ESR

A summary report to
The Glenn Inquiry

Getting it together:

A transformed system to reduce family violence and child abuse and neglect in New Zealand

by

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Getting it together is a summary overview of a more extensive report for The Glenn Inquiry, *Toward a transformed system to address child abuse and family violence in New Zealand.*[1]

Getting it together:

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The Glenn Inquiry (TGI), an independent inquiry into all forms of child abuse and family violence in New Zealand, has contracted ESR to bring together relevant experience and expertise to develop a model of how to address child abuse and neglect (CAN) and family violence (FV) in New Zealand.

This paper provides a summary overview of the more extensive report produced by ESR[2] for TGI entitled, *Toward a transformed system to address child abuse and family violence in New Zealand*.[3]

Family violence, in this report, includes intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, inter-sibling abuse and parental abuse.

The problem

The level of family violence in New Zealand is unacceptably high.

In terms of fatalities, between 2009 and 2012 there were 63 people killed in intimate partner violence, 37 children killed through child abuse and neglect, and 26 intrafamilial violence deaths. Overall, 47 per cent of all homicide and related offences were considered to be due to family violence or related to family violence.[4]

These deaths and the reported incidents of family violence are likely to be only a small proportion of what happens. In 2009, it is estimated that three quarters of those who claimed they were victims of partner offences did not contact the police. Similarly with elder abuse; one agency alone reports over 1600 elder abuse and neglect referrals each year, of which two thirds are substantiated as abuse.[5]

In relation to child abuse, between 2007 and 2012, notifications to Child, Youth and Family (CYF) that require further action have risen. Those where abuse was substantiated after investigation increased in number between 2007 and 2010, and remained fairly constant in the following two years.

The impacts of family violence do not fall evenly in the population, with a disproportionate harm occurring to women, young children and Māori. Survey data suggest that about 85 per cent of serious intimate partner offences are against female victims.[6] Of the homicides resulting from intimate partner violence (2009-2012), almost all of the women involved had been previously abused in the relationship.[7] Over three quarters of children killed are less than five years old and nearly half of the children killed have a history with CYF.[8] Māori are disproportionately represented in all forms of family violence homicides, compared to non-Māori. It also appears that "family deaths occur more commonly among people living in areas of high socio-economic deprivation."[9] Family violence is experienced in all socio-economic groups, however, and less is known about the experiences of middle and higher income families.

The impacts of family violence can be intergenerational; for example, intimate partner violence can affect the life trajectories and later health of children and adolescents.

The People's Report, published by TGI, stated that most of those who contributed to that inquiry felt that "the normalisation of child abuse and domestic violence" is a major issue facing New Zealand. Key factors linked to this normalisation included a general apathy toward child abuse and domestic violence, New Zealand's drinking culture, and 'system failures'.

One of the criticisms of how New Zealand currently addresses family violence and child abuse is that it is like a patchwork. While skilful patchwork does involve careful attention to coherence and design, the metaphor here suggests a range of differing responses that have been developed and implemented without sufficient regard to the overall effect. Clearly the patchwork of services and responses does include outstanding activities and achievements, and the range of responses to family violence is not restricted to formal or 'official' responses. Contributors to *The People's Report*, among other informants, point to the importance of a vast informal system of family, friends, community, hapū, and voluntary activities that help reduce the rates and effects of child abuse and family violence. But practitioners, researchers and those represented in *The People's Report* have told us of variable quality; variable resourcing; insufficient coordination; poor levels of evaluation and evidence to support some approaches; insecurity of funding; lack of national strategy; and contracting, funding and accountability processes that can undermine service delivery.

Overall, the 'patchwork' of planning and provision of services in this area is not consistent in quality, evidence-base or resourcing, and lacks overall coherence.

The task, then, is to outline a more integrated approach to reducing both the incidence and the impacts of family violence. What is needed is a systemic approach that will deliver more than is possible through a patchwork of provision, and that recognises and integrates informal systems in the community.

Beyond the patchwork approach

To achieve a more integrated approach we have viewed the national response to family violence as if it were a purpose-built system to reduce the rate of child abuse and neglect and other forms of family violence. What is required is a 'viable system'; that is, an integrated approach that produces the desired outcomes and will remain effective over time. Viability requires both 'system viability' (the necessary functions in the system work together in balance), and 'social viability' (the system is seen by key stakeholders as relevant, credible, and legitimate).[10]

We have applied a combination of systems methods to highlight critical areas for improvement, to structure the insights from New Zealand experience, international literature, and sector experts, and to recommend a way forward[11]. In particular, we used Critical Systems Heuristics[12] with sector experts to understand essential properties of both the current system and the desired system, and the Viable System Model (VSM)[13] to consider where improvements and interventions are needed.

To ensure relevance, credibility and legitimacy we worked with sector experts and took account of *The People's Report* to identify essential properties for a transformed system. We wanted to know what a system to reduce family violence would need to be like to satisfy key stakeholders.[14] We have tabulated the critical properties for the transformed system in our main report, and have summarised them in the next section.

The VSM approach focuses attention on five critical functions, or subsystems, and how they work together to ensure that any system has what it needs to sustain effectiveness over time (remain viable). The subsystems are:

- **Operational effectiveness:** a range of operations or activities that carry out the main work of the system to improve the situation; in this case, to improve the situation of children and families by reducing the incidence and effects of CAN and FV (*System One*).

- **Coordination:** sufficient coordination of the operations or activities so they do not undermine or diminish the overall effectiveness of the system through how they work together or fail to work together (*System Two*).

- **Tasking, resourcing and monitoring performance:** ways to ensure the operations or activities are appropriately tasked and resourced, and that they are held accountable for their performance (*System Three*).

- **Scanning and planning:** ways to keep the system alert to new developments and future opportunities that could affect the ability of the system to achieve its purpose (*System Four*).

- **Purpose and guidance:** ways of providing a clear focus or purpose for the system, and to ensure that the system is both looking to the future to adapt, and maintaining high performing and well-resourced activities in the present (*System Five*).

What is important is that these functions are working effectively together at every level in the system. The model does not assume any particular organisational structure.

Having reviewed the international literature, consulted with New Zealand experts (both academics and practitioners) and considered the insights reported in *The People's Report*, we decided that 'operational effectiveness' (System One) required five distinct but overlapping kinds of activity:

- Prevention (activities to stop family violence occurring),
- Targeted prevention (prevention activities tailored to particular communities, groups and populations),
- Response (dealing with the effects of family violence and its perpetrators),
- Recovery (supporting those affected by family violence to deal with its effects) and
- Advocacy (activities to change how society deals with family violence).

Figure 1 shows the VSM as a conceptual model to investigate the current approach to family violence and to design a transformed system. Again, the model does not assume any particular organisational structure; in other words, the five system one functions could be carried out in various combinations by multiple agencies, and a given agency may carry out a combination of the VSM systems one to five.

Figure 1: Reducing family violence - a viable system model
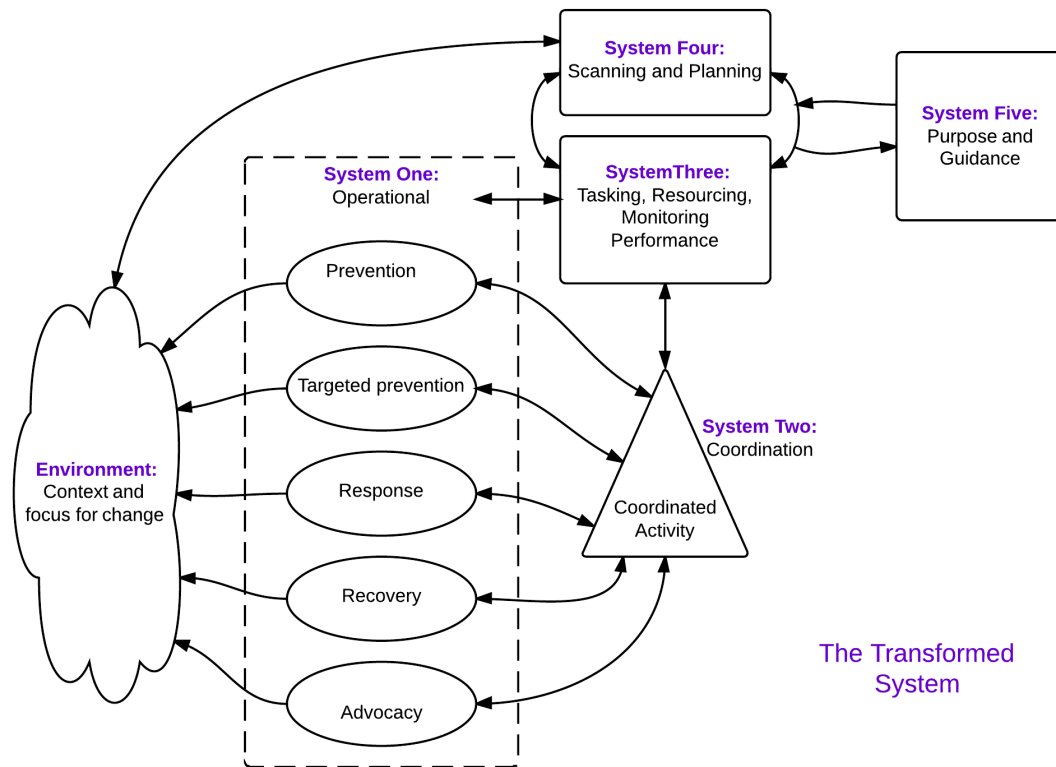
In relation to reducing FV and CAN, each aspect of Figure 1 needs to function at local, regional and national levels, with effective communication between these levels.

A *transformed system*

Before discussing the potential for improving New Zealand's response to family violence at each level of the VSM, it is important to note that further piecemeal initiatives will not ensure an approach that is integrated and viable.

For example, while there is an understandable demand in society to improve services to support victims and to hold perpetrators to account (response and recovery), a system to reduce family violence must include measures that address the very likelihood of such violence happening (prevention) and the prevailing structures, attitudes and behaviours in society that help perpetuate family violence (advocacy). And, inevitable tensions and inefficiencies between these functions will need to be deliberately managed (system 2), resources and accountabilities will need to be appropriately administered (system 3), new developments in society and in knowledge about what to do will need to be actively canvassed and used to improve the overall response (system 4), and strategic policy directions will need to be protecting and guiding how all these different functions and activities contribute to desired outcomes (system 5).

To be politically and socially viable, the transformed system needs to be sufficiently relevant, credible and legitimate in the eyes of all key stakeholders. Our application of the Critical Systems Heuristic questions identified at least seven conditions that would need to be met:

- The system will improve the situation of those who have been subject to family violence, those vulnerable to such abuse, those who have perpetrated abuse and those who are vulnerable to doing so.
- Monitoring the performance of the system will incorporate evaluation evidence (outcomes data) as well as the experience of individuals and communities directly affected.
- Governance decisions will include representation of service users, and balance the advice of experts with that of communities and practitioners informed by the experience of those most affected.
- How the system is planned and implemented will include focus on prevention, response and recovery, involve stakeholders, use the best evaluation evidence, and balance central control with local context.
- The system will have cross-party political commitment and government capacity to advise on direction and interventions.
- The system will use accurate documentation and well-designed evaluations that are culturally responsive.
- The system will be based on commitments to the dignity of persons, the application of human rights and respect, and a recognition of cultural diversity.

Applying the VSM

We will now briefly suggest necessary interventions or improvements at each level of the VSM illustrated in Figure 1 above.

Operational activities (System One)

These are the system one activities of prevention, targeted prevention, response, recovery and advocacy.

In general, there is a paucity of local or international evidence to support programmes, so building an evidence base is important.

Where the effectiveness of an approach is supported by evidence its local application will still require monitoring and evaluation. Where not enough is known about effectiveness, any initiative that appears to have potential and to address a known gap needs to be implemented and evaluated in ways that generate evidence of effectiveness. We will return to this system improvement when discussing systems three and four.

Prevention and targeted prevention activities

Prevention activities are needed in at least four areas: education in schools, parent education, public awareness, and programmes of social support.

While current programmes in schools such as *Keeping Ourselves Safe*, and its early childhood module, *All About Me* are considered worthwhile, we recommend a clear nation-wide integrated approach to dealing with family violence and child abuse themes in schools and pre-schools. There needs to be support for adaptation and targeting for particular communities, while maintaining a degree of standardisation of what is offered, and integration with the national curriculum.

Again, in relation to parent education, credible programmes already exist and are happening. The focus needs to be on ensuring that such programmes are well run, widely available, integrated with other initiatives, and designed or tailored well for particular communities. A more systematic and integrated use of health and social services (e.g., midwives) to support parent education is worth exploring.

A number of public awareness campaigns have been carried out. What appears to be needed is a greater understanding of what works and what does not work in terms of preventive campaigns, and a stocktake of who is doing what in community settings. In addition, a programme of systematically gathering and reporting relevant indicator data may serve to focus community attention on progress or otherwise in addressing family violence.

More evidence is needed on the effectiveness of various forms of social support in reducing family violence. As noted above, in the absence of adequate evidence, programmes should be designed and implemented in a way that generates evidence and learning. In particular, we suggest trialling initiatives such as recognising neighbourhood or community 'guardians'. The effectiveness of various forms of parent support (e.g., Helplines and child care) also needs to be established.

Response

Once family violence of any kind has occurred, responses focus on victim support and perpetrator accountability. In the light of widespread dissatisfaction with the ways that court processes deal with family violence, the development since 2001 of family violence courts is to be welcomed, and specialist training of the judiciary and the potential of court processes that do not rely on victim testimony need to be explored.

Greater attention needs to be given to tailoring responses designed both for victims and perpetrators that are appropriate to the person's needs, gender, age, culture, ethnicity and abilities. This will include the appropriate use of therapeutic services, particularly psychological and mental health services. Consideration also needs to be given to when and how to involve family, whānau, hapū, or other expressions of a person's community. We recommend learning from the strengths and weaknesses of the family group conference approach used in New Zealand for youth offenders.

Recovery

The aims of recovery include the restoration of health and wellbeing for victims of violence, stopping re-victimisation, and stopping recidivism by perpetrators. Recovery approaches include community and peer support activities, mandated programmes for perpetrators, and therapeutic services.

We recognise the value in recovery of support networks, peer groups and the role of family and whānau.

Sector experts have suggested the strategic use of the justice and corrections systems to provide and mandate effective recovery interventions for perpetrators. Interventions could include the strategic use of supervision during probation, with judicial review. Such approaches have been more common in relation to child abuse than with domestic violence.

Therapeutic interventions need to include specialist counselling and therapeutic services for victims of family violence. Programmes need to support recovery of those with long-term effects of FV or CAN.

It is not clear what the long-term value of brief interventions is, and so further evidence is needed; however, new research does support using 'bridge services' so victims with multiple needs can receive concurrent treatment and services as needed.

There is a need for programmes for women that address repeat re-victimisation.

Meanwhile, there are already a number of programmes designed to support the recovery of perpetrators, including culturally responsive programmes by Māori and Pasifika providers. More research is needed to establish what components of group programmes create change for perpetrators, although programmes that incorporate motivational enhancement, and programmes that are part of coordinated response with the criminal justice system seem to achieve better outcomes. Furthermore, the report on narratives of former perpetrators prepared for The Glenn Inquiry (Roguski & Gregory, 2014) suggest that community-based mentors who had been on a journey to violence-free living were influential alongside other programmes.

Advocacy

Formal support for advocacy as a function is inevitably contentious because the task of advocacy is to seek change: change to social attitudes, services, policy, legislation, regulation and institutional practices. However, for the system aimed at reducing family violence to be viable we believe that a deliberate policy of supporting advocacy activities is essential. The continuous critique of the system by those affected by it and by emerging evidence is vital for continuous adaptation and improvement. Therefore, we suggest, an advocacy function should be expected and supported as part of contracting and funding services, and insights from service users need to be actively sought and considered.

 'Shero', a programme run by the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, identifies and supports individuals to be advocates in the community. Such initiatives need to be evaluated and consideration given to developing other examples.

Coordination (System Two)

Sector experts are clear on the need for paths of communication between agencies and for greater coordination between the services offered. Seven areas for improvement have been identified:

1. There is a need to understand the range of services and what they offer. This calls for mapping and knowledge sharing processes.
2. Users and potential users of services need to gain access to the right service at the right time.
3. There is a case to improve inter-agency case management, local coordination to identify gaps and avoid overlap, the development of local preventative initiatives, and measures to strengthen communities .[15] Such inter-agency coordination and local initiatives require adequate recognition and resourcing.
4. Protocols are needed for inter-agency sharing of information about cases and families at risk.

5. There is a need to develop national best practice guidelines and tools that reflect a common set of core values, common language and that can be customised to local contexts.
6. There is a need for agreed training standards and qualifications for working in the fields of FV.
7. There is a need to develop a 'common analysis'; a coherent and replicable framework to document and analyse the causes and impacts of CAN and FV.

Contributors to *The People's Report* proposed better integration of services through a case management approach that enabled more effective use of informal community resources and support alongside of services. The holistic approach underpinning Whānau Ora requiring co-ordination across services and the community was seen as a good model for interventions, especially for Māori families.

Special attention needs to be given to the intersection between child abuse and family violence.

Tasking, resourcing, monitoring (System Three)

This function is responsible for implementing policies and strategies, allocating resources, monitoring performance and ensuring the accountability of operational interventions.

There is a need to improve the way funding agencies identify, implement and evaluate effective interventions. Three problems need to be solved:

- Methods found to incorporate the experience and perspectives of communities when it comes to decisions about funding or purchasing of services and monitoring performance (one size does not fit all);
- The sustainable resourcing of programmes that provides for staffing, internal audits and external evaluation, with longer-term contracts;
- The ability for new players to enter the 'market'.

To enable auditing of outcomes from operational activities, funding agreements would stipulate desired outcomes along with meaningful and measurable performance indicators. This focus on desired outcomes would help avoid a narrow, piecemeal and fragmented approach.

Scanning and planning (System Four)

This function is to keep the system alert to new developments and future opportunities that could affect the ability of the system to achieve its purpose. Two distinct forms of data will be important: firstly, data about the prevalence and incidence of FV, and attitudes toward FV, and secondly, data about the capacity of the system to address the changing situation around violence. The two forms of data need regular comparison, and the means to inform change in how to reduce FV.

We propose three initiatives for consideration:

- Establish a 'national family safety authority' as a crown agency with responsibility to ensure decision-makers in the system are well informed on national and international trends and research findings. Such a body would be made up of representative heads of agencies (governmental and NGO) and researchers, and be served by a secretariat.

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- Standardisation of terminology, data sets and variables so that data on family violence is meaningful and comparable; and a systematic triangulation of administrative data, self-report data and qualitative data from practitioners to determine trends.
- Develop a national data strategy and supporting infrastructure. This needs to include methods and protocols for gathering, accessing and disseminating data and research findings, along with improved capacity and capability for research and development in the field of reducing family violence. Supporting infrastructure is needed to streamline data collection from service providers. This may be a national electronic platform.

Purpose and guidance (System Five)

This function is to provide a clear focus or purpose for the system, and to ensure that the system is both looking to the future to adapt, and maintaining high performance and well-resourced activities in the present.

There is a need for a national policy framework that has commitment and ownership across political parties and sector stakeholders. Such a framework would facilitate and express broad 'buy-in' to the underlying values, strategies and desired outcomes to drive a system to reduce family violence, including child abuse and neglect.

Getting it together

So, what would it take to change New Zealand's response to family violence from a patchwork of programmes and policies that collectively have not succeeded in reducing family violence, to a viable system seen, particularly by those most affected by it, as being relevant, credible and legitimate?

In response to this question we offer three challenges:

- What if the limiting factor is not more or better programmes, but lack of national and regional strategy, coordination and intelligence? We believe that this is the place to start. In other words, and in terms of the VSM (Figure 1), we recommend focusing on innovation and development in systems 2 – 4. Of course to carry out such a reform will require renewed vision and commitment at system 5.
- In relation to programmes and activities to reduce family violence (system 1 in the VSM), we recommend a greater commitment and resourcing to establish what works, what might work, and how to determine effectiveness. Of course this implies strengthening systems 3 and 4.
- There will always be pressure to add programmes and services that support victims and reduce reoffending by perpetrators. However, a system to *reduce family violence* needs to also innovate and resource effective activities for prevention and advocacy, and maintaining a balance between prevention, response, recovery and advocacy needs to be planned, monitored and resourced.

A more detailed description of the methods and data on which this overview is based can be found in the full report (Foote et al., 2014).

A further report is in preparation by ESR for TGI that will provide an evidence-based means to select interventions to support a transformed system to reduce family violence, including child abuse and neglect.

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[2] The Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited, a New Zealand Crown Research Institute charged to deliver enhanced scientific and research services to the public health, food safety, security and justice systems and the environmental sector to improve the safety and contribute to the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of people and communities in New Zealand.

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[4] Family Violence Death Review Committee Fourth Annual Report, 2014. "Family violence related deaths are homicides, and sometimes suicides, that are related to family violence but fall outside the Committee's terms of reference (e.g., a bystander or intervener who died at the event but is not related to the victim)" (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014, p.35). From 2009 – 2012 13 family violence related deaths were recorded.

[5] Age Concern data.

[6] During 2008. Data from the New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey 2009.

[7] 93% (Family Violence Death Review Committee Fourth Annual Report, 2014). Of the 51 women, 41 were killed by their abuser, and 10 killed their abuser.

[8] Family Violence Death Review Committee Fourth Annual Report, 2014.

[9] Family Violence Death Review Committee Fourth Annual Report, 2014, p.67.

[10] The concepts of salience, credibility and legitimacy in relation to scientific advice and stakeholders are developed by Cash et al. [Cash, D. W., Clark, W., Alcock, F., Dickson, N., Eckley, N., & Jager, J. (2002). *Salience, Credibility, Legitimacy and Boundaries: Linking Research, Assessment and Decision Making* (Research Working Paper No. 02-046): Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government.]. For more on the concept of 'social viability' see, Wynne, B. (1983). Redefining the issues of risk and public acceptance: The social viability of technology. *Futures, 15*(1), 13-32. Also, Espinosa, A., Harnden, R., & Walker, J. (2005). Cybernetics and Participation: From Theory to Practice. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 17*(6), 573-589.

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[14] To answer this we modified questions developed by Werner Ulrich in his Critical Systems Heuristics (Ulrich, W. (1983). *Critical Heuristics of Social Planning: A New Approach to Practical Philosophy*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ulrich, W. (2002). Critical Systems Heuristics. In H. G. Daellenbach & R. L. Flood (Eds.), *The Informed Student Guide to Management Science* (pp. 72f.). London: Thomson Learning.)

[15] This concept was explored and recommended by the initiative among government agencies developed in the 1990s, *Strengthening Families* (Bazley, 2000).