nei, e mana maata tona mei tetai o te au atua taito. E tuke maata tona mei tona au taeake. E te au angaanga tana i rave e mea umere tikai. E ravakai aia i tona tupuanga, e koia katoa tei uti mai i te au enua o te pae moana Polinetia, ina te tuatua taito ei. E tamaiti inangaro ia a Maui e tona tupuna e Hina-te-Papa, ko tei ako e tei oronga i te pakari kiaia.

Teia te pe'e a Hina-te-Papa i te karanga ki tana mokopuna Maui no tona utianga mai ia Havaiki mei raro i te moana :

*“To rire to*

*Tokomiti tokomiti*

*Tokofeta tokofeta*

*Ha ha ha te henua*

*Tu tu tu Maui”*

## **“MAUI”**

**(Symbolic significance to this model)**

*“Maui is a major folk hero in Polynesian myths. The story of Maui has been passed down from generation to generation.*

*Maui was the son of a god and possessed magical powers. These powers enabled him to achieve many great feats such as snaring the sun with a net he made from his sister’s hair so that we could have more hours of daylight.*

*Maui and his brothers were renowned fishermen. Maui however, was different from his brothers. While they were content with life as it was, Maui was always searching for something better.*

*His greatest feat was the fishing up of Havaiki - the land many Polynesians refer to as the homeland of their origin. Maui however, could not have achieved this feat without the help of another family member - his grandmother, Hina-te-Papa, who later chanted words of wisdom and encouragement in praise of Maui’s achievement.”*

Maui’s myth contains positive cultural messages about family relationships, family collaboration, strength, skill, and courage in facing new challenges, overcoming problems and being successful. All of these have symbolic significance and relevance to our model, because essentially both the myth and the model are concerned with kinship.

The surfacing of land from the depth of the sea as a result of Maui’s fishing efforts symbolises a new beginning and opportunities for growth and development. Our Cook Islands Model of Social Work Practice is a new creation. We expect that both the model, and the skills and knowledge of Cook Islands social workers who use it in their practice, will continue to develop and grow.

***“Ko ta te tangata e ruru***

***Ko tana rai ia e kokoti”***

## TUATUA AKAMEITAKIANGA

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Kia orana te au taeake tei tauturu mai ia matou i te kimianga i tetai au ravenga meitaki tikai no te tauturu anga atu i te anau tamariki, kopu tangata e te iti tangata Kuki Airani i runga i teia enua ko Aotearoa.

Te irinaki nei matou e, ka riro teia au ravenga meitaki ei akatupu i tetai au peu me kare akonoanga tau tikai ki roto i te ngutuare, kopu tangata e te iti tangata no te akonoanga i te anau tamariki. Ka riro katoa teia ei tauturu ia matou i te angaanga kapitianga e to tatou iti tangata Kuki Airani.

Te rauka katoa nei ia matou i te akameitaki ia Kuresa Tiumalu-Faleseuga no tona manako marama tei riro ei akatuera i tetai matara no te akatupuanga i teia angaanga ta matou e rave nei.

Te oronga katoa atu nei te akameitakianga ki to matou au metua, kopu tangata e te au enua tangata katoatoa o te pae Tonga/Tokerau Kuki Airani, no te tauturu maata ta kotou i rave e i oronga mai te ka riro ei tauturu ia matou e pera te tamariki e te iti tangata Kuki Airani no te au tuatau ki mua.

Akaiti Crummer  
Materau Samuel  
Tina Papai-Vao  
Catherine George

January 1998

## AKAMEITAKIANGA

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Te mataora nei matou i te akarianga atu i ta matou akameitakianga takake kia Mrs Tai Carpentier no tona tuatau tei akapou aia na roto i te orongaanga mai i tana i marama no runga i ta matou e inangaro nei i te akatupu ei puapinga no ta tatou anau tamariki e te iti tangata Kuki Airani.

Kua rave maroiroi tikai aia i teia na roto i tona kite, karape e te inangaro tikai i te tauturu i teia moemoea kia tupu e kua kitea mai te puapinga o te reira au manako tana i akaari mai.

Na te Atua e akamaata mai i tona kite e te marama e kia akamaroiroi mai iaia no te tauturu i to tatou iti tangata Kuki Airani i runga i teia enua ko Aotearoa.



# **E KAVEINGA**

## **A Cook Islands Model of Social Work Practice**

**Akaiti Crummer  
Materau Samuel  
Tina Papai-Vao  
Catherine George**

**This model is complementary to the existing policies, procedures and legislative requirements of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Service - it does not replace them.**

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## INTRODUCTION

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We, a group of Cook Islands women from the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Service in Mangere, have developed the attached Cook Islands Model of Social Work Practice in recognition of the specific beliefs, values and cultural needs of our Cook Islands families. As other social work models do not cover sufficiently the requirements of our children and families, the model was put together as a guideline for work with our Cook Islands people. This model is designed for use of Cook Islands as well as non-Cook Islands workers. For non-Cook Islands workers, we hope that this model will provide guidance and structure for work with Cook Islands children and their families. For Cook Islands workers, this model is intended to help reinforce or clarify the importance of our bicultural skills and knowledge, and also to provide a challenge to develop this work further.

The work on this model was initiated from a workshop facilitated by Kuresa Tiimalu-Faleseuga, a consultant and trainer from the Northern Training Unit. Using a theoretical framework designed by Kuresa (see Appendix B, on page 31), we began a process whereby we identified the Cook Islands ideologies, knowledge, ethics and practice which we considered relevant for this model (see Appendices C to F, pages 32 to 38), and thus developed the attached practice model. We also consulted various family members, community members and Cook Islands social workers from this Service, asking them to critique our work and add to our knowledge base.

The model was developed within the legislative framework of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Service. It is therefore influenced by the values and legislative requirements of that Service. While the paramountcy principle<sup>1</sup> may be seen to be in conflict with the collective ideology of Cook Islands families, it is also compatible with the high value that children have in Cook Islands society. In practice we should be aware of this ideological conflict and actively access and implement Cook Islands knowledge and skills to try and resolve this source of friction. For social work practice to be effective we need to break down barriers and encourage a co-operative working relationship with family members.

This model should be used in conjunction with other policies and procedures of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Service<sup>2</sup>, as it is designed to add to the practice knowledge of this Service as well as to improve the service delivery to our Cook Island clients. We acknowledge that Cook Islands families adapt in different ways to living in a different cultural environment. Accordingly, there may be differences in the way that some Cook Islands families react to this model of practice (for example,

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<sup>1</sup> Paramountcy principle: where "any conflict of principles or interests arises, the welfare and interests of the child or young person shall be the deciding factor" s6 Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act

<sup>2</sup> This model is complementary to the existing policies, procedures and legislative requirements of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Service - it does not replace them.

those families who have been assimilated into the *papa'a* way of life may be more comfortable with a non-Cook Islands support system).

Finally, we want to acknowledge the importance of the social work role in engaging Cook Islands families in the social work process so that safe and appropriate decisions are made for their children. The role of the social worker is to affirm Cook Islands values and ideologies, while also challenging and seeking to change unacceptable practices and behaviour in relation to the care, protection and control of their children.

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## 1 PHILOSOPHY

*This model is designed to provide a guideline for work with Cook Islands families within the legislative framework of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989. Cook Islands culture must be an integral part of the social work process and its values must be at the foundation of practice. The family (ngutuare tangata, kopu tangata) forms the basis of Cook Islands culture; the social work process should aim to strengthen and empower this collective unit to provide good care, protection and control of their children.*

**‘E ivi no toku nei ivi,  
E kiko no toku nei kiko,  
E toto no toku nei toto.’**

## 2 GOALS

- *Cook Islands families will keep their children safe and protected from harm*
- *Cook Islands families and communities will have responsibility for the care, protection and control of their children*
- *Cook Islands youth offenders will be held accountable for their actions and will face appropriate sanctions that are acceptable to both their family and their victims.*

## 3 OBJECTIVES

1. *To ensure the safety and well-being of Cook Islands children by:*
  - a) *working with their families to put protective measures and plans in place*
  - b) *working with these children to identify their needs, to keep them safe, to involve them in planning and to monitor their progress.*
2. *To support and develop the placement of Cook Islands children with their families **unless** this places the children’s safety at serious risk. If a child is unable to be placed with his or her family (ngutuare tangata or kopu tangata), then the aim will be to support and develop an alternative placement in the Cook Islands community (preferably within oire tangata, vaka tangata, or enua tangata).*
3. *To support and develop the relationship between Cook Islands children and their families (and communities where appropriate). This can be by*

*maintaining regular contacts and visits if the child is living away from family, or by putting supports in place if there are any difficulties in relationships.*

4. *To support the integrity of Cook Islands families by:
  - a) *treating families with respect and dignity during the 'social work process'*
  - b) *keeping families fully informed*
  - c) *effectively 'delivering the message' about social work concerns and responsibilities in relation to the care, protection and control of their children*
  - d) *acknowledging their cultural difference and identity throughout the social work process by use of Cook Islands language and protocols*
  - e) *utilising family decision-making processes to address the needs of the family's children*
  - f) *utilising and supporting family resources to care for, protect and control the children.**
5. *To open up effective communication and to engage Cook Islands families and their communities in the social work process by utilising a combination of Cook Islands and social work skills and knowledge.*
6. *To involve Cook Islands families in decision-making and planning for their children.*
7. *To develop the self-reliance of Cook Islands families so that they are able to keep their children safe and protected from harm, by facilitating interim supports and monitoring systems from other family members, CYPFS, other community groups and agencies as required.*
8. *To ensure that all Cook Islands youth offenders are held accountable for their misbehaviour by facing consequences that are appropriate for the level of offending, culturally relevant, and acceptable to their family and victims, as well as being within the legislative frameworks currently existing.*

## 4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We endorse the principles outlined in the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 and consider that they are consistent with Cook Islands beliefs (see sections 5, 6, 13 and 208 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act). In addition to those principles, the following points and background information will provide guidance when working with Cook Islands families.

### 4.1 Personal Philosophy

*Social workers are influenced by their own belief systems when they work with clients (this is the case, whatever the culture of the client may be). For that reason, social workers need to have a good understanding of who they are and where they are coming from - that is, they should have an awareness and understanding of their own value base, knowledge and skills; and their own strengths and weaknesses. With this insight they are better able to recognise their own particular limitations and strengths in working with Cook Islands clients, and hence what they also need to do to develop and facilitate a suitable and more effective service for these clients.*

### 4.2 Collective Philosophy

*Cook Islands families are collective by nature and children are seen to be a valued part of a family and community. In addressing the needs of Cook Islands children, social workers must work with family members and, where appropriate, community support people to find and implement the most effective strategies to strengthen the position of these children and families. Wherever possible, Cook Islands children should be strengthened and supported within their family and community.*

Cook Islands society is based on a collective philosophy where each individual is seen to contribute to a larger group such as family, church, community. Each individual has a role to play and recognises, supports and complements the roles of others. While individual achievement is valued, that person's place within his or her family and community is still a matter of importance - the individual functions as part of a collective rather than solely for him or herself. Values such as obedience, respect, order, service and reciprocity (see Appendix C, *Cook Islands Ideologies*, on page 32) are factors that contribute to the viability and survival of this collective way of life.

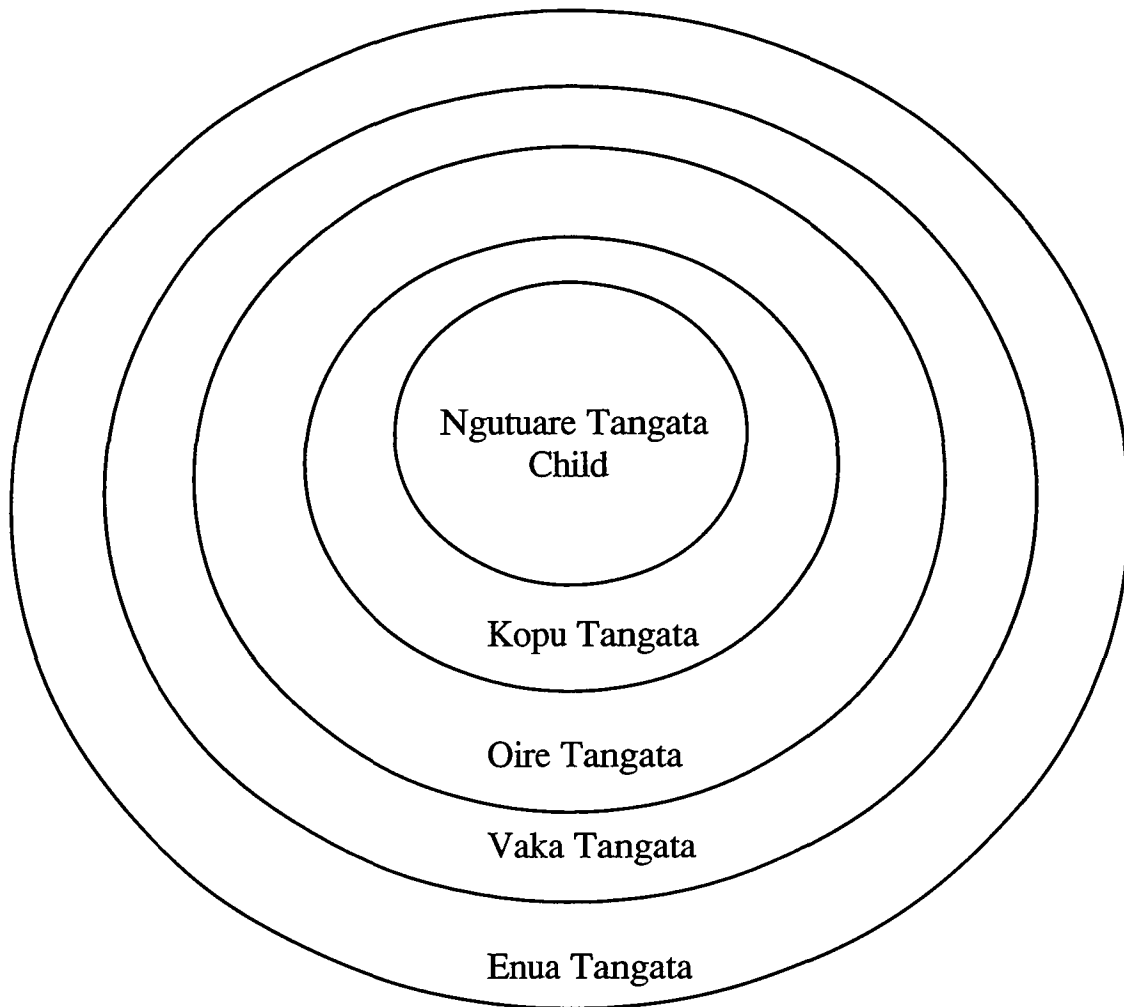
From birth, Cook Islands children are recognised as belonging to a particular family (*ngutuare tangata, kopu tangata*) and a particular part of the Cook Islands (*enua, oire, vaka*). Rather than seeking independence at an early age, children are encouraged to maintain their collective way of functioning into adulthood, remaining with parents and contributing to the financial and physical running of the household.

### 4.3 The Child's Cook Islands Links

*A Cook Islands child belongs to an extensive network. Links with family, village, tribe and island are part of the child's identity as well as the basis for the child's support and development. A social worker must be able to access and utilise these networks during the social work process. Knowledge of the child's genealogy is also important, as links from both paternal and maternal sides may need to be explored when a wider search is required for family or community input and support. (See Figure 1, Relationship links for child in Cook Islands society.)*

Cook Islands society is based on a hierarchical, tribal structure. The Cook Islands consists of fifteen islands, with eight different dialects (see Appendix A on page 30 for more information). Each island has its own identity and social structure. Nuclear families (*ngutuare tangata*) are linked to a particular island, tribe (*vaka tangata*), village (*oire*) and extended family (*kopu tangata*). (Note: In some islands the *vaka tangata* is no longer part of the structure.) In any attempt to identify leaders, elders and other significant persons within a family's network, the family's *enua anauanga* (island/s of origin), tribe and extended family must be researched and investigated through the appropriate Cook Islands networks. (In Rarotonga, for instance, there are three tribal areas, known as *vaka* - Takitumu, Puaikura and Te Au o Tonga. Each *vaka* is sub-divided into villages or *oire* - Takitumu has three villages, Matavera, Ngatangia and Titikaveka. Families are identified with particular areas and have blood links with other people from within the *vaka*.) Influential traditional leaders, such as *mataiapo* and *ariki*, are mainly based in the Cook Islands. Significant contact persons in New Zealand would be senior family members of *kopu tangata*, and community leaders such as ministers (*orometua*), healers (*ta'unga*) and community group leaders.

**RELATIONSHIP LINKS FOR CHILD IN COOK ISLANDS SOCIETY**



*Figure 1*

**Definitions**

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Ngutuare tangata: | Nuclear family  |
| Kopu tangata:     | Extended family   |
| Oire tangata:     | People from the same village                              |
| Vaka tangata:     | Tribe (Note: Some islands do not have a tribal structure) |
| Enea tangata:     | People from the same island                               |

#### 4.4 Cook Islands Perspective on Social Work Role

*From a Cook Islands perspective, the social worker has a dual responsibility when working with Cook Islands families. The social worker's power and authority in protecting a child is recognised, but he or she also has the responsibility of working for the family - for instance, to ensure that the needs of the family are met in relation to caring for their children. Mutual respect, humility and service are necessary elements of the social work relationship with Cook Islands families.*

In Cook Islands society, traditional structures have various in-built mechanisms to protect the well-being of children and their families. The protective function of the social worker is therefore compatible with Cook Islands practices. (In more traditional times, senior family members and tribal leaders such as the *ariki* or *mataiapo* often intervened if a child was ill treated. The alleged abuser faced certain consequences, such as openly acknowledging the ill-treatment and apologising to the family. In more extreme situations, the abuser was ostracised from the community.)

Cook Islands society is hierarchical, and has various levels of power and authority. The *ariki* (high chief), for instance, is a traditional leader and accordingly enjoys a prestigious position within the community. The *ariki's* relationship with the community, though, has a dual function. On one level the *ariki* receives services, goods and kudos for the position he/she holds. But in return for this power and respect, the *ariki* is also expected to carry out services for his or her community, such as settling disputes and officiating at ceremonies. Similarly, the social work role has dual expectations within the Cook Islands community.

#### 4.5 Cook Islands Language

*Proficiency in the client family's Cook Islands dialect or language is a prerequisite for developing an effective working relationship with them. A person with this skill should be involved in all social work interviews and meetings with adult family members.*

For the majority of Cook Islands families in New Zealand, English is a second language (and in some instances a third language if they are not from Rarotonga). The main means of communication within their families and communities is in their own particular Cook Islands dialect.

Eight dialects are used within the Cook Islands. Different dialects are used in Rarotonga, Mangaia, Aitutaki, Penrhyn and Palmerston. A common dialect is used in Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro, another dialect in Manahiki and Rakahanga, and a shared dialect in Pukapuka and Nassau. Rarotongan is considered to be the main dialect; most Cook Islands families understand it. However, the various dialects are different, and in most cases Cook Islands families are more comfortable using their own particular dialect.

## 4.6 Cook Islands Knowledge

*An ability to operate effectively within the client family's cultural environment is required when trying to engage them in the social work process. Knowledge of Cook Islands protocols, networks and other cultural practices is also a prerequisite for working with Cook Islands families. Expertise and advice from suitable cultural consultant/s from the client family's particular island may be required to assist in work with the family concerned.*

Ideally, a Cook Islands cultural consultant would:

- be recognised as a respected and credible member of the client family's community and island group
- be proficient in the dialect and protocols of the client family's island group
- have knowledge of care and protection issues
- have a demonstrated commitment to challenging and supporting Cook Islands families to provide safe care for their children.

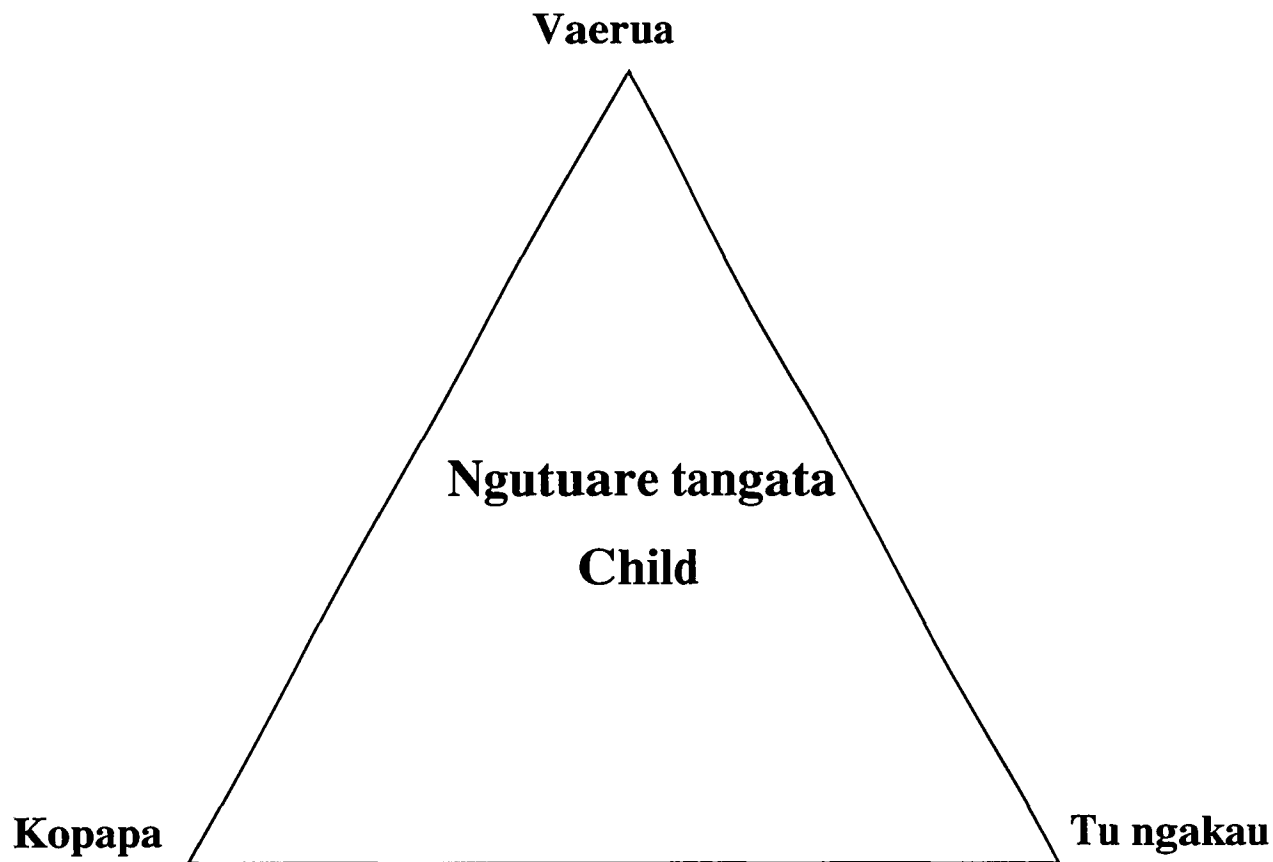
(Note: This Service would need to invest in the development, support and maintenance of these consultants and networks as part of its commitment to providing an effective service for Cook Islands clients.)

## 4.7 Holistic Approach to Assessment

*In Cook Islands culture a child has strong emotional, physical and spiritual ties to family and the wider Cook Islands community. CYPFS becomes involved when problems arise in the child's environment. When these problems stem from within the family, the social worker should be focusing his or her attention on identifying the relevant issues affecting the family as a whole. The child's needs should not be viewed in isolation from his or her family (both nuclear and extended). The physical (kopapa), emotional (tu ngakau) and spiritual (vaerua) well-being of the family (which includes the children) should be addressed in the assessment.*

The above concepts are interrelated. If one area is problematic, then problems will also arise in the other two areas. The impact of these problems adds to the risk factors involved for children and their families, and therefore should be included in the assessment process. Figure 2 (below on page 8) illustrates the three elements to be considered in a holistic assessment of the family. Table 1 (on page 9) identifies some of the symptoms or indicators of a faulty family belief system, or an unhealthy family system. A holistic assessment needs to identify the source of the problems and their impact on the safety mechanisms of the family system.

### HOLISTIC VIEW OF ASSESSMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY



**Figure 2**

The physical well-being (*kopapa*), spiritual well-being (*vaerua*) and emotional well-being (*tu ngakau*) of the child as well as the rest of the family (*ngutuare tangata*) is fundamental to the over-all health of this unit. If one of these elements is problematic, then the other two areas will also be weakened. The social work assessment must address the physical, spiritual and emotional health of both child and family.

Table 1: Factors to consider in holistic assessment

<b>Signs of concern within <i>Ngutuare tangata</i> (for child and family)</b>	
<p><b>Physical well-being</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Kopapa</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of physical and/or sexual abuse (for example, domestic violence, excessive physical discipline, incest)</li> <li>• Neglect of health, medical, physical needs (through lack of knowledge, skills, motivation, resources)</li> <li>• Problem behaviour (offending, running away from home)</li> <li>• Lack of supports, isolation from family/community</li> <li>• Poor housing, accommodation</li> <li>• Drug and/or alcohol abuse</li> <li>• Lack of resources (money, job, education)</li> <li>• Physical illness due to imbalance in emotional and/or spiritual well-being</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotional well-being</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Tu ngakau</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional abuse (such as constant criticism or putting down of child)</li> <li>• Isolation from family/community supports</li> <li>• High stress level (money worries, job pressures, relationship problems)</li> <li>• Cultural conflicts</li> <li>• Conflicts between parent/s and child raised in New Zealand</li> <li>• Suicidal feelings, depression and other mental health issues</li> <li>• Motivation (lack of, or misguided, motivation)</li> <li>• Relationship difficulties (lack of respect for parents, marital problems)</li> <li>• Unresolved trauma (for example, from previous abuse)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spiritual well-being</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Vaerua</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of physical/sexual/emotional abuse, neglect and other unresolved trauma</li> <li>• Isolation from spiritual, religious supports</li> <li>• Conflict in spiritual and/or religious beliefs</li> <li>• Curse (<i>tauma'a</i>), possession</li> <li>• Mental illness</li> </ul>

The social work assessment should not be isolating for the child. A holistic view of the child and his/her family, encompassing their physical (*kopapa*), emotional (*tu ngakau*) and spiritual (*vaerua*) well-being, must be included in the assessment.

## 4.8 Family Relationships

*In order to work effectively with Cook Islands clients, a social worker should have a good understanding of the roles of parents, extended family members and children in this society.*

The parents' roles within the family are complementary. Women are influential in decision-making, and often take on a shared role with their husbands as providers for the family. Men have precedence and a higher profile in many positions of responsibility and power in Cook Islands society, but they are also taking on a greater role in the domestic routines in the home. In most situations, both parents should be approached about concerns. With more sensitive issues, such as sexual abuse, initial contact with an appropriate adult female family member (such as the mother) may be required.

Under normal circumstances, Cook Islands children are represented by their parents or other adult family members and are not expected to contribute to issues affecting the family. However, the role of children is changing. It is becoming more acceptable for them to speak in less formal situations if authorised by their parents or other elders. Cook Islands children are also part of an extended family and community network; valuable information can be obtained from adult members of this network.

*“Ta tatou akonoanga enua:*

- a) te tamariki, kia kauraro ki to ratou au metua*
- b) te apii i ta tatou tamariki i te pae o te evangelia, e pera te pae o te ture*
- c) te apii anga i ta tatou tamariki i te akono ia ratou uaorai (to ratou oraanga)”*

*Quotation from consultations with community*

## 4.9 Family Decision-making

*The social work process should ‘capture’ or ‘harness’ the innate decision-making mechanisms of the Cook Islands family (which includes extended family) concerned, so that participation of family members is maximised and agreed plans ‘owned’ by the participants. (Note: Plans would include measures to address the needs of the child as well as the family - and the alleged abuser if he or she is a member of the family.)*

Family meetings are a commonly-used process in Cook Islands society. These forums are used when issues affecting the function, interests or well-being of the family need to be addressed. Elders or senior family member/s usually facilitate and mediate these processes.

## 4.10 Solutions

*In order to be effective, solutions or measures to address identified issues for the child and family need to be realistic and meaningful for the parties concerned. Education, family responsibility, family and community sanctions, family and community supports as well as Cook Islands community resources are important when trying to formulate workable solutions to issues affecting families and their children.*

Both in the past and in the present, Cook Islands society has had a number of ways of dealing with unacceptable behaviour and ill-treatment of children. Although some of the more traditional mechanisms have been replaced by state agencies such as the Police and CYPFS, the principles contained in community practices remain valid. The following examples of practices and solutions (from past and present) illustrate this point:

- In the past a mediation process was used to address sexual abuse within families. Chants by the victim's family, addressed to the offender's family, were used to relate their genealogy and link with the offender's family. This chant was a challenge to the offender's family and raised the question as to why the offender had been allowed to have a sexual relationship with a member of his own family. The chant was the beginning of the resolution process in which both families negotiated a settlement to the issue. Although this is no longer done, it does illustrate the importance Cook Islands families place on knowing their own genealogy and on members knowing who they are related to in the community (and hence which are acceptable relationships and which are not).
- The involvement of a *ta'unga* or minister (*orometua*) if a person (child, parent, alleged abuser) is thought to be 'spiritually troubled', possessed, or cursed. The intention is to address mental health issues, and behavioural problems where the source of the problems is thought to be spiritual or supernatural.
- The *mataiapo*, *ariki*, or elders in a family or community used to arbitrate in particularly serious matters, such as being ostracised from the community. State agencies have now taken over the bulk of these responsibilities.
- The offender's family visit and offer a verbal apology to the victim's family. Further settlement may be negotiated.
- Family and/or community members offer support to the victim and his or her family.

## 5 PROTOCOLS

Cook Islands society is essentially structured and ordered. Values such as collectivity, respect, obedience and service are basic elements which help to preserve it (see Appendix C, page 32, for Cook Islands ideologies). Accepted practices and protocols are also fundamental to this society. The following are examples of protocols that will assist social workers in carrying out their roles with Cook Islands families.

### 5.1 Home Visits

When working with Cook Islands families, face-to-face contact is important and should be the main means of communication. The following is a guideline of protocols to follow when visiting Cook Islands families in their homes:

- Ask to speak to the parents (or any other family caregiver, if appropriate).
- Use an appropriate Cook Islands greeting to acknowledge any elders present, such as *kia orana mama, kia orana papa*.
- Use respectful language and tone of voice.
- Wait to be invited inside the house.
- Be guided by family members about:
  - whether you take your shoes off before entering the house
  - whether you conduct the interview in the family's own Cook Islands dialect, Rarotongan, or *papa'a*
  - how much 'settling in' talk (for example, asking how the family is) is required before you can introduce the purpose of the visit
  - which family members should be present during the interview
  - whether you should sit or stand during the interview. In general, you should be at the same level as the family members you are talking to
  - whether you start the actual interview with a prayer (*pure akamataanga*).
- Accept and acknowledge any food or drink prepared for you during the visit.
- Give family members the opportunity to ask questions, give information and voice their opinions about issues (especially the senior members of the family).
- At the end of the visit, acknowledge the family's hospitality, input, and assistance. If the meeting was opened with a prayer, end it with a closing prayer (*pure akaotianga*).

## 5.2 Family Meetings

Meetings are commonly used by Cook Islands families when issues affecting the wider group need to be addressed, planned or resolved. The following is an outline of the process used by family members in these meetings:

- The meeting is facilitated by a senior member of the family (*va'a tuatua*).
- The *va'a tuatua* (facilitator) welcomes and acknowledges the elders and other family members present. The meeting begins with a prayer (*pure akamataanga*).
- The meeting is conducted in the particular Cook Islands dialect of the family, or a combination of this dialect and *papa'a*.
- The *va'a tuatua* explains the purpose of the meeting and invites comments from the family members present. Senior members are usually heard first, but each adult family member is given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Children are often present at family meetings, but do not usually contribute to the discussions - the adult family members speak on their behalf. Under normal circumstances this process is fairly orderly, as each family member will wait for his or her turn to speak and will listen to and acknowledge what has been said by others. When conflict arises, the process is less orderly. The *va'a tuatua* tries to get a resolution. The views of the senior family members are also influential. The process of conflict resolution can be fairly time consuming, as Cook Islands dialogue, in comparison to *papa'a*, tends to be more general and roundabout in its approach to issues. Biblical quotations are often used by senior family members to support their arguments. Although *papa'a* terms are more specific and concise, they can be viewed as offensive and/or difficult to understand in these forums. While respect is shown for the views of senior members, younger members are given the opportunity to present their arguments for consideration by the rest of the family.
- After these discussions, the *va'a tuatua* will work to get an agreement from all the family members present about what should happen next - senior family members are again influential in this process. Agreement from all family members is usually required before a decision is reached. The *va'a tuatua* is responsible for checking that all the family members understand and agree to any plans and tasks before the end of the meeting.
- The *va'a tuatua* closes the meeting by thanking all the members of the family and acknowledging the contribution of each. There is a closing prayer (*pure akaotianga*).
- The meeting is followed by a meal (the food is blessed before it is eaten).

Note: In formal extended family meetings, or in meetings where a mixture of family and non-family members are present (for instance, Family Group Conferences), family members may choose to appoint spokespeople to represent their views. In these cases, not all family members will participate in the discussion.

## 6 PRACTICE

We acknowledge that this model of practice will not cover the needs of all Cook Islands clients. The Cook Islands consist of 15 islands, so there are some variations in cultural practices and protocols. The way that Cook Islands families adapt to life in New Zealand also varies. Families may be totally assimilated into *papa'a* culture, or may maintain a combination of *papa'a* and Cook Islands cultures. However, we believe that this model outlines some important principles and guidelines for work with Cook Islands families, and we also support the use of skilled and experienced Cook Islands consultants to help provide an effective service for our people.

### 6.1 Social Work Process

The main focus of the social work process is to work with families to address the care, protection and control needs of their children. Mechanisms to accommodate Cook Islands culture and languages must be included in any effective approach to working with these clients.

This section identifies the individual elements of the social work process and elaborates on the practice issues that result.

#### 6.1.1 Preparation Before Visit

A feeling of *akama* or shame is commonly felt by Cook Islands families when they are approached by statutory agencies such as CYPFS. An unnecessarily intrusive approach may do irreparable harm to the working relationship with the family. Good planning, networking and preparation are therefore important to addressing the needs of the child as well as the family. The family has a right to be presented with quality information about care and protection concerns. Identification of family and Cook Islands community networks will also assist with information gathering, decision-making and supports required during the investigation process. Children are seen as valuable members of the family and their well-being is normally the responsibility of adult family members. When immediate safety issues are identified for child/ren, therefore, suitable options within the family (*ngutuare tangata* and *kopu tangata*) should be a primary consideration for the social worker. The following steps will assist in preparing for a visit to a family:

**1. *The case should be allocated to Cook Islands social workers.***

If none are available, an appropriate Cook Islands community resource person should accompany a non-Cook Islands worker. Preferably, the key worker should be a social worker from the client's island of origin (*enua anauanga*). If this is not possible, a community co-worker (from *enua anauanga*) is required, to accommodate the family's particular Cook Islands dialect as well as to assist with networking, protocols and practice advice (see the following paragraph for further information).

**2. From the client's family name, use resources such as personal knowledge, written records and Cook Islands networks to:**

- a) identify any Cook Islands relationship links (such as *kopu tangata, oire tangata, vaka tangata, enua tangata*)
- b) identify significant elders and other family/community members who should be consulted for further information and who may be available to provide suitable support for the client's family
- c) identify a suitable consultant or resource person who would be able to provide advice or to participate in meetings with the family. This person needs to hold a position of respect and to have credibility in the client family's community (and would also fulfil the role identified in paragraph 1).

**3. Be well informed and clear about the issues and message<sup>3</sup> to be delivered to the parents and family.**

Prepare by:

- a) checking and becoming familiar with any information and recorded concerns (past and present) about the child, such as information from written records as well as from other resource people
- b) formulating the appropriate language and manner in which the message about concerns will be delivered to parents and family. If necessary, seek advice from an appropriate Cook Islands consultant (as identified in paragraph 2) about terminology or particular island protocols.

**4. Consult with others to clarify information, check your plan, and to get appropriate Cook Islands involvement.**

Seek advice and input from others, such as a supervisor, Cook Islands colleagues and community people about issues, plan, and possible strategies for follow-up action with the child/ren, the family, and so on.

**5. Plan what to do, how to do it, who to see, and when.**

From the information in paragraphs 1 to 4, formulate a plan of action. When addressing the cultural aspects of the plan, consider the following steps:

- a) prioritise actions. If the safety of the child is in question, how will this be addressed? It is preferable that the parent/s be contacted first. If this action would compromise the safety of the child, see what other options are possible in the family
- b) identify which adult family members should be approached first about your concerns (in most cases, this would be both the parents of the child/ren). Sexual abuse is a more sensitive issue. If the alleged abuser is one of the parents, or in other circumstances where a cautious approach is required, it is often preferable to speak to and

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<sup>3</sup> 'Message' to be delivered to family refers to the reported concerns about the child and, where appropriate, the reasons why child's/children's treatment or behaviour is unacceptable

- seek the advice of a female family member (such as a mother, grandmother, or aunt) first
- c) identify how the issues will be addressed with the family. This may mean:
- involving a suitable person from the Cook Islands community (in this case, roles should be clarified before the visit)
  - deciding which language should be used when describing concerns and what are the most appropriate terms in the relevant Cook Islands dialect
  - deciding the specific protocols to be addressed.
- A respected and credible member of the client family's Cook Islands community may also assist with conflict resolution and mediation between the family and the social worker (see *Cook Islands Knowledge*, page 7, for a description of desirable attributes for Cook Islands consultant)
- d) identify which Cook Islands family and community members should be consulted for information and possible support for the child and/or the family. Identify any elder/s or other senior people who have influence with the family and decide how they will be included in the investigation (for instance, to facilitate or co-facilitate)
- e) identify an appropriate Cook Islands consultant (a respected and credible member of the client's community, with a good knowledge of child protection issues and work) who would be available for advice and practical support during the social work process. This person may well have been identified in earlier steps
- f) identify any victims who need to be consulted or contacted (YJ cases), and how this will be done. If necessary (for instance, if both families are from the Cook Islands), consider ways of addressing conflict between the victim's and the offender's families.

*"Kia kite koe e no teea enua mai te tamaiti."*

*"Kia aravei atu i tetai tangata no te enua mai o te tamaiti."*

*"Tamou meitaki i te au reo e te au peu o te au pa enua."*

*"Te araveianga mua ki te metua o te tamaiti, kia aru ia atu koe e te tangata tauturu (no te enua o te tamaiti)."*

*"Kauraro - marama i tona peu enua no te aravei atu i teia kopu angata."*

*Quotations from community consultations*

### **6.1.2 Introduction and Explanation of Visit**

On the initial visit to the family, the social worker's role is to effectively deliver the message about concerns for the child/ren, to try and engage the family in the social work process, and to come to a common understanding with the family about what action will follow. (This includes immediate safety measures for the child, choosing the people to be consulted and interviewed, arranging medical checks, and so on.) The first visit with the family is important in establishing an on-going working relationship, so families should be treated with respect and humility, concepts which are

valued in Cook Islands societies. The message, however, should still be clearly delivered. Cook Islands language, knowledge and cultural skills are crucial to this process. (Note: The first visit is usually made with the parents and any other family members that they may wish to have present at the meeting.)

1. ***Present a professional image.*** Conform to a reasonable standard of dress, carry identification, be professional in manner.
2. ***See section 5 Protocols, 5.1 Home Visits*** for general guidelines to follow when visiting the home of a Cook Islands family.
3. ***Introduce yourself and any co-worker*** and be guided by the parents/family about which language/s should be spoken. Use discretion about stating your own Cook Islands connections at this stage (in some situations, this may create a barrier with the family). Explain what your job is and who you work for (produce identification if required). Note: If you are visiting with an elder from that community, then the elder should take the leading role in the interview (agreement and clarification of roles that the social worker and Cook Islands community worker will undertake is an important step in planning for the visit to the family).
4. ***Explain the purpose of the visit and the nature of the concerns.*** In Cook Islands dialect, this explanation may be less direct than in *papa'a*, but the same meaning is conveyed to the family in a much more acceptable fashion. Use appropriate terms (physical abuse - *patu, papa, ta*; sexual abuse - *kanga taukore ite kopapa tamariki me kare amirimiri*). Use *papa'a* terms with care - they can sometimes be viewed as offensive (especially in relation to sexual abuse). Workers may need to obtain advice from cultural consultants about the appropriate terminology in a particular Cook Islands dialect, as there are eight different dialects used in the Cook Islands).
5. ***Allow as much time as is needed to overcome any initial hostilities and to fully explain concerns, possible consequences and options.*** Try to talk through and listen to any areas of conflict for the family. Using a client family's Cook Islands dialect and the appropriate Cook Islands terms to describe concerns, knowing the correct protocols and demeanour, involving a respected member of the client family's community as mediator, and using familiar media such as biblical quotations and community contacts are useful means of managing conflict. A common process used in conflict resolution in Cooks Islands dialogue is to listen to the point of view expressed by a family member and acknowledge the opinion, but also to debate the issues until a common agreement is reached. This process should not be rushed, especially in difficult situations. Check the family's understanding of the issues. Listen to what family members have to say, and any explanations and options they may have to offer.

6. Also, *check any supports the family may have (which include kopu tangata, vaka tangata) and people they want included in meetings or consultations*, any key people they identify, and the roles these people play in the family.
7. Try to *facilitate agreement about what is to happen after the visit*. Explain the steps that a social worker is required to undertake during the social work process (including sighting and possibly interviewing child/ren). Ask the family who they think should be consulted and contacted, and what action they think should follow. When necessary, use members of the family's own network or community to try and involve the family in the social work process (especially if a child's temporary removal from home is required).
8. *At the end of the visit, summarise the issues and the agreement that was reached during the visit.* Check again that the family understands and agrees on both the issues and their resolution.
9. *Thank and acknowledge the parents and family* for their hospitality and input (see Figure 3, *Initial Contact with the Family*).

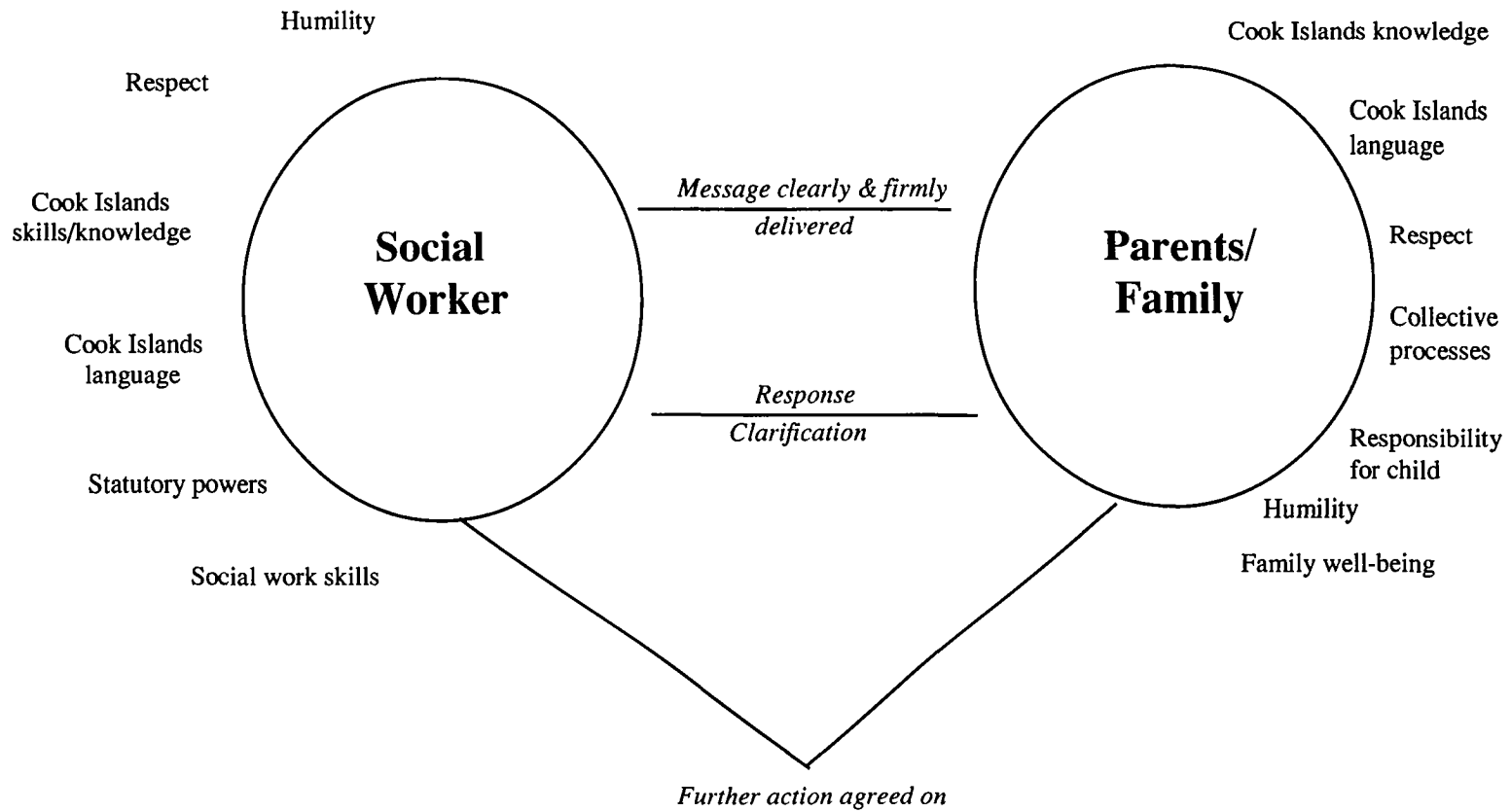
*“Te kite i te raveanga*

- a) *te taakaakaanga ia taua ki raro ake i te pu ngutuare*
- b) *ora araveianga*
- c) *pure akamataanga e te akaotianga*
- d) *akamanea ia koe i mua ake ka aere ei ki te ngutuare no te uipaanga*
- e) *tuatua i toou uaorai reo”*

*Quotation from community consultations*

# INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE FAMILY

Figure 1



### 6.1.3 Exploration of Problems

Cook Islands communities are normally close-knit and co-operative. Cook Islands clients are entitled to confidentiality. When making contact with members of the extended family or the community, social workers should take care not to cause unnecessary embarrassment for the family.

The following steps will assist in identifying and clarifying the issues affecting the child and the family:

1. ***Speak to parents and/or other family members*** about your concerns and ask for any information they are able to give about issues affecting the child and the family. Check their supports, their family and community links (see section 6.1.2, *Introduction and Explanation of Visit*, on page 16). Ask permission to see and interview the child. This is important to Cook Island families, as the parents or other adult family members represent the child's interests in most matters.
2. ***Sight the child and observe his or her interaction with the parents***. Check for any visible injuries. Note interaction with the parents, use of discipline, and so on. Cook Islands families are often not as physically demonstrative as other cultures; this factor should not be misinterpreted a lack of bonding or a sign of relationship difficulties. Observations should always be checked against other sources of information.
3. ***Speak to the child (if he or she is old enough)*** to check his/her account of what has happened. Reassurance from a parent or trusted family member may make the child feel more comfortable about speaking. The child may feel that he/she will get into trouble with the family for telling, or may be uncomfortable about speaking to a social worker, as an adult would usually do this.
4. ***Consult with others (family, community members such as tangata, oire tangata, vaka tangata, enua tangata and other agencies)*** to gather and clarify information. See paragraphs 5.1, *Protocols - Home Visits*, and 6.1.2, *Introduction and Explanation of Visit*, for guidelines to follow in making this contact.
5. ***Consult with the victim (Youth Justice) about involvement in FGC, and any expectations he or she may have about an appropriate penalty for the offender and the offender's family.***

See section 4.7, *Holistic Approach to Assessment*, on page 7, and Table 1, *Holistic View of Assessment of Child and Family*, on page 9, for issues to consider in assessing the child and the family.

***"Marama***

- a) Kia kite i to tatou reo, te au peu***
- b) Kia kite i te akonoanga a te reira enua***
- c) Kia marama koe i te ngutuare taau ka tauturu"***

*Quotation from community consultations*

### 6.1.4 Searching for Solutions

At the conclusion of the investigation process, the social worker and the family should have a joint understanding of the assessed concerns and issues involving the child/ren. The social worker has a responsibility to keep the family fully informed and involved throughout the social work process. Possible solutions and options should also have been explored with the family and with any other involved persons during the investigation stage<sup>4</sup>. To be effective for the child and the family, solutions should address them as a whole unit (see paragraph 4.7, *Holistic Approach to Assessment*, on page 7). The factors to consider when formulating solutions for the child and the family are given in Table 2 below:

*Table 2: Solutions*

*Options which should be considered with the family (at a family meeting or FGC)*

<b>Safety and placement of the child</b>	<p>Safe placement within the family or within the Cook Islands community is a priority (see paragraph 4.3, <i>Child's Cook Islands Links</i>, on page 4). Safety mechanisms for the child and family must be identified - consult <i>ngutuare tangata, kopu tangata</i>. Who is seen in the role of protector for the child within the family? It is not unusual for a family member such as a grandparent to have a special protective role with children. How can this role be integrated into a safety plan for the child? What is the attitude of the parents towards abuse? Do they acknowledge that harsh physical discipline also constitutes physical abuse?</p> <p>What protective measures is the family able to offer? Are they willing to keep the alleged perpetrator away, or is there an alternative safe family placement?</p>
<b>Education</b>	<p>Extra skills or knowledge may be required to meet the needs of the family (including the child) in case of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical abuse. Physical punishment is often used by Cook Islands parents to teach children what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. The acceptability of excessive physical discipline is still a much-debated topic in Cook Islands society (biblical quotations are often used to support or oppose this form of discipline). However, in New Zealand physical abuse is against the law and is unacceptable. Parents who believe that excessive physical discipline is required to teach their children to behave, should therefore be educated and supported in the use of more positive methods of discipline. Family or Cook Islands support groups are often the most effective people to carry out this education because of their cultural and practical expertise and knowledge (Note: The parents' motivation, which is to teach acceptable behaviour, remains the same, but the means of achieving</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> CYPFS has a statutory responsibility to monitor outcomes to ensure that they are appropriate for the care and protection issues that are apparent and that the outcomes are reviewed to check that they continue to meet their objectives.

	<p>this is the issue that needs to be addressed with re-education).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sexual abuse. For many Cook Islands families, sex education is a sensitive matter, and is not a comfortable issue of discussion. Education for both the family and the child are, therefore, related issues when trying to put in place safety and support systems for a child who has been sexually abused,. Again, appropriately trained Cook Islands resource people are often the most suitable people to provide this education.</li></ul>
<b>Counselling and therapy</b>	<p>This is important for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• resolving difficult issues for the child and the family</li><li>• repairing rifts in the family</li><li>• addressing the needs of the abuser.</li></ul> <p>The forum for this must be culturally and professionally appropriate.</p>
<b>Other supports</b>	<p>These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• financial assistance</li><li>• family or community support</li><li>• sports, recreational, or church activities</li><li>• <i>ta'unga</i> or minister for spiritual or health issues.</li></ul> <p>Mental health issues or bizarre or anti-social behaviours are at times attributed to spiritual or supernatural causes. In these cases, the involvement of Cook Islands ministers, <i>ta'unga</i>, healers, or other appropriate persons is sought. Social workers should be aware of the range of options available in both Cook Islands and New Zealand societies, and should assist the family in accessing the most suitable option for them. The family should have the major influence in making this choice.</p>
<b>Sanctions</b>	<p>Culturally appropriate sanctions for youth offenders or alleged perpetrators. For instance, the youth offender, accompanied by parents, offers a verbal apology to the victim.</p>
<b>Monitoring and review</b>	<p>Identified members from the family, the community or appropriate agencies who are able to monitor and support the family's move towards independence from the Service.</p>

After the social work assessment is complete, that is, CP and YJ issues have been identified through the involvement of the family and any other appropriate persons, a meeting with the family should be organised to

formulate solutions. This would be either a family meeting or the more formal process of a Family Group Conference (FGC)<sup>5</sup>.

### **6.1.5 Preparation for Family Meeting or FGC**

Before holding a family meeting or FGC<sup>6</sup>, proper preparation is required to ensure that the participants are well informed, supported, and as comfortable as possible about the meeting. The Care and Protection Co-ordinator is responsible for the following tasks:

1. *Family members must be consulted about who should attend the meeting.* These consultations should be carried out in face-to-face meetings.
2. *Family members must be informed of the purpose of the meeting, the concerns that have been identified, and the roles that they and others will have in that forum.* Any anxieties that the family may have the meeting, such as issues of shame, should also be addressed beforehand. The family should be given the time to consider suitable options or outcomes in preparation for meeting (see section 6.1.2, *Introduction and Explanation of Visit*, on page 16, for an outline of the approach to be used when visiting other family members).
3. *Organising an appropriate venue*, such as a church hall.
4. *Encouraging family members to bring other Cook Islands support people.*
5. *Cook Islands facilitator (va'a tuatua or mata) identified and prepared for meeting.* The facilitator (va'a tuatua or mata) should preferably be a respected and credible member of the family or the family's Cook Islands community. (See section 6.1.1, *Preparation before visit*, on page 14, for further help in identifying a suitable person for this role.)

### **6.1.6 Family Meetings or FGCs<sup>7</sup>**

Family decision-making is a commonly-used process in Cook Islands society. However, the presence of significant family members and the tone of the meeting is also important. Senior members must be treated with respect, people must be given uninterrupted time to put forward their views. As the child has a strong affiliation to and identification with family (*ngutuare tangata* and *kopu tangata*), plans formulated from these meetings should address strategies to ensure the well-being of the child as well as deal with any issues affecting the family's ability to properly meet the child's needs. The following steps will provide guidelines for these meetings.

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<sup>5</sup> The FGC is a statutory process with formal outcomes, and may lead on to court proceedings to implement the outcomes. In the FGC, while the process outlined in this section can be used, the legislative requirements must also be adhered to. This is not the case with a family meeting.

<sup>6</sup> See footnote 5.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 5.

1. ***The facilitator (va'a tuatua) must be proficient in Cook Islands dialect and protocols as well as in papa'a.*** The appropriate Cook Islands dialect should be the main means of communication during the meeting. Provision must also be made for those who may not be fluent in the dialect, such as people presenting information from agencies, and children.
  
2. ***Meeting must be compatible with the following Cook Islands protocols:***
  - The meeting is opened in the appropriate Cook Islands dialect, with the greeting and acknowledgement of those present - minister, elders, family members, community members, social worker/s, workers from other agencies, and so on. The minister or senior family member present is invited to start the meeting with a prayer.
  - Introductions. The members of the family decide how they wish to do this ( they may choose to appoint spokespeople, or ask one person to introduce the family members).
  - The social worker presents the family with information about the concerns to be addressed. The Cook Islands elders and other family members then have the opportunity to respond and to ask questions. Each speaker should be given uninterrupted time to speak. If conflict arises, the facilitator or senior family member takes steps to mediate.
  - The family members have time on their own to discuss and debate the issues, and formulate plans that they present to the FGC or meeting.
  - The meeting is concluded in Cook Islands dialect, with thanks and acknowledgement to participants. The minister or senior family is then invited to close the meeting with a prayer.
  - The participants are invited to a meal or refreshments after the meeting. The minister or senior family member is invited to bless the food.
  
3. ***Plans formulated by the family should address the needs of the child and rest of ngutuare tangata (and/or kopu tangata).*** The child's safety and interest is the paramount issue within this circle, but if the alleged abuser is one of the family, then his/her needs should also be addressed. (See section 6.1.4, *Searching for Solutions*, on page 21, for an outline of the issues which should be considered in developing strategies to strengthen the family and meet the child's needs.)

At the end of the meeting the facilitator must summarise the plan, to check that the participants understand it and agree with it.

4. ***The participants must be given a written copy of the agreed plan.*** A Cook Islands translation of the agreement must be available for family members.

#### **6.1.7 Following up the Family Meeting or FGC**

Cook Islands families generally respect and comply with formal processes such as family meetings and FGCs<sup>8</sup>. However, if the meeting did not fully include family members in the decision-making process (for instance, they may not have felt confident about expressing their own views in this forum), then families may well agree to plans and decisions that they do not fully understand or are not fully committed to. For this reason, it is preferable that a Cook Islands worker follow up with significant family members to ensure that they comprehend and are committed to the plans they agreed to at the meeting. The recommended process is:

1. ***Revisit the parents or caregivers of the children and other significant family members to check and clarify their understanding of the outcome of the meeting.*** Provide them with a Cook Islands translation of the plan if required. Discuss any issues or difficulties they may have with the plan. Help set tasks and timeframes if this helps the family to meet the requirements of the plan. See the previous sections for information about the process to use when working with the family. Advice from a Cook Islands consultant may be of assistance.
2. ***After this follow-up visit, send the family a copy of the action plan that you have agreed upon.*** This action plan should also include the role of the social worker and any further contact planned with him or her.
3. ***Ensure that significant family members are fully informed and advised of the purpose, proceedings and outcome of any court action.*** (See previous sections for information about the process to use when working with the family. A Cook Islands consultant may assist with advice.)

#### **6.1.8 Contingency Plans and Reviews**

See the section *Family Meetings or FGCs*, page 23. Family members should be included in any review process via a further family meeting or FGC. The focus of these plans and reviews should always be the ultimate goals of supporting and preparing Cook Islands families and communities to assume responsibility for the care, protection and control of their children.

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<sup>8</sup> See footnote 5, page 23.

## 7 SKILLS

From a Cook Islands perspective, there are a number of skills that a social worker should possess in order to work effectively with Cook Islands families. The following section outlines these skills and also identifies their relevance to this model.

### 7.1 Cook Islands Language/s

Proficiency in the client family's Cook Islands dialect is a prerequisite for developing an effective working relationship with them. A person with these skills should be involved in all interviews and meetings with adult family members. See section 4.5, *Cook Islands Language*, and section 6, *Practice*, on pages 6 and 14, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

### 7.2 Cook Islands Cultural Skills

A social worker should be able to operate effectively within the client family's cultural environment. Knowledge of and skill in using Cook Islands protocols, networks and other cultural practices are therefore required. If the social worker does not have these skills, then expertise and advice should be sought from a suitable cultural consultant (from the client family's *enua anauanga*). See section 4, *Cook Islands Knowledge*, section 5, *Protocols*, and section 6, *Practice*, on pages 7, 12 and 14, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

### 7.3 Negotiation Skills

The working relationship between a social worker and the client family should be a two-way process. The social worker must therefore be able to negotiate with the family and community members so that common ground is reached. To reach this common ground, the social worker must know his or bottom line from the outset, but be prepared to debate issues and listen to family members so that the mana of the family is supported and barriers are minimised. The process may be time-consuming, but if family members feel that they are being heard and are given time to consider a different viewpoint or options, then the outcome is more likely to be positive for both parties. This dialogue is usually carried out in Cook Islands dialect. See section 6.1.4, *Searching for Solutions*, and section 6.1.6, *Family Meetings or FGCs*, on pages 21 and 23, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

### 7.4 Mediation and Conflict Resolution

An ability to work through any issues of conflict with family members is essential to establishing a joint working relationship with them. Using the appropriate Cook Islands terminology to describe concerns in the client family's Cook Islands dialect, knowing and using correct protocols and an appropriate demeanour, and involving a respected member of the family's community are useful means of managing conflict. A common process used

in Cook Islands conflict resolution is to listen to the point of view expressed by the family member and acknowledge it, but also to try and debate the issues with that person until a common agreement is reached. This process takes as much time as is required to resolve the issue.

See section 5, *Protocols*, section 6.1.1, *Preparation Before Visit*, section 6.1.2, *Introduction and Explanation of Visit*, and section 6.1.6, *Family Meetings or FGCs*, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

## 7.5 Facilitation Skills

Group and family decision-making processes are commonly-used mechanisms within Cook Islands society. The facilitator's credibility and knowledge of Cook Islands language and culture are important to the successful outcome of interviews and meetings with Cook Islands families and community members. A facilitator must be able to:

- acknowledge and engage elders and other adult family members in meetings
- manage conflict and guide the process so that Cook Islands participants are empowered to make decisions and plans for their children.

See section 4.9, *Family Decision-making*, section 5.2, *Family Meetings*, section 6.1.2, *Introduction and Explanation of Visit*, and section 6.1.6, *Family Meetings or FGCs*, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

## 7.6 Analytical Skills

A social worker must be able to:

- identify and address Cook Islands issues and factors pertinent to the investigation process
- interpret findings of the investigation so that family members are provided with quality information about the assessed concerns and options
- the assessment and options should be realistic from a Cook Islands perspective.

See section 4, *Guiding Principles*, especially subsection 4.7, *Holistic Approach to Assessment*, and subsection 4.10, *Solutions*, on pages 7 and 11, and section 6, *Practice*, on page 14, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

## 7.7 Conceptual Skills

A social worker must be able to recognise and integrate important Cook Islands principles and values into work with Cook Islands clients.

See section 4, *Guiding Principles*, section 6.1.4, *Searching for Solutions*, and section 6.1.6, *Family Meetings or FGCs*, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

## 7.8 Communication Skills

A social worker requires a number of skills to be successful in developing a co-operative working relationship with Cook Islands families and communities. As well as being proficient in Cook Islands language/s, he or she must be able to provide quality information and be able to read and respond to verbal and non-verbal communication from Cook Islands people. Summarising and checking out a family's understanding of issues and decisions at the end of interviews, consultations and meetings is an effective strategy for reviewing the communication process. Successful communication with a Cook Islands child often depends on how acceptable this contact is to the adult family members (parents normally speak for the child). Parents or other suitable family members should give permission for a child to be interviewed. If the child is aware of the family's endorsement, he or she will be more comfortable about speaking in the interview. This approach should make the communication process more effective with both parents and children.

See section 4.5, *Cook Islands language*, section 5, *Protocols*, and section 6, *Practice*, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

## 7.9 Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are a combination of skills and behaviour which assist a social worker to break down barriers with Cook Islands family and community members. Behaviour which is respectful and professional, coupled with good communication, negotiation and facilitation skills (as outlined in the whole section) maximises the social worker's ability to form an effective relationship with Cook Islands clients.

See section 6.1.2, *Introduction and Explanation of Visit*, section 6.1.3, *Exploration of Problems*, and section 6.1.4, *Searching for Solutions*, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

## 7.10 Cross-cultural Skills

A social worker is required to work within at least two different cultural environments during the social work process - the Cook Islands culture of the client family and the *papa'a* culture of agencies and CYPFS. The social worker must therefore have a good understanding of his or her own value base and abilities (including weaknesses) in working within the other culture. With this personal insight, he or she is better equipped to recognise the differences of the other culture, and the skills or expertise required to address these differences.

See section 4.1, *Personal Philosophy*, section 4.6, *Cook Islands Knowledge*, section 5, *Protocols*, and section 6, *Practice*, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

## 7.11 Networking Skills

A social worker must be able to identify, access and utilise Cook Islands networks during the social work process. A Cook Islands child belongs to an extensive network - links with family, village, tribe and island are the basis of a child's support and development.

See section 4.3, *Child's Cook Islands Links*, section 6.1.1, *Preparation Before Visit*, section 6.1.3, *Exploration of Problems*, section 6.1.4, *Searching for Solutions*, and section 6.1.5, *Preparation for Family Meeting or FGCs*, for more information about knowledge and use of skills.

## APPENDIX A

### DEFINITIONS

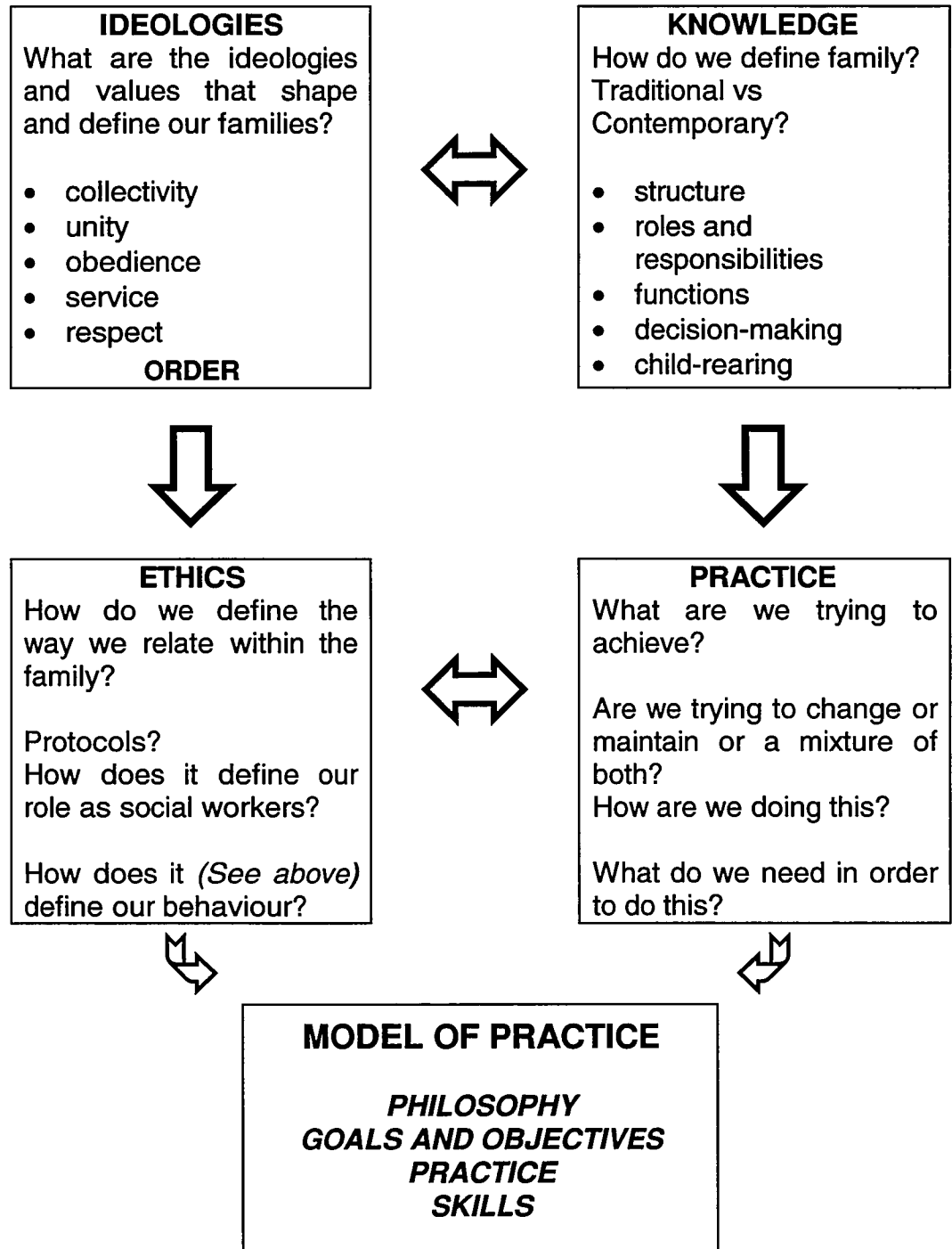
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- Child, Children** The terms *child* and *children*, in reference to this model, covers the age range from 0 to 17 years - that is, covers the definition of children and young persons as stated in the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act.
- Family, Families**  
**Ngutuare tangata**  
**Kopu tangata** Family is defined in the wider sense. It includes the nuclear family (*ngutuare tangata*) of parents (or alternative family caregivers) and their children, as well as the extended family (*kopu tangata*). In most Cook Island families in New Zealand, parents are responsible for decision-making in relation to their children. However, extended family members (especially elders and more senior family members) are also influential in supporting, advising and monitoring these decisions.
- Vaka tangata** A tribal system exists in the Cook Islands. The *vaka tangata* (tribe) consists of a collection of *kopu tangata* from a particular area (these families are connected through a common ancestor). For example, in Rarotonga there are three *vaka tangata*: Takitumu, Te Au o Tonga, and Puaikura.  
In some islands the hierarchical structure of *ariki*, *mataiapo*, *rangatira* is still influential in the *vaka tangata*.
- Enua Anauanga (the child or family's island of origin)** The Cook Islands consists of 15 islands which are divided into the Northern (Pae Tokerau) and Southern (Pae Tonga) groups. Islands in Pae Tokerau are: Suwarrow, Palmerston, Nassau, Pukapuka, Rakahanga, Manahiki and Penrhyn (also known as Tongareva). Islands in Pae Tonga are: Rarotonga (which is considered as the main island in the Cook Islands), Mangaia, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mauke, Mitiaro, Manuae, and Takutea. Although there are many similarities between customs and protocols used in these islands, it should be noted that there are also significant differences in some areas. This reinforces the need, when dealing with any family, to have available the appropriate cultural expertise from their particular island.
- Language and dialects** Eight different dialects are used within the Cook Islands. Different dialects are in use in Rarotonga, Mangaia, Aitutaki, Penrhyn and Palmerston. A common dialect is used in Atiu, Mauke and Mitiaro, another dialect in Manihiki and Rakahanga, and a shared dialect in Nassau and Pukapuka. Rarotongan is considered to be the main dialect - most Cook Island families will understand it. However, the various dialects are different. In most cases, Cook Island families are more comfortable using their own particular dialect.

## APPENDIX B

### DEVELOPING A SOCIAL WORK MODEL FOR WORKING WITH PACIFIC ISLAND FAMILIES



Source: Kuresa Tiimalu-Faleseuga

## APPENDIX C

### COOK ISLANDS IDEOLOGIES

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Cook Islands society has, at its foundation, a set of ideologies and values which permeates all aspects of its functioning and being. The following is a summary of the key concepts on which this Cook Islands Model of Social Work Practice has been based.

#### Kinship and Family Ties

- “Blood is thicker than water” - the obligations and loyalty expected of family members.
- Everyone is born belonging to a family. This sense of identity and belonging remains throughout their lifetime. It is an individual’s choice whether or not he or she puts this into practice.
- The definition of family includes extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so on). The nuclear family is *ngutuare tangata*, the extended family is *kopu tangata*, and the tribe is *vaka tangata*.
- Adoptions by aunts, uncles and extended family are commonplace.

#### Collectivity

- Individuals are seen as part of a collective. There is a strong sense of belonging to a family, village, island, church, and community. If any individual is not personally known to others, his/her links with parents, grandparents, and so on, is used to identify where he/she ‘belongs’.
- Individuals have definite roles in contributing to the functioning of the family or village.
- It is recognised that individuals can make things happen as part of a group.
- Older (female) children help with the care of younger children; parents share roles as providers and decision-makers for their family; families contribute to the collection and preparation of food in village celebrations.

#### Unity

- Family meetings are often used to reach decisions, especially for events such as marriages, deaths, and celebrations.
- *Ariki* and *mataiapo* are involved in collective decision making when the issue/s affect number of families (for example, land and investiture).

#### Obedience

- Traditionally, children are expected to listen to their parents. Now there is more acceptance of children’s right to be heard.

- Children are given a degree of independence and responsibility at an early age, by doing chores, picking up rubbish, cleaning the plantation, and so on.
- Families are also expected to obey various social, community and church controls (for example, family control over land, the importance of family decision-making in terms of land and occupation rights).

## Service

- A mutually dependent relationship exists between families, *ariki* and *mataiapo*, church, village and other groups. They each have a responsibility to serve as well as to be served. For example, families will contribute food and money to the church while also expecting that the church will provide them with spiritual guidance, instruction and support.
- The *mataiapo* holds a responsible position in the community but is also expected to carry out certain duties for the *ariki*, such as caring for pigs for special occasions.

## Respect

- The concept of respect is important to the maintenance of the social structure.
- Respect is shown for those in more senior positions, such as parents, elders, *ariki* and *mataiapo*, ministers, healers.
- Respect is shown for achievers, those in jobs or positions where they are considered to have social status, such as police, lawyers, doctors and other professional people.

## Order

- Cook Islands society has a structure in which everyone has a set place and responsibility.
- Various roles and structures (*ariki*, *mataiapo*, *rangatira*; *vaka*, *oire*, *tapere*) are required to maintain the overall functioning.
- Taboos are used within and outside families to maintain order.
- The head of the family (usually father, sometimes mother) is responsible for protecting the family.
- Brothers (and male cousins) protect sisters.

## Church, Christianity, Spirituality

- The church is a major influence. Most families have some link with this institution. It is a part of daily life and social functioning.
- Some spiritual beliefs which existed prior to Christianity are still incorporated into the Cook Islands way of life, alongside Christian beliefs.
- People contribute to the church according to their own abilities (this can be by food and money).

## **Ties to the Land**

- Families are entitled to land according to their identified family ties and Cook Islands bloodline.
- Those adopted from outside the family do not have automatic rights to occupy land that belongs to their adoptive family.

## **Reciprocity**

- There is mutual expectation that what is given by one party will also be received by another. This act is also seen as an 'insurance policy', as the gift will be returned later in a similar **form**. For example, extended family and community members contribute to funeral costs and these gifts are accepted and acknowledged by bereaved family; guests visiting homes will be offered food and drink and they are expected to accept this hospitality by consuming these refreshments during the visit.

## **Cook Islands Language and Dialects**

- These are a form of identification (showing whereabouts in the Cook Islands the speaker comes from), as well as a common medium for communication within communities.

## APPENDIX D

### KNOWLEDGE

Cook Islands culture, as with every other dynamic entity, has changed and adapted over time. In the following table we have made comparisons between the more traditional and the more contemporary practices of Cook Islands families in New Zealand.

<i>TRADITIONAL FAMILY</i>	<i>CONTEMPORARY FAMILY</i>
Collection of related families living together.	Smaller family units living together, but usually in close proximity to wider family. (It is more likely for parents and children to live together as a family unit.)
Clear gender roles. Women undertook domestic duties, while males provided food (fishing, planting, working). Older female children helped with the care of younger ones (cousins included).	Men's and women's roles have expanded. Women now work in paid employment as well as care for children. Men are assuming more responsibility for child-rearing and domestic chores. Older children are still expected to help care for younger ones (when both parents work, this responsibility may have increased).
Grandparents played a major role in determining and monitoring the family's well-being. The other adult family members had designated responsibilities within family unit. (For example, the female members may have taken it in turn to care for all the children.) The grandparents were the holders of knowledge and wisdom (including genealogy).	Grandparents are a major source of advice and support. If the family becomes separated from the grandparents or other supportive relatives, the church or other Cook Islands community groups may be an alternative source of support and advice.
The grandfather made decisions for the family until his son or daughter assumed this responsibility.	Parents now take on decision-making for their own children.
Other decision making: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the wider family was involved, the <i>mataiapo</i> was sometimes involved in decision-making.</li> <li>• Family meetings were used.</li> </ul>	Same as for traditional families.

**TRADITIONAL FAMILY**

The eldest male in a family had seniority, which was then passed on to his children (for instance, the entitlement to the title of *mataiapo*). The line of the first born was maintained.

Women had a 'speaking voice', and it was common to have women as *mataiapo* and *ariki*.

Child rearing :

- Women expected to have children.
- Women were responsible for raising the children (men contributed to some of the teaching of boys).
- Older female children assumed some responsibility for the care of younger children (including cousins).
- Physical and verbal discipline was used, and was shared by men and women.
- Sex was a taboo subject, not openly discussed.

**CONTEMPORARY FAMILY**

Same as for traditional families.

Child rearing:

Similar to the traditional pattern, but men now contribute more.

## APPENDIX E

### ETHICS

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The following is an outline of the ethical considerations on which this Cook Island Model of Social work Practice has been based.

- The safety and well-being of the child is paramount. The child has a right to belong to a family where he/she is safe and where his/her basic needs (such as shelter, nutrition, and health) are met.
- The place of children within their family (inclusive of extended family) should be supported *unless* the safety or well-being of that child is threatened.
- Families should be treated with respect, honesty and confidentiality. Parents and other senior family members should be acknowledged in their roles as leaders or heads of the family.
- The social work process should recognise and incorporate Cook Islands language skills and cultural knowledge so that:
  1. an in-depth assessment of the child's circumstances, safety and well-being is obtained
  2. involvement of family is maximised
  3. intervention is relevant to the needs of the child and the family.
- Families should be involved in the decision-making and plans for the care of their children. The child's relationships should be maintained and strengthened wherever possible.
- Families should receive the support and intervention from other family members, agencies, church and community groups that is relevant to their social and cultural needs.
- Children should receive the support and intervention that is relevant to their care and protection needs as well as to their social and cultural needs.

## APPENDIX F

### PRACTICE OUTLINE

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The *Cook Islands Model of Social Work Practice* was generated from the following practice outline.

***What are we trying to achieve?***

- To ensure the safety and well-being of the child or young person
- To support and enhance the integrity of the family, wherever possible.

***What are we trying to change or maintain?***

Our intention is to affirm basic values, but also to play an educative role in modifying some of the accepted behaviours, such as:

- Attitude to physical discipline and abuse
- Attitude to sexual abuse
- Attitude to obedience for children (here there is a conflict in generational values between children born here and parents in the Cook Islands)
- Attitude to collectivity and kinship may be compromised in focus on the individual needs of the child
- Attitude to child rearing (older children may be given unrealistic responsibilities in the home, especially if both parents are working).

***How are we doing this?***

- By educating and informing parents of other options as part of our casework
- By involving the family (inclusive of extended) in decision-making
- By consulting with wider family, church, and similar groups
- By engaging parents and families in the support, education and counselling processes
- By engaging the wider family in the support and monitoring mechanisms.

***What do we need to do this?***

- The knowledge of particular island, village and family links, and appropriate protocol and cultural knowledge
- Cook Island language skills
- Social work skills and knowledge (analytical, conceptual, facilitation skills)
- The ability to combine social work skills and Cook Islands knowledge to engage a client family and break down barriers
- The use of humility and respect, without losing the 'message' and without losing the authority of position and purpose.

## APPENDIX G

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