



MINISTRY OF  
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# **Evaluation of the Family Violence Interagency Response System (FVIARS)**

## **Summary of Findings**

**Centre for Social Research and Evaluation  
Te Pokapū Rangahau Arotake Hapori**

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# Evaluation of the Family Violence Interagency Response System (FVIARS)

## Summary of findings

### Introduction

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The Family Violence Interagency Response System (FVIARS) is an interagency initiative designed to more effectively manage cases of family violence<sup>1</sup> reported to the Police. This *Summary of Findings* is based on the *Evaluation of the Family Violence Interagency Response System (FVIARS) Final Report*, which is available on request from the Ministry of Social Development.

A key objective of FVIARS is to enable collaborative, co-ordinated interagency responses to family violence. The model provides guidelines for each of the agencies around the initial response, post event assessment, risk response planning, co-ordinated cross-sector support for victim empowerment, child safety, and offender management and accountability.

Key elements of the model are regular interagency meetings to assess risk in reported cases of family violence, to plan responses and to monitor cases.

The FVIARS model was introduced nationally in December 2006 and operates throughout New Zealand. The three core agencies involved in the development and national roll out of FVIARS were: Child, Youth and Family (CYF), New Zealand Police and the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR). Where a Women's Refuge is not available, other community agencies such as Victim Support provide support for victims. FVIARS case management teams may also include representatives from other government and community agencies.

The evaluation of FVIARS examined the development, implementation and progress towards outcomes of FVIARS at four case study sites: Takapuna, Manurewa, Kaikohe and Dunedin. The main evaluation objectives were to understand the short-term and long-term impact of FVIARS, identify site-specific variations, and report on issues of practical value to its implementation. The evaluation period overall was from the inception of FVIARS in December 2006 until June 2009.

The evaluation found that FVIARS improved relationships between agencies and allowed for local adaptability to local conditions, efficient use of agency resources and a more accurate picture of individual cases and the possible risks of further violence. There were indications of positive outcomes for adult and child victims, for offenders and for the management of notifications. However, the evaluation also identified the need for developing a result-based database to test these outcomes, an interagency national-level monitoring and evaluation framework, success indicators across agencies, and a common risk assessment framework.

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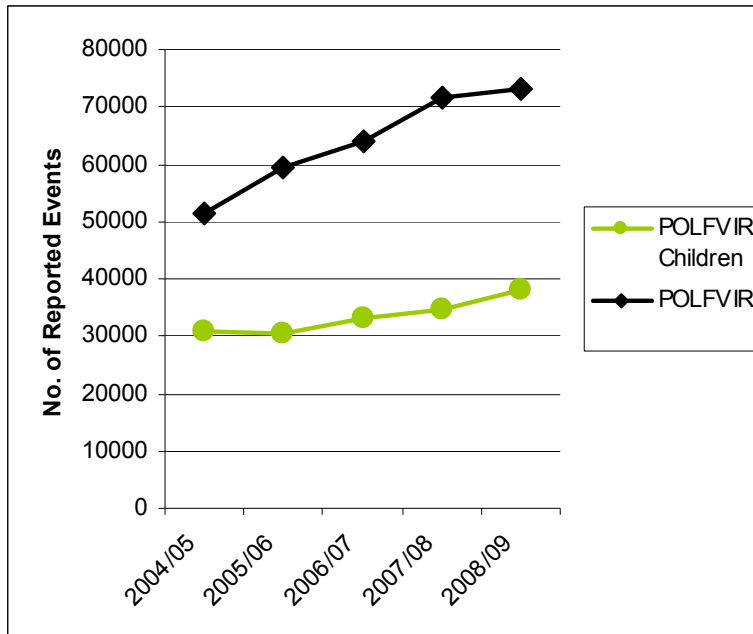
<sup>1</sup> 'Family violence' is defined in the Domestic Violence Act 1995 as including physical, sexual and/or psychological abuse and the Act covers people in many different types of domestic relationships. Psychological or emotional abuse includes threats, intimidation, harassment or damage to property. In addition, psychological abuse is committed against a child if that child witnesses the abuse of a person with whom the child has a domestic relationship. A single act of violence or a number of acts that form part of a pattern can be regarded as domestic violence.

## Family violence events reported to Police

Police Family Violence Investigation Report (POLFVIR) events have increased in the last five years by 42% from 51,516 events recorded in 2004/2005 to 73,240 events recorded in 2008/2009.

The increase can be attributed to a number of factors including a heightened awareness in the community about family violence, a growing intolerance of family violence due to high profile media cases and social marketing campaigns such as the Campaign for Action Against Family Violence (the Its not OK campaign).<sup>2</sup>

### Reported family violence events



Source: New Zealand Police POLFVIRs

The number of POLFVIRs with children present has also increased but to a lesser extent, from 30,909 recorded events in 2004/2005 to 38,183 recorded events in 2008/2009. This is a 23% increase. For the last four financial years approximately half of POLFVIR events have had children present. The impact of this reporting by Police should be taken into consideration when examining information on notifications to CYF and understanding changes in notification numbers.

A large proportion of family violence goes unreported to Police (according to research by Fanslow and Robinson, 2010) so any increase in POLFVIRs can be regarded positively. Such an increase would not reflect more family violence events but rather a greater willingness in the community to report instances of family violence.

<sup>2</sup> This increase in reported events is unlikely to reflect increased violence because so little of the violence is reported in the first instance. Janet L. Fanslow and Elizabeth M. Robinson of the University of Auckland, in their article "Help-Seeking Behaviors and Reasons for Help Seeking Reported by a Representative Sample of Women Victims of Intimate Partner Violence in New Zealand" in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, May 2010, 25(5):929-951, found that of the women in their sample who had experienced violence committed by their partners only one-quarter reported this to the police.

Repeat victimisation is an important indicator of the effectiveness of the FVIARS model. The FVIARS case management process focuses on preventing further family violence in established cases, rather than on preventing family violence taking place in the first instance.

However, there are several factors that make interpreting this data difficult. These factors include increases due to better recording practices by the Police, limited data for trend analysis and the possibility some repeat calls may signal a victim feels more confident about ringing the Police. Results should be treated cautiously and long-term analysis will be required to provide a clearer picture.

Police data from 2004/2005 to 2008/2009 shows:

- Repeat victimisation of more than once or twice a year increased in 2005/2006 and has remained fairly constant at just over 40% of events, rising to 41% in 2008/2009.
- Repeat offending and victimisation of three or more instances a year showed similar proportions and after increasing in 2005/2006 has also remained fairly constant at approximately 20% of events.

## **Strengths and benefits of FVIARS**

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A major strength of FVIARS has been the development of improved relationships between agencies. This had been enabled by regular face to face interagency meetings and by formal agreements (MOUs and confidentiality agreements) outlining information sharing protocols and expectations of agency involvement.

Many participants in the evaluation talked about the increased trust that had developed between agencies and the increased understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. This had helped to break down myths about the other agencies. The result has been increased interagency communication and collaboration, which is critical for facilitating the safety of victims (adults and children) and for the efficient use of agencies' resources.

The partnership of government and community agencies and the range of agencies involved provide opportunities for a holistic approach to family violence. The evaluation found when agencies are engaged and supported to implement a co-ordinated and collaborative approach this has real benefits for victim (adults and children) safety and for offender accountability.

However, there needs to be a more rigorous and consistent collection of data on the outcomes of high-risk cases the FVIARS teams collaborate on. This would provide better information for local sites and nationally on how the FVIARS process affects victims and offenders.

A major benefit of the FVIARS teams approach is that it provides a structured forum for agencies to regularly meet to share information, to assess risk, and to make case management decisions for follow up, referral and review.

The changes to the POLFVIR form itself have resulted in the provision of more information on which to base risk assessments and of answers to questions about past history that give a better indication of emerging patterns of abuse. This information, combined with information from agencies' records, provides a more comprehensive picture of what is happening in reported cases and what are the risks

of further violence. This enables decisions to be made on a much more informed basis about what actions agencies should take (eg decisions regarding notifications, informing prosecution charges and opposition to bail applications, referral options to support women and children).

The practice in most FVIARS teams was to agree on a lead agency for follow-up actions. This enabled a more efficient and appropriate response, avoiding duplications. The FVIARS process also leads to more accountability and transparency between agencies as members provide regular updates at successive meetings on the actions they have taken with cases.

Agencies have different measures and different ways of assessing risk due to their different operational focuses. The different perspectives on risk assessment were not generally seen in oppositional terms, particularly as team members learnt more about other agencies and understood and respected their different assessments. However, there were difficulties in one of the sites which highlighted the importance for the partner agencies to have an agreed and mutually-understood risk assessment process.

A major factor in making FVIARS work locally has been the commitment of team members and their ability as a team to reflect on their practices and processes, and to adapt them. Adaptations by teams include inviting new agencies into the team, adjusting meeting formats and procedures and introducing better recording systems. Teams were also able to develop more tailored approaches to cases by co-ordinating and collaborating on cases. This meant teams could extend the services they were able to refer families to by using the additional networks and resources of other agencies.

The FVIARS model intended sites would be able to develop their structures, systems and processes to meet and accommodate their site-specific needs. Over the two and half year timeframe of the evaluation, the management and structure of all the FVIARS sites had undergone change. This reflects the flexibility inherent in the FVIARS approach that enables sites to adapt processes to best suit their needs.

## **Progress towards outcomes**

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There were good case examples of how the FVIARS teams worked together to assess risk, to put in place safety measures and to refer families to appropriate services where available.

### **For victims (adults and children)**

A small sample of 11 victims<sup>3</sup> was interviewed. (Quantitative data is presented in the section below “For the management of notifications”.) They identified strong support from family, friends and non-government organisation (NGO) workers (particularly Women’s Refuge and Victim Support) as the main support they had in dealing with their experiences of family violence. Several women were unsupported and relied on their own limited resources. It was particularly difficult for migrants who did not have

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<sup>3</sup> There were limitations to getting a larger sample of victims and offenders to interview due to not wanting to compromise legal proceedings for those who were likely to be involved in court cases, which was the situation for many potential interviewees. A review of the national and international literature on victims’ and offenders’ perspectives and experiences showed similar findings to this evaluation.

family in New Zealand, who spoke English as their second language, and who had no specialist NGOs they could go to.

Several factors helped increase women's feelings of safety. For women who wanted no further contact with the offender these factors included knowing the offender was in prison, having safety plans in place, and having a family violence alarm installed for high-risk cases.

Children are negatively affected by witnessing family violence and are at a higher risk of being abused in these situations. With regard to the safety of children, adult victims generally reported good support for their children including the provision of safety measures (eg teaching them safety planning), counselling (group programmes or one on one), support by education institutions, and indirect support through their parents attending parenting programmes and counselling.

From the agencies' perspective, FVIARS has had an impact on victims in the following ways:

- Victim safety is enhanced by each agency sharing information about a family. This enhances their risk assessment and decision making about how best to support the family. It also helps agencies to identify high-risk families who can be provided with earlier intervention and quicker follow-up.
- Interagency decision making provides a co-ordinated response with fewer agency overlaps and duplicated services.
- The inclusion of NGOs on FVIARS teams has meant:
  - widened networks with more resources available allowing for earlier and more targeted interventions
  - increased knowledge of/involvement with family and/or child-based programmes which government agencies may not have been aware of before
  - a more community-based approach, especially for families at the lower end of the risk scale. This limits the need for statutory involvement and results in an increased chance of successful outcomes as families, generally, would rather work with NGOs than with statutory agencies.
- Increased face-to-face, joint visits by agencies (eg Police and Women's Refuge, CYF or Victim Support) improves dialogue and communication between victims and FVIARS members and leads to improved outcomes.
- More relevant and accurate information is provided to victims (and families) as FVIARS teams are more aware of the context of a family and the stresses they may be under. This can help the victims in their decision making and safety planning.

## **For offenders**

FVIARS agencies thought FVIARS has had an impact on their work with offender management and accountability in the following ways:

- Police have more time to focus on offenders, as other agencies take on the support of victims.
- Information sharing among agencies has resulted in:
  - Offenders not being able to play agencies off against each other as the agencies were working together and were more informed about an offender's circumstances. This contributed towards holding offenders accountable.
  - Valuable information being provided for Probation and Prosecutions to help their decision making, including for bail, home detention and pre-sentence reports.



- Agencies working with offenders having a more comprehensive picture of what was happening. Previously, agencies heard mainly the offender's side of the story.
- Some case study sites have agencies in the FVIARS teams that work with offenders in a therapeutic way to address their attitudes and behaviours. Their presence on FVIARS provides for a better collaboration with the Police and CYF.

A resolution resulting in a prosecution indicates a quality investigation. FVIARS teams can help by providing Police Prosecution with information to assist a prosecution. Information on an offender's risk and concerns about a victim's safety can also be useful for opposing bail applications. There have been no major changes to the prosecution rates pre and post FVIARS. Longer-term analysis is required to see if any trends emerge. FVIARS information is just one factor that may influence outcomes so a more robust data collection on the use of FVIARS information would also be required.

The resolution descriptions for two common types of family violence offences are Male assaults Female (MAF) and Breach of Protection Order (PO). The proportion of these offences that resulted in a prosecution for the years 2004/2005 to 2008/2009 is as follows:

- A high proportion of offences for MAF resulted in a prosecution and the prosecution rate has been maintained at over 85% for the five years.
- The proportion of Breach of Protection Order offences that resulted in a prosecution has increased over the period from 73% to 79%.

## **For the management of notifications**

A major driver of the FVIARS initiative was to develop a system to help CYF manage the increasing volumes of notifications to the agency resulting from Police family violence call outs.

The indications based on the available data from CYF and interviews with FVIARS team members at the evaluation sites are that the teams are successfully contributing towards managing Police Family Violence (PFV) notification volumes. The teams are putting forward more appropriate notifications based on interagency information sharing and risk assessment. This is evidenced in the national statistics which show the volumes of PFV notifications accepted for investigation (FAR) have stayed at a similar level over the last four years. An increase in positive findings after investigation and a decrease in nothing found (NTF) also indicates the Police are forwarding more appropriate notifications.

The FVIARS teams' interagency meetings provide team members with increased access to interagency information. This enables them to more easily assess whether a statutory response to a family violence event is required and what action is appropriate. FVIARS teams share information about what measures are already in place and whether they can facilitate other measures for victim and child safety, eg referrals to community agencies, installation of a family violence alarm.

When FVIARS was rolled out, the guidelines for this initiative requested CYF sites to record Police Family Violence Investigation Reports (POLFVIRs) with children present which did not require a statutory investigation. The intention of recording all reported events on CYF's database (CYRAS) was so the agency could monitor the risk to children. Subsequently-reported family violence indicates a pattern of family violence which heightens the risk to children. CYF is concerned about the resources

they use to record all POLFVIRs with children, and it questions whether they should be keeping this information.

This raises an important question about what is CYF's role in monitoring ambiguous risk to children exposed to family violence. It is important to resolve this issue, given the critical importance of interagency collaboration to decrease the risk of children falling through the gaps, as highlighted by the reports on the deaths of James Whakaruru and the Aplin sisters.

We suggest there needs to be a national interagency agreement to provide clarity about the responsibility for monitoring potential risk to children reported in POLFVIRs who are not considered in need of a statutory investigation.

To analyse any impact FVIARS teams have on managing the volumes of notifications, we have examined the number of PFV notifications accepted for investigation (Further Action Required – FAR) by CYF. This is the closest approximation to the number of notifications the FVIARS teams are recommending as notifications.

The total volumes of PFV notifications from 2006/2007 onwards include recordings of the POLFVIRs with children present not recommended for notification by the FVIARS teams. These are recorded in CYRAS as notifications No Further Actioned (NFAed) after entry. We have called these 'information only' notifications for analysis purposes, as they are not reports of concern/notifications as defined under section 15 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

## **National findings**

Nationally, the volumes of PFV notifications accepted for investigation (FAR) have not changed markedly in the last four financial years. This indicates the volumes are being managed at a certain level. The numbers of PFV notifications accepted for investigation were: 2005/2006 10,538; 2006/2007 10,604; 2007/2008 8,849; 2008/2009 11,798.

Positive findings of either abuse or behaviour have increased since the implementation of FVIARS from 47% (2005/2006) to 57% (2006/2007). In 2007/2008 positive findings increased to 61% of PFV notifications investigated and dropped slightly to 56% in 2008/2009. There has been a corresponding decrease in nothing found (NTF) findings.

PFV notifications have a higher proportion of positive findings compared with notifications from Other notifiers (eg health professionals, teachers etc). These findings provide a strong indication FVIARS teams are more comprehensively assessing risk and putting forward appropriate notifications.

Other contextual factors may be affecting these positive findings, including CYF's assessment practices. CYF suggests there has been a growing awareness among its staff about the impact of family violence on children and the need to record its presence. This may be contributing to increases in positive findings of PFV notifications.

## **Site findings for the management of notifications**

### **Manurewa**

The Manurewa site was chosen as an evaluation site due to the high volumes of POLFVIRs processed.

The statistical findings on PFV notifications accepted for investigation pre and post FVIARS show:

- pre FVIARS 2005/2006 (1,458 notifications) to first year post FVIARS 2006/2007 (1,319 notifications) = 9% decrease
- pre FVIARS 2005/2006 (1,458 notifications) to second year post FVIARS 2007/2008 (759 notifications) = 48% decrease.

The data shows the number of PFV notifications for investigation (FAR) decreased 48% from the year before FVIARS was implemented (2005/2006) to 2007/2008. As the Manurewa FVIARS team assessed the majority of PFV notifications put forward, this indicates they were largely contributing towards the reduction of PFV notifications for investigation.

POLFVIR events with children actually increased by 12% from 2006/2007 (1,771 notifications) to 2007/2008 (1,985 notifications). This means any decreases in notifications for investigation are not attributable to this factor.

Pre FVIARS (2005/2006), 33% of PFV notifications investigated had positive findings of abuse or behaviour. Post FVIARS the proportion of positive findings increased to 51% in 2006/2007 and 63% in 2007/2008.

The future analysis of Manurewa statistics should take into consideration the addition of more NGOs to the FVIARS team in late 2008. This meant more cases could be referred directly to these organisations, rather than making a notification. The attendance of the CYF's Differential Response representative at FVIARS meetings also helped to enable more direct referrals to other agencies, rather than making a notification.

### **Takapuna**

The Takapuna site was chosen to examine the innovative practice developed by the SAVES (Shore Anti Violence Essential) initiative that started in late 2004. Therefore the evaluation analysis considered the data from the pre SAVES/FVIARS timeframe (2003/2004).

The statistical findings on PFV notifications accepted for investigation pre- and post-SAVES/FVIARS show:

- The volumes of PFV notifications accepted for investigation (PFV FAR) have changed substantially over the time period. They increased five fold from 2003/2004 to 2006/2007 and then decreased by 82% from 2006/2007 to 2008/2009.
- There has been over a 20 percentage point increase in the proportion of positive findings over the eight-year period, from 39% in 2001/2002 to 61% in 2008/2009. In 2005/2006 over half of the notifications showed positive findings and they continued to increase to 65% of findings in 2007/2008 and 61% in 2008/2009. There has been a corresponding decrease in the proportion of no findings (NTFs).

Qualitative evidence from the FVIARS member agencies in Takapuna shows the decrease in the volume of PFV notifications accepted for investigation from 2006/2007 is due to the FVIARS team assessing POLFVIRs and referring to other agencies. This meant there was no need for a formal notification to CYF.

A CYF member said only if people were not engaging with services and there was a concern about children's safety would they consider this a notification for investigation.

### **Kaikohe**

Kaikohe was chosen as an evaluation site due to the challenges of working in a rural, geographically-spread environment.

The statistical findings on PFV notifications accepted for investigation pre and post FVIARS show:

- The number of PFV notifications accepted for further investigation before the introduction of FVIARS in the years 2001/2002 to 2005/2006 were very small. The numbers ranged from 16–25, with just 20 in 2006/2007 when FVIARS began. However, between 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 the number of notifications accepted rose to 132 (560% increase). The following year, 2008/2009, the number rose again to 326 (147% increase).
- The proportion of positive findings for PFV notifications investigated, decreased from 49% in 2007/2008 to 36% in 2008/2009. Due to the small numbers of PFV notifications investigated from 2001/2002 to 2006/2007, the analysis is limited. A longer time period is needed to see whether a clear trend will emerge.

The rise in the numbers of PFV notifications accepted for further investigation can be regarded positively. Before FVIARS, it appears very few children were being identified at risk by Police attending family violence events. Feedback from FVIARS agency members was that some of CYF's practices of 'minimal intervention' and 'early closure' of cases had resulted in multiple notifications within short timeframes. This may also have contributed to the increased number of PFV notifications.

### **Dunedin**

Dunedin was chosen as it had poor interagency relationships before FVIARS.<sup>4</sup>

The statistical findings on PFV notifications accepted for investigation pre and post FVIARS show:

- Pre FVIARS 2002/2001 to 2005/2006, numbers ranged from 2–21 notifications. Post FVIARS in 2006/2007, there was an 80% increase to 38 PFV notifications FAR. From 2006/2007 (38 notifications) to 2007/2008 (70) there was an 84% increase; and from 2007/2008 (70 notifications) to 2008/2009 (60) a 14% decrease in PFV notifications FAR.
- The proportion of positive findings for PFV notifications investigated increased from 48% in 2006/2007 to 57% in 2007/2008 and decreased slightly to 55% in 2008/2009. Due to the small numbers of PFV notifications investigated from 2001/2002 to 2005/2006 analysis is limited and a longer time period is needed to see whether a clear trend will emerge.

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<sup>4</sup> After the first year of operation the Dunedin team reported more positive relationships. Over the period of the evaluation, these positive relationships were found to have been sustained and developed into strong working relationships.

## **Issues and barriers to the implementation of FVIARS**

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All four sites identified service gaps in their communities and tried to manage these as much as possible through the extended networks they had in the interagency forums. Where services did not exist or service capacity and capability was limited, this presented a risk and an ongoing barrier to good outcomes for families. There were also concerns that access to some services could be overly compromised when access was based on raised thresholds for risk due to the limited capacity of services.

Some FVIARS team members reported gaining a better understanding of the dynamics of family violence through their participation in the interagency team. There appears to be variable levels of understanding from frontline staff and managers. A strong understanding of family violence is particularly important when working with victims and offenders and children, assessing risk, and identifying when there is a pattern of violence or sufficient grounds for concern for the safety of victims (adults and children).

Where the FVIARS teams focused on offender accountability (prosecutions), and to varying degrees on promoting behaviour change, the services available were limited. The resourcing of this area requires more attention, as offenders can go on to re-offend with other partners and families. Holding offenders accountable is an important step in promoting change but it requires following up with behaviour change interventions or programmes and services. In the case of gendered violence, it also requires a shift in society's cultural understanding of and attitudes toward violence.

The major issue from the FVIARS team members' perspective has been their capacity to participate in FVIARS. When agency representatives have not been able to prioritise the FVIARS meetings, this has resulted in non-attendance at meetings and a reduced ability to follow up on actions (either by themselves or by other members of their agency). This limits the effectiveness of interagency collaboration and creates tensions between some of the agencies. In particular there has been uncertainty about the level of CYF's commitment to FVIARS, and how the Differential Response system will interface with FVIARS.

The awareness and support of FVIARS within agencies by managers and frontline staff is also important. It enables agencies to contribute through their agency representatives and to take full advantage of the information sharing and potential for collaboration within the FVIARS teams.

## **Key elements of a successful response**

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While FVIARS has been implemented differently at each of the sites, many elements of good practice for responding to family violence events were evident across all the sites. These elements apply generally to operating this model.

### **For engaging with victims**

- The value of agencies sharing information and co-ordinating an agreed response or intervention strategy, with a lead agency taking the primary role in contacting victims. This ensures victims are not bombarded with multiple agency involvement but receive wrap-around services and co-ordinated, timely interventions.
- The importance of engaging adult victims in a way that elicits their trust. One way to do this is to provide joint agency visits to show families there is support for them, and their experiences are taken seriously.
- The necessity of agencies communicating with clients clearly, providing information about services and talking them through the next steps in their situation. This helps families with their decision making and safety plans. This includes ensuring non-English speakers or those for whom English is a second language receive appropriate information.
- Informing families that agencies are going to work together in the family's best interests and in a supportive way. This includes being clear about relevant agencies' roles and responsibilities with clients. Victims do not want to feel threatened or punished because agencies are working together. It might be necessary to allay victims' fears about services, particularly CYF's services, so victims are willing to come forward after a family violence incident, even if they know CYF may become involved.
- The importance of all agencies following through on agreed actions so families feel supported. This may include doing more than just providing the name and contact details of an agency, but helping families to arrange meetings or interviews.

### **For engaging with offenders**

- The FVIARS teams' risk assessment and case management can be strongly enhanced by including members who work with offenders, such as Community Probation and Psychological Services and NGO providers.
- Agencies working together to ensure the effective management of offenders who are made accountable for their actions.
- The provision of good support programmes to help rehabilitate offenders.

### **For interagency collaboration**

The importance of developing and maintaining trusting relationships as a foundation for the ongoing progress of FVIARS teams was considered vital for effective interagency collaboration.

Good practices identified across sites for interagency collaboration have been grouped under the following areas:

- leadership, management and structure of FVIARS
- effective communication
- roles and boundaries
- interagency meeting processes

- information sharing and risk assessment
- case management decisions
- cultural responsiveness
- collaborative and co-ordinated responses
- developing sector relationships
- learning and reflecting on practice.

### **Leadership, management and structure of FVIARS**

- Leadership demonstrated by agencies at national, regional and local levels. Mandate from national office to participate in FVIARS and resources to enable the operation of FVIARS, eg taking account of workloads and providing administrative and technological support. Ideally, resourcing would include time for FVIARS members to participate in training, presentations, planning days etc.
- Agencies prioritising family violence and taking ownership and responsibility for their engagement in FVIARS at strategic and operational levels.
- Value of formal agreements for facilitating the functioning of FVIARS, eg MOUs or agreements (at national, regional and operational levels), building common understanding, facilitating information sharing, identifying potential issues and managing risk. MOUs can also be used to clearly state roles, expectations and resources agencies are prepared to commit to the FVIARS process.
- A clearly defined and understood FVIARS structure that is able to provide regular POLFVIR assessments and to respond to victim (adults and children) safety and offender accountability. The provision of ongoing case management of high-risk cases through interagency monitoring, collaboration and co-ordination of agencies. As demonstrated by the case studies, the FVIARS structure is flexible and can be adapted to the local context. Some sites have a second-tier case management team with a broader range of agencies to provide longer-term support to high-risk families.
- Consideration of the appropriate composition of teams for meetings, eg for POLFVIR assessments and/or for managing high-risk cases, so those around the table have a clear role and purpose in being there, can add value, are committed, and have integrity.
- Manageable size of interagency teams to ensure effective decision making and the maintenance of trust. It was also found to be beneficial to consolidate relationships before adding new members to the team.
- Regular FVIARS team meetings to provide greater opportunities for information sharing and relationship building between team members and their agencies.
- Regular and consistent attendance by each agency's representative(s), ie the same person(s) attending each case management meeting to help with client follow-up, building relationships and trust across agencies, and bringing historic agency and client knowledge to the meeting.
- Tailoring meeting formats, eg agencies attend only those parts of the meeting where they have something to contribute. This is more efficient for agency representatives, and some agencies may not need to be privy to all the information shared at a meeting.
- Ensure succession planning is in place and positions are backfilled when people are on leave, and monitor the possible burnout of any FVIARS team member.

### **Effective communication**

- Importance of communication between FVIARS agencies at national and regional levels, particularly to note pending internal policy and operational changes that could have an impact on the processes of the FVIARS team.

- Good open communication, acceptance of others' opinions, the ability to receive feedback, the willingness of agencies to listen to each other.
- Clarity about information that needs to be shared so agencies are not privy to information they do not need to know.
- Consider the inclusion of a disputes resolution process in local MOUs to help provide a clear process to address any issues that arise. This includes identifying an independent agency/person as a mediator.

### **Roles and boundaries**

- A much more comprehensive approach to case management was achieved with the partnership of community and government agencies on the FVIARS teams.
- Ensure there is clarity around the roles of agencies and the people attending the meetings. Teams generally found regular meetings enhanced their understanding of partner agencies' roles and responsibilities.
- The teams stressed the importance of knowing, identifying, acknowledging and using each agency's expertise. This was considered a key factor in the successful implementation of an interagency approach.
- Having a specialist family violence agency such as Women's Refuge on the team provided other agencies with the opportunity to learn more about the dynamics of family violence.
- Likewise, having Police and CYF in the teams provided community agencies with more understanding about their roles and the statutory obligations they have.

### **Interagency meeting processes**

- Providing a summary of POLFVIRs to all FVIARS team members before case management meetings allows them to check their own agency's files and to come to the meetings prepared. Or, in the case of Manurewa where there is a high volume of POLFVIRs, Police and CYF are able to access their databases in the meeting room and check their files on the spot.
- The distribution of POLFVIRs to agencies in FVIARS teams who previously did not get them means these agencies have to consider confidentiality protocols to ensure information is kept secure and, when appropriate, destroyed.
- Having a good recording system to manage the team's information that all members can get access and contribute to, eg a spreadsheet with a concise record of cases, tasks and their status, allows for the ongoing monitoring and accountability of agencies. Ideally there should be dedicated resourcing to administer this and frequent updating to maintain its value.
- Confidentiality – 'keeping it in the room' – can be facilitated by confidentiality agreements and trust.
- Entry and exit criteria for high-risk cases to be case managed by the FVIARS team or a higher level case management group to be determined at a local level in response to volumes and local capacity. For example, Dunedin has established case acceptance and exit criteria for when their case management review list becomes too long.

### **Information sharing and risk assessment**

- Information sharing between agencies was extremely useful for getting a fuller picture of what was happening in a case and formed the basis for more informed risk assessment and decision making regarding interventions.
- Team members talked about a shared understanding of risk while recognising the different perspectives of risk based on their agencies' roles and responsibilities. Consensus about risk was enhanced when agencies had an understanding of



and a respect for each other's ability to assess risk. Tensions arose when there was a lack of understanding around the patterns of family violence, eg a POLFVIR event had to be assessed within the context of other events and other information from agencies. Agencies noted that tensions were not always negative as healthy discussions helped to build an understanding of other agencies' perspectives. The ability to challenge each other in a safe environment was also considered important for reaching robust decisions.

- The new POLFVIR form provided more information on which to base risk assessment. It was important that Police officers responding to calls for service filled out the POLFVIRs as fully as possible.
- Ongoing monitoring is important for assessing risk, as this can change very quickly in family violence cases.
- Factors that enabled good information sharing were respect, trust, good communication and working towards the same outcome.

### **Case management decisions**

- Information from a variety of agency perspectives provides the opportunity to manage cases in a more holistic way. Usually a case is allocated to an agency who takes a lead role in the case or ownership of it. This often includes an agency developing comprehensive case management plans and acting as an advocate for victims with other agencies. This can streamline agency involvement.
- The interagency forum provides transparency in decision making and in who is doing what. Collective decision making means everyone knows what is happening with a case.
- Reporting back on follow-up actions about a case at FVIARS meetings led to increased agency accountability for agreed actions.
- Effective engagement with victims can be facilitated by FVIARS team members providing other pathways to engage and by agencies advocating for each other to promote appropriate services for clients.
- FVIARS members provide a point of contact for their agencies for other FVIARS members. This facilitates access to the other agencies and often enhances responsiveness to cases in a timely way.

### **Cultural responsiveness**

- Wherever possible, provide victims and offenders with a choice of culturally-appropriate services.
- Ensure staff within mainstream organisations have the training and support to be culturally responsive, particularly given the lack of culturally-appropriate services. For example, the FVIARS team at Manurewa invited people working with the Muslim communities to talk to them about working with this community and family violence. This helped to build a relationship and understanding.
- The inclusion of community agencies helps to build broader networks and knowledge of services for diverse ethnic groups.
- Engage with iwi services at a national level and locally to build relationships and trust in the FVIARS process. Seek guidance about how to proceed from appropriate people. Also look at what services are available, their cultural capability and what is working for Māori.
- Engage with Pacific and other ethnic community leaders and organisations at national and local levels to build relationships and trust in the FVIARS process.
- Make better use of agencies' internal Pacific resources (or external such as MPIA or established Pacific providers working in other sectors, eg health or education).

This can provide information about appropriate service providers/community resources to work with Pacific victims and offenders.

- Establish and use cultural supervision (or a Māori or Pacific advisory group) to guide best practice in terms of cultural responsiveness (and to help with networking).
- Where service gaps exist, consider what may help to build Māori, Pacific and Asian provider capacity to deliver services to victims and offenders in their communities.
- Operate on the principal of providing a supportive transparent role, not a punitive role.

### **Collaborative and co-ordinated responses**

- Agencies present a coherent service to families and speak with 'one voice'.
- Implement a collaborative and co-ordinated response identified as the best approach for individual families. Co-ordinate the timing of visits to victims so they are not overwhelmed by agencies and identify the appropriate opportunities for conducting joint agency visits. This approach enhances engagement and service provision.
- Recognise that working with families to address family violence can take a long time and put the infrastructure in place to be able to provide it.
- FVIARS team basing decisions on priority needs and on which agency needs to be involved. This facilitates a better co-ordinated response and avoids duplicating work.
- Being able to refer to another agency if an agency is overcommitted.
- Sharing resources/contacts.
- Important to acknowledge any history or differences between agencies or the environment (eg policies) and be willing to move on and work together.
- Co-location can help agencies work together and can facilitate efficiencies in processes, relationship building and collaboration.

### **Developing sector relationships**

- Communication between FVIARS teams and community agencies is critical to building capacity/capability in the broader family violence sector to support FVIARS actions and to improve family violence outcomes.
- Identifying and attending community forums that raise the profile of family violence and/or the collaborative response to family violence. This includes informing other agencies about FVIARS and the role of this process.

### **Learning and reflecting on practice**

- Teams reflected on their practice and have had the flexibility to change and develop their processes.

### **Key learnings for the future development of FVIARS**

The evaluation identified a number of common issues across the sites, and key learnings for improving and enhancing FVIARS and for ensuring its sustainability. These key learnings are grouped under the following areas:

- leadership and management
- co-location
- resourcing and service development
- training
- reflective practice, monitoring and evaluation

- sharing good practice and innovation.

### **Leadership and management**

- National leadership demonstrating a collaborative approach by the three founding agencies was important for the establishment and roll out of FVIARS. We suggest demonstrating collaborative national leadership is still important for the sustainability and development of FVIARS and for modelling interagency collaboration at the highest level.
- National leadership sends clear messages about how FVIARS work should be prioritised within the key agencies and provides the mandate for effective participation.
- National consideration and review of core agencies to be involved in FVIARS with a view to:
  - clarifying the role and purpose of participation in FVIARS
  - considering national level MOUs to provide a mandate for participation in FVIARS
  - maintaining core members of the model while recognising local areas may invite other agencies and community organisations to be involved in FVIARS, taking account of other support services available in an area.
- National leadership is important for providing guidance on the development of policy and operational guidelines, disseminating good practice, and monitoring and evaluating long-term outcomes of FVIARS nationally.
- At the regional or local level, establishing a strategic group of senior managers from each FVIARS agency (and possibly others) to provide a strategic overview and to support the case management team. This should enable support such as working with other agencies to develop a clear understanding of how information is shared to ensure buy-in and support for FVIARS, demonstrating support for and endorsement of case management collaboration, and assisting/supporting the monitoring and review of case management practice.
- At the agency level, supporting staff participation in FVIARS teams and follow-up tasks with family violence cases related to the agency's work. Agencies to take into consideration succession planning of FVIARS representatives, including ensuring operational responsibilities are role-based and not person-based.
- Agencies communicate any pending changes in their agency's processes or policies that may have an impact on FVIARS. A 'no surprises' policy among the participating agencies would help to ensure the maintenance of trust and good interagency relations.

### **Co-location**

While co-location as practiced in Takapuna might not be an option in other contexts, it has proven to be a critical tool in the success of the Takapuna model. Co-location has had a positive impact on all aspects of the team's operations, from enhancing knowledge and awareness of partner agencies' expertise and responsibilities, to improving outcomes for victims through effective joint visits. Co-location was a key factor in enabling the FVIARS to recover from events in 2008/2009 when multiple key personnel left their positions around the same time, resulting in a wind-down of the team's meetings and attendance at meetings.

The evaluation identified the benefits of co-location. These benefits include:

- building and maintaining relationships
- increased opportunities to share information
- improved understanding of partner agencies
- improved understanding of family violence and its impacts on victims

- building an understanding across agencies of each other's agency context, business, strengths and limitations
- increased capacity for collaborative responses and interventions.

### **Resourcing and service development**

- National consideration of resourcing FVIARS to facilitate the participation of community organisations and government agencies in the most efficient way. A number of areas were identified that could enhance FVIARS processes. These areas included: resourcing co-ordinator positions; co-located positions; adequate administrative support; streamlining recording practices; and providing technological resources and training/support to use technologies.
- Development of a common risk assessment framework.
- Resourcing for ongoing training was identified as a priority by the case study sites.

### **Training**

- Continuing to train frontline staff and their managers to ensure they have a strong understanding of the dynamics of family violence so they can relate more appropriately to victims. The provision of training needs to take into account personnel turnover to ensure new staff are sufficiently prepared to maintain or to extend response capacity.
- Ensure frontline staff and managers are knowledgeable about FVIARS case management team functions so they can better benefit from and contribute to the FVIARS process, eg receiving appropriate information about cases from their agency's FVIARS representative and informing their representative of relevant information to take to FVIARS meetings. This can be facilitated by agencies promoting and resourcing presentations and training about FVIARS.
- Joint training and tagging on to another agency's training can be cost effective and can also help to build relationships and an understanding of each other's agency.

### **Reflective practice, monitoring and evaluation**

- Building an annual review into case management practice, eg FVIARS team planning days to facilitate team planning and reflection on practice.
- Interagency support to develop and administer monitoring mechanisms of team cases, to collect evidence on outcomes for victims (adults and children) and offenders, eg the development of a result-based database.
- Developing 'success' indicators across agencies, with their different objectives and perspectives of success, is a challenge. Success can be measured in terms of the immediate safety of victims through to longer-term life outcomes for families. The accountability of offenders can be measured in terms of justice outcomes (eg prosecutions, recidivism, and lethality) as well as looking at long-term changes to attitudes and behaviour. Any consideration of success indicators for FVIARS should be clear around the expectations of what FVIARS is designed to deliver.
- Suggest developing an interagency national monitoring and evaluation framework that can be used at the local level for the long-term monitoring of the effectiveness of FVIARS as well as for feeding into national monitoring. Such a framework could be used for facilitating the ongoing development of FVIARS and for assessing its effectiveness.

## **Sharing good practice and innovation**

- Sharing good practice and innovation with other FVIARS teams through mechanisms such as:
  - regional/national meetings or ‘communities of practice’
  - sitting in on team meetings at other sites
  - sharing knowledge and resources and discussing practice via online forums and a website, facts sheets, joint training.