

Q&As – Family violence work programme

What is the Family Violence work programme?

The family violence work programme encompasses all the work undertaken by the Ministerial Group on Family and Sexual Violence.

It brings together the two separate work streams of Achieving Intergenerational Change (MSD) and the Stronger Response to Family Violence (Justice) work programmes.

Over the next few months, the Government will be looking at all parts of the system to identify what we are doing well, and where improvements can be made.

The aim of the new work, together with the broader cross-government work programme, is to achieve an integrated system for preventing and responding to family and sexual violence in order to provide better results for victims.

Who is involved in the Ministerial Group on Family and Sexual Violence?

The Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence is co-chaired by the Minister of Justice and Minister for Social Development. It was established in November 2014.

The other Ministers in the group are the Ministers of Health, Education, Police, and Corrections, ACC, Pacific Peoples, Ethnic Communities, Senior Citizens, Disability Issues, Women, Māori Development, and Whānau Ora; Associate Ministers of Social Development and Justice.

The agencies are also involved, with the work programme being driven by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Development.

The Ministerial Group is focused on three main aims: stopping family violence and sexual violence from happening in the first place; reducing the harm they cause; and breaking the cycle of re-victimisation and re-offending.

What happens next?

Agencies will work with NGOs and will develop advice, an investment strategy and an action plan, with the first report due to be provided to Cabinet by December 2015.

Why is this work important?

Overall crime in New Zealand is at a 35-year low. However, violent crime is decreasing at a slower rate – and we know half of all homicides relate to family violence where victims are killed by a family member or someone they had been in a relationship with.

In New Zealand, one notification for family violence is made to Police every five minutes and it is estimated that as much as 90 per cent of family violence goes unreported.

We want to improve the way we address these issues so that people can live full and productive lives, free from violence.

What is family and sexual violence?

Family violence is physical, sexual or psychological abuse against any person by someone with whom they have a close and personal relationship. Psychological abuse includes economic and financial abuse, threats of violence, property damage and causing children to witness violence.

Family violence includes intimate partner violence; elder abuse and neglect; abuse of a family member with disabilities; and child abuse and neglect.

Part of the work programme includes a common definition, data collection, and measurement.

Sexual violence affects people of every age and gender and can range from coercion and intimidation to physical offences such as indecent assault and rape.

What is the stocktake and what does it show?

The stocktake was commissioned by the Ministerial Group on Family and Sexual Violence.

It found the Government spends an estimated \$1.4 billion per year addressing family and sexual violence, with most of that money being spent on core services that deal with the aftermath of family and sexual violence incidents. For example, Police callouts, injury treatment and holding offenders to account. – Only a small proportion is spent on specialist services, prevention and early intervention.

Data shows 41 per cent of police response time is spent on domestic violence.

The analysis also shows the current family violence and sexual violence response system is fragmented.

Multiple agencies are delivering a wide range of services and interventions. This may lead to unnecessary duplication, gaps and inconsistencies in the type and quality of help that's available to people.

This is what the work programme will seek to address.

How does the new Ministerial Group Work Programme relate to the family violence initiatives announced last year?

The new work programme builds on the initiatives announced by Prime Minister John Key in July 2014 which includes:

reviewing the Domestic Violence Act 1995 to ensure it keeps victims safe and holds offenders to account

- trialling mobile safety alarms for victims, so they can notify Police of an emergency, and their location

- establishing a Chief Victims Advisor to the Minister of Justice to advise on the needs and views of victims of crime, including domestic violence victims
- testing an intensive case management approach to improve the safety of domestic violence victims at high risk of serious harm or death
- establishing a nationwide home safety service to help victims who want to leave a violent relationship. The service will offer practical support such as safety planning, strengthening doors and windows and installing alarms.

The work on family violence and sexual violence also aligns with a range of work the Government has undertaken to protect the most vulnerable New Zealanders, such as the Children's Action Plan and the Gangs Action Plan.

What progress has been made on existing family violence and sexual violence initiatives?

Stronger Response to Family Violence – Significant progress has been made on the suite of initiatives announced in July 2014. The National Home Safety Service began on 1 July 2015 to help up to 400 victims of family violence and 600 children remain safer in their own homes. Recruitment for the role of a Chief Victims Advisor is underway, with an appointment to be announced later this year. The Justice Minister of Justice will soon release a discussion paper reviewing family violence legislation.

Operational Multi-agency Response System – In April 2015, Waikato District commenced a demonstration of a new multi-agency response process called Family Safe Network. It consists of a daily triage of family violence incidents from the previous 24 hours involving partner agencies – Police CYFs, Corrections, and Women's Refuge (Te Whakaruruhau).

Internal Police Family Violence Change Programme – Police has begun work to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its response, investigation and resolution of family violence. This work is also intended to reduce the harm caused by family violence.

Child Protection Offender Register – The Child Protection Offender Register and Risk Management Framework Bill is scheduled to be introduced in Parliament in 2015.

The Electronic Monitoring of Offenders Legislation Bill – This was introduced on 12 May 2015 and began its first reading on 2 June 2015. The Bill removes legislative barriers to the electronic monitoring of offenders released with conditions from a prison sentence of up to two years, and offenders serving a sentence of intensive supervision.

Expert Panel on Modernising Child, Youth and Family – This aims to develop a new operating model which sets out the structure, systems and resources needed to help improve outcomes for children and young people. It will provide advice to Government on ways in which investments can be used to improve Child, Youth and Family's performance.

Gangs Action Plan - This aims to encourage pro-social behavioural change in both gang members and their wider families. The Start at Home component of this work targets children of prisoners, partners of gang members and youth. It seeks to provide support and encourage positive relationships within gang families, with a view to reducing harm such as family violence and sexual violence.

“Wāhine Māori, Wāhine Ora, Wāhine Kaha: Preventing violence against Māori women” – The Ministry for Women released this report on what keeps Māori women safe from ever becoming victims of violence. It followed up with hui around New Zealand to engage Māori women and their whānau on the findings of the report.

‘Are you that someone?’ campaign – The Ministry of Social Development has run a social media campaign to encourage young people to identify the signs that someone may be at risk of sexual violence, and find ways to safely step in early.

Sexual violence sector funding – Funding of \$10.4 million over two years was made available through Budget 2014 to stabilise specialist sexual violence social services, including crisis services, community-based harmful sexual behaviour treatment services, and services for male survivors of sexual abuse.

ACC’s Integrated Services for Sensitive Claims – includes holistic support for people who’ve experienced sexual abuse or assault, such as one-to-one therapy, family and whānau sessions, social work and coordination with other agencies to obtain assistance that can help recovery, all of which can be tailored to meet the client’s individual needs.

Social Services Committee Inquiry into the funding of specialist sexual violence social services – A report summarising advice and information received by the Committee was provided in May 2015. The Committee will prepare a final report to the house over the next two to three months.

Health relationships school-based initiatives such as:

- Mates & Dates - The Accident Compensation Corporation (with support from the Ministry of Education) has piloted and evaluated this programme, with results being used to inform further development of secondary schools-based initiatives.
- Loves Me Not – A one-day healthy relationship workshop for year 12 secondary school students.
- Sexuality Education – The Ministry of Education has released an updated guide for principals, boards of trustees and teachers on teaching sexuality education.

Does the new work programme address sexual violence?

Yes, a sexual violence work programme is also being progressed as part of the Ministerial Group Work Programme. This acknowledges that family violence and sexual violence share some commonalities. However, they also have significant differences. We have made alignments where it is appropriate and have maintained separate work programmes where it is not.

The cross-agency sexual violence work programme being advanced as part of the Ministerial Group Work Programme has a focus on:

- developing a policy framework for responding to sexual violence
- improving our approach for service purchasing and planning
- building on current work to develop a sexual violence prevention strategy and action plan
- improving the infrastructure of the sexual violence sector
- developing a sexual violence strategy and action plan focused on youth (led by ACC and Youth Minister Nikki Kaye).

How will the non-government sector have a say in this?

The Government will seek strategic input from key sector groups by discussing the overall approach, including the Ministerial Group Work Programme, with key stakeholders including the Māori Reference Group and the Pacific Advisory Group.

We will also seek input from non-government sector individuals and groups who have technical and service level expertise in specific work areas. We will communicate regularly with stakeholders about the Ministerial Group Work Programme.

The non-government sector has an essential role in work to address family violence and sexual violence. Reducing family violence and sexual violence will require a sustained and co-ordinated effort from government, non-government and community sectors.

How does this affect the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families?

The Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families was set-up in 2005 and was focussed on ensuring that work across Government on family violence was joined up. This is now the focus of the Ministerial Group on Family and Sexual Violence, which will build on the work undertaken by the Taskforce.

While the Taskforce does include some NGO representation, the majority of members were from the public service.

Late last year, the Chairman of the Taskforce wrote to the Minister of Social Development recommending that with the establishment of the Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence, the Taskforce has had its day.

The Government is absolutely committed to working with the NGO sector and will ensure they are fully involved as we develop a whole-of-government strategy to address family violence. The Māori and Pacific Reference Groups will continue to ensure that both Māori and Pacific views are fed into this work.