

Breaking the
cycle of violence



The Centre for Family Violence
and Sexual Violence Prevention
Responding, healing, strengthening



Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

What we heard
SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PLANS | MAY 2026

Strengthening **MULTI-AGENCY** RESPONSES

Suggested citation: The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention, 2026.
What we heard, System Improvement Plans Report. New Zealand Government.

Published by the Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention
Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa | New Zealand Government, May 2026.
For more information go to www.preventfvsv.govt.nz

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ISBN: 978-1-0670532-4-6

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Acknowledgements

This report has been shaped by the experience, expertise, and commitment of individuals and organisations who work alongside whānau and families affected by family violence in their communities.

The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention appreciates the time and effort participating sites gave to the development of the System Improvement Plans (SIPs), which took workers away from the day-to-day work of responding to people in need, to look at the system and processes that enable effective ways of working.

We extend our sincere thanks to the kaimahi, NGOs, iwi, and government agencies across the twelve multi-agency responses who partnered with the Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention to develop local SIPs: Canterbury, Whanganui, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Wairoa, Tairāwhiti, Rotorua, Eastern Bay of Plenty, Waitākere, Auckland City, Whangārei, and Kaitiāia.

We recognise the strength, resilience, and deep knowledge within each site, and your collective commitment to strengthening multi-agency responses. Your work reflects a shared vision for communities where whānau are safe, supported, and able to thrive – free from family violence and sexual violence.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.



Introduction

Purpose of this report

What we heard – System Improvement Plans brings together themes from the development of twelve local System Improvement Plans (SIPs) across Aotearoa New Zealand in 2025.

The report captures what was heard from these localities about what is needed to strengthen multi-agency responses to family violence. It reflects the themes, challenges, and opportunities consistently identified through workshops, analysis, and locally led planning processes.

These themes represent a collective view across diverse communities. While each locality faces different contexts and conditions, there is strong alignment in what matters most for improving system performance at local and national levels.

This report presents a collective overview only. The SIPs themselves are owned and implemented by each local site, with progress to be reported later in 2026.

Context

The development of the twelve local SIPs is a key action within **Te Aorerekura Action Plan (2025–2030) – Breaking the Cycle**. This work contributes to the priority focus area of keeping people safe, with a particular emphasis on improving multi-agency responses for people at high risk, including children and young people, and those with complex needs who experience or use violence.

Across all sites, SIPs demonstrated a shared understanding: effective responses to family violence depend on how well agencies work together – across government, Iwi, NGOs and communities – to provide coordinated, timely, and whānau-centred support.



Core components of effective multi-agency responses

Six core components underpin effective multi-agency responses to family violence. Research, evaluation, and practice experience consistently show that effective multi-agency responses are not driven by a single intervention. Instead, they rely on integrated, multi-level systems that can:

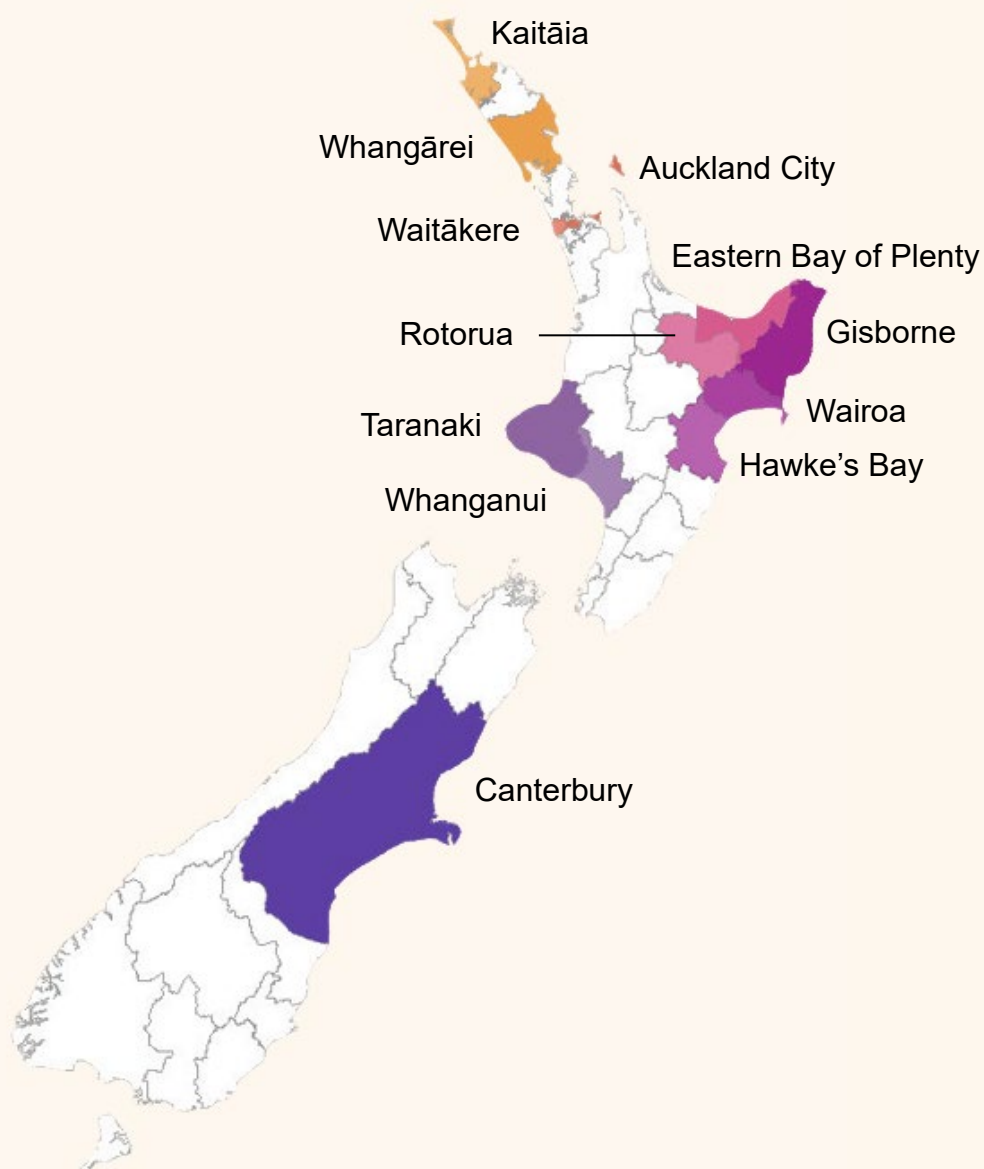
- build a shared understanding of risk and context
- respond rapidly following an incident
- reduce barriers to safety and support, and
- maintain engagement with whānau to enable sustained change.

These core components form the foundation of the System Improvement Plans across the participating sites, provide the structure for this report, and identify the ways of working that are required for effective multi-agency responses to family violence. The findings from the SIPs affirm the importance of strengthening these system conditions in practice.



Participating sites

Twelve family violence sites across Aotearoa completed a System Improvement Plan.



Looking ahead

By capturing common themes, this report contributes to a growing evidence base to inform system improvement and the development of good practice nationally. It supports a learning approach – one that evolves through shared experience, reflection, and continuous improvement.

The sections that follow are structured around the six core components of effective multi-agency responses to family violence and outline the key themes identified across the localities.

Safe and Effective Responses to Risk and Need

Safe and effective responses to high-risk family violence require rapid and coordinated multi-agency risk identification and management. Better collaboration also improves how family violence is recognised and addressed in the places people seek help.

What local sites wanted to work on

Build on what works and keep reflecting on how to improve the safety and effectiveness of family violence responses.

Priorities for enhancement

Strengthen high-risk protocols

- Build on what exists to develop and test new, integrated, and coordinated approaches to high-risk cases.
- Focus on opportunities and gaps identified locally.

Support specialist practitioners

- Build practitioner capability and access to specialist support for complex cases particularly mental health, housing and substance issues, enabled through practice and training opportunities.

Improve coordination and remove duplication

- Ensure smooth transitions into services for victim-survivors, with agencies coordination to support a shared response.
- Streamline contact and support to reduce pressure for victim-survivors.

Resource responses for high-risk and responding to children

- Understand what resources and authority needed to respond quickly and effectively to high-risk and need.
- Improve local tools and processes to ensure children and young people are visible and supported in responses.

Examples of local actions

- Review and agree the risk assessment processes, including referrals and information sharing.
- Develop a succession plan and train more *Entry to Expert* educators.
- Continue to identify ways to streamline who contacts victim-survivors, ensuring it is a trusted person to reduce duplication and pressure.
- Explore the community's capability and capacity to respond to all whānau needs.

National enablers

To enhance local family violence responses, sites identified national actions that could support them. The themes highlighted the need for clarity, strong processes, and responsive support to risk and need – all enabled by sustained investment to ensure safe and effective practice.

Supporting responses could include

Nationally consistent high-risk response

- Build on the new High-Risk Protocol being tested in 2026, enabling a nationally consistent approach to recognise and respond to high-risk family violence.
- Provide shared definitions, consistent guidance, training and implementation support.
- Allow for local adaptation, which is essential to ensuring equitable and effective responses across the country.

Clarification of agency roles and responsibilities

- Define and resource the roles of government agencies, lwi, and community agencies involved in high-risk family violence responses.
- This supports accountability, reduces duplication, and ensures organisations have clarity, and can fulfil their responsibilities as part of a collective response.

Information sharing protocols

- Learn from the work underway to test updated information sharing guidelines and the new High-Risk Protocol.
- Ensure timely, safe, and effective information sharing in high-risk cases, as delays in accessing risk-related information can hinder the ability to respond.
- More flexible funding options

More flexible funding options

- Provide adequate, flexible funding to support urgent and high-risk family violence cases.
- Include options for discretionary funds within investment and commissioning models, prioritising high-risk and pathways that meet the community needs.



Child and Victim-Survivor Centred Responses

Having safe and effective responses to risk and need for multi-agency responses, recognises the need to listen to and meet the needs of victim-survivors; have a greater focus on protecting children, and increased visibility and action to stop people using violence.

What local sites wanted to work on

Creating and developing ways to enhance processes and relationships centred on children and victim-survivors.

Priorities for enhancement

Recognise and support children

- Build out processes that ensure children are actively considered in risk assessments, case management, and service design for family violence responses.

Strengthen engagement with educators

- Build proactive relationships with local schools and education providers to support early intervention and safety planning.

Centre responses on victims and whānau

- Gather whānau voice and choices, so it can be built into response, service design, referrals, and feedback loops.
- Build capability for whānau-centred, Iwi-led models of practice.

Provide accessible ongoing support

- Create ways to ensure seamless, multi-agency support systems for whānau, especially those who are at high-risk and transient.

Build workforce capability and training

- Build in consistent and specialised training to support child and victim-centred practice for local responses.

Examples of local actions

- Update guidelines to include a case management checklist that makes children more visible.
- Continue to build relationships with local schools, education providers and the Ministry of Education.
- Review what is working well for whānau and agencies in the multi-agency responses to understand what could be replicated.
- Explore how more support services for people using violence, men, and children, can be linked into responses to fill the gaps.
- Enhance regular training to support capability building, specific to age, risk, needs and other whānau situations.

National enablers

To enhance local responses, sites identified national actions which highlighted the need for consistent policy, processes, and workforce to support visibility of children and victim-survivors, access to services, and safety.

Supporting responses could include

Strengthening education and health engagement

- National level education sector coordination to support schools to identify and respond to family violence.
- A national approach that includes health services in multi-agency responses to family violence, creating holistic and equitable pathways for whānau at risk.

Enhancing information sharing and data visibility

- Improve protocols, training, and systems to support safe and effective information capture and sharing across agencies.
- Better visibility of local data, insights, and information can help agencies make better decisions about need, filling service gaps, or providing workers.

Child-centred risk identification and response

- Ensure children are visible and supported in risk assessments and responses.
- Develop national guidance that improves early intervention and strengthens prevention before children reach a crisis point.

Child and victim-survivor centred policies and frameworks

- Develop flexible national tools, guidance, and policies that can be tailored to meet local needs and contexts.
- Update legislation to remove barriers for child and victim-survivor centred responses, ensuring they are visible - for example, addressing barriers that limit child-centred practice and direct engagement.

Better support services

- Improve access to support services for children and whānau, including childcare and advocacy.
- Flexible services and early interventions that respond to diverse and changing needs.

Grow specialist workforce

- Increase services, funding, and contracts for responses to children.
- Ensure there are trained staff who work with children, especially those with higher needs or who need a sexual violence response.

“ Pathways are needed to easily access available support, especially those specific to young people. ”



The right functions and accessible pathways will enable the needs of young people to be met during vulnerable and challenging times.

Collaborative ways of working

Have collaborative ways of working across multi-agency family violence responses, recognising the need to develop strong partnerships to support operating as one team.

What local sites wanted to work on

Strengthening relationships and collaboration to improve multi-agency responses.

Priorities for enhancement

Strengthen relationships and shared understanding

- Finding opportunities to build strong, trusted relationships and shared values across agencies.
- Put structures and models in place to support ways of working together.

Develop the workforce

- Put plans in place and deliver training, mentoring, and leadership development that support collaborative and consistent practice locally.

Strengthen collaborative models

- Test collaborative models that support safety and whānau-centred responses.
- Look at how multi-agency responses interact with other models or support other social services.

Strengthen joint practice

- Clarify what local responsibilities are in multi-agency responses.
- Document and share decisions to support joint practice.
- Ensure effective information sharing to support responses.

Examples of local actions

- Create an MOU or Charter so there is commitment to the collective response, shared values, accountabilities, and responsibilities.
- Set up informal community of practice and peer support following training to embed learning and share how to apply training in practice.
- Explore and test Iwi-led Hub collective actions from multi-agency meetings to understand what is required to support whānau.
- Strengthen collective action by documenting roles and responsibilities, and the response processes from entry to exit.

National enablers

To enhance local family violence responses, sites identified national actions that could support them. The themes highlighted the need to enable government and communities to work together with visibility and shared understanding to reflect, grow, and respond.

Supporting responses could include

Stronger interagency relationships

- Build enduring relationships between government and non-government agencies that support a shared understanding of why multi-agency responses to family violence exist and how they operate.
- Building trusted relationships is the foundation for trust, a shared understanding, and agreed values.

Clarifying roles and responsibilities across agencies

- Ensure government and non-government agencies have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the multi-agency family violence response system.
- Support shared accountability, clarity of contribution, and a shift from siloed business-as-usual approaches to collective approaches.

National standards, frameworks, and consistency

- Provide consistent national guidance and frameworks to support collaborative practice across regions, with a shared understanding of practices and service delivery.
- Sharing successful models and practices across regions can foster innovation and consistency.

Workforce development and training

- Invest in building the capability of all workers who participate in multi-agency responses to family violence.
- Fund training, dedicated specialist staff, and practical tools that foster shared learning and continuous improvement.



Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Enabling innovation and continuous improvement across multi-agency family violence responses, recognising the need for adaption through better data, community feedback, and quality assurance.



What local sites wanted to work on

Enhancing shared innovation that impacts the community, whānau, and families.

Priorities for enhancement

Strengthen reflective practice

- Find ways to incorporate reflective practice and learning from experience into ways of working.
- Identify opportunities for different agencies or groups to come together, and create mechanisms to support reflection, review and learning.

Use data to inform decisions

- Identify ways to capture data and experience, with mechanisms for bringing it together.
- Use this data and whānau voice to create insights to guide improvements and measure the success of multi-agency family violence responses.

Develop the workforce

- Invest more in workforce development and shared learning to improve practice.

Test and scale innovative models

- Explore approaches locally, where whānau lead and guide primary preventions and responses.
- Be part of building infrastructure with local partners for long-term impact.

Examples of local actions

- Create opportunities to share practice and create space to provide constructive feedback, enabling innovation.
- Grow capability to identify what data is needed, how to collect it, and how to tell the story to create change.
- Build kaimahi capability – trauma informed and culturally responsive, aligned with national practice frameworks for risk, safety, and family violence response capability.
- Explore feasibility and viability a holistic multidisciplinary hub to address whānau wellbeing.

National enablers

To enhance local family violence responses, sites identified national actions that could support them. The themes highlighted the need for national structures that support local innovation informed by lived experience and whānau voice, acceleration through local collaboration, and a system that is responsive.

Supporting responses could include

Learning mechanisms and communities of practice

- Move to collaborative continuous learning mechanisms, to enable reflection and learning, supported by training.
- Support communities of practice across the motu to lift capability regionally.
- Provide national guidance, processes, and structures that support reviewing serious incidents (death reviews) and make meaningful change accordingly.

System and policy responsiveness

- Enhance national mechanisms that respond to local insights, which embed national-level adaptation to community needs; including ways to influence legislation, policy, and practice that allow for local needs.

Digital and data infrastructure enhancements

- Improve digital infrastructure to support a multi-agency family violence response approach.
- Enhance case management systems, identifying national data needs, and how data and insights are gathered.
- Be smarter with data so it can be used easily, to inform decisions about service delivery and continuous improvement (e.g. data sharing and analysis).

Centring whānau voice

- Take deliberate steps to embed whānau perspectives into national practice and system design.
- Ensure information is used in a safe and structured way – informing service delivery and policy improvement jointly.

Innovative engagement

- Enable structures and leadership that support experimentation and continuous improvement.
- Strengthen national-to-local monitoring and information flows so innovations in one region can be adapted and scaled elsewhere to enhance practice.
- Investment in early intervention and dedicated ways for supporting children.

“ Whānau and family voice must shape practice and be built into any guidance provided nationally. ”



Having safe repositories and mechanisms to capture whānau and family voice allows responses to understand, and shape supports needed.

Flexible, Targeted, and Integrated Investment

Having flexible, targeted, and integrated investment for multi-agency family violence responses which recognises the need to use resources wisely to meet the needs of different communities.

What local sites wanted to work on

Enhancing good investment practice that supports better outcomes.

Priorities for enhancement

Allocate resources wisely

- Ensure adequate staffing, including dedicated roles for response, and support roles (e.g. admin, data) are in place to support local needs.
- Implement training supported by sustainable funding.

Develop flexible and sustainable funding

- Align existing resources to demand.
- Use flexible or discretionary funds to provide greater options.
- Work with government agencies on what long-term, and locally controlled funding mechanisms could be.

Better use of data, evaluation, and monitoring to inform decisions

- Ensure data can be used to inform decisions on community need and service prioritisation.
- Monitor performance of services and increasing transparency about what services are available and where gaps exist.

Strengthen governance, clarify roles and planning

- Strengthen local governance structures with clear roles and responsibilities to support investment decisions.
- Develop strategic planning for investment in services and leverage existing models for integrated responses.

Examples of local actions

- Specify adequate resources and training investment to respond to the local environment and maintain good practice.
- Explore promoting choice for whānau using a flexi-fund.
- Build data sets to inform community need and understand available services.
- Embed tikanga/process and agree expectations of roles, responsibilities, and operating guidelines.

National enablers

To enhance local family violence responses, sites identified national actions that highlighted the need for a responsive system where national investment structures provide assurance and adapt to support local communities to invest in what works.



Supporting responses could include

Adaptive funding models

- Models that allow local sites to respond to changing needs, support integrated services, and ensure continuity.
- Include flexible contracts, discretionary funds, and bipartisan agreements to secure baseline funding.
- Ensuring government funded organisations are enabled to contribute meaningfully to provide services.

Community-led investment

- Improve visibility of funding flows, contracts and investment gaps, to support communities to lead and inform investment decisions.
- Clearer contracting and processes simpler to improve coordination.

Local commissioning, partnership

- More regional and community-led commissioning approaches.
- Support decisions to be made in partnership with those closest to the issues, supporting collaborative services tailored to local needs.

Dedicated roles and workforce development

- Invest in dedicated roles and workforce development to strengthen the capacity, capability and sustainability of multi-agency responses.
- Funding for things like super-advocates, national training, leadership development.

Outcomes-focused investment

- Align investment with shared meaningful outcomes for whānau, not just outputs or compliance.
- Work with communities to agree shared outcomes to guide long-term goals.

“ Visibility and tailored local investment plans are important; this includes collective visibility over funding for contracts, specifications, and numbers. ”



With consortium funding it would support a coordinated response by, with, and for the community to continue to improve outcomes.

Effective Governance and Leadership

Safe, effective responses to risk and need for multi-agency responses recognises the need for clear accountability structures, aligning efforts across all levels.

What local sites wanted to work on

Strengthening connection and building governance and leadership capability.

Priorities for enhancement

Strengthen local governance

- Improve governance arrangements by developing, updating, or completing core documents to support governance and leadership.
- Actively align what works for the community, captured in local Terms of Reference or guidelines, with the national guidelines.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, decision-making, and structures.

Grow local leadership

- Establish or strengthen leadership groups that are locally anchored, action-based and responsive.
- Improve capability and coordination.

Support community and iwi-led leadership

- Support locally designed, community-driven, models that champion local solutions.
- Support iwi-led culturally grounded approaches.

Strengthen communication, reporting and escalation mechanisms

- Build clear, consistent, transparent pathways for communication, feedback, reporting, and escalation across governance, operational, and iwi-led structures.

Examples of local actions

- Expand proposed governance structures and understand the different groups involved e.g. what do they do, who sits on the group and how are they funded?
- Establish a local leadership group to support the needs of the response.
- Champion local solutions and invest in the collective response to addressing family violence.
- Develop a mechanism for communicating outputs of the governance and steering group meetings, including key decisions.

National enablers

To enhance local responses, sites identified national actions that could support them. The themes highlighted the need for connected governance that supports good leadership, enables alignment and strengthens communities to respond to needs.

Supporting responses could include

Clarity of roles, responsibilities, and structure

- Build on existing structures to establish what governance and leadership could look like, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clear locally, regionally, and nationally.
- Provide clarity through adaptable national expectations, mandates, and mechanisms for multi-agency governance and leadership.

Stronger communication and greater transparency

- Develop robust mechanisms to share information and data locally, regionally, and nationally to support coordinated responses and inform decision-making.
- Support communication between governance and frontline staff, giving visibility and pathways for escalations and decisions from local through to national, and back.

Governance support

- Provide support for those involved in governance and leadership.
- Continue to develop national guidance for establishing governance, supported by adaptive policy that can be shaped to local needs.
- Enable local leadership to make decisions, reallocate resources, and report outcomes, ensuring community and Māori are strongly represented.

Wider representation

- Build structures and ways of working that support governance and leadership, inclusive of community voices, especially Māori and non-government organisation perspectives.
- Create pathways to bring in agencies that are not part of the multi-agency response to address things such as housing security.
- Strengthen collaboration between Police, Iwi, and regional structures.

“ Enabling local leadership and governance is important to responses. This includes guidance, capability support and resourcing for NGO and iwi participation in decision making. ”



When governance and leadership work for local and regional responses, people get safe and effective responses.

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