

Executive summary

Government agencies¹ have undertaken a review of government-funded, community-based interventions for people who use family violence and/or sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand (the Review).

Breaking the Cycle of Violence, Te Aorerekura Action Plan 2025–2030 outlines the government’s priorities to drive system change.² Stopping violence is one of the seven broad five-year focus areas in *Breaking the Cycle of Violence*. The Review is one of five stopping violence actions within the *Breaking the Cycle of Violence* first programme of action (2025–2026).

¹ Department of Corrections | Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Corrections), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of Social Development (MSD), Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki), and NZ Police.

² The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention. (2024). *Breaking the Cycle of Silence: Te Aorerekura action plan 2025–2030*. New Zealand Government.



This report provides an analysis of the findings of the Review and offers recommendations for government organisations to improve how we design, fund, commission, and support interventions for people who use violence (the Report). The recommendations from the Report should be considered as actions in future Te Aorerekura action plans.

The interventions in scope of the Review are:

- Non-Violence Programmes for Perpetrators of Family Violence (NVPs) contracted by Department of Corrections | Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Corrections) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
- Te Huringa o Te Ao - family violence services contracted by Ministry of Social Development (MSD).
- Wraparound Housing Services for people using violence that have been issued a Police Safety Order (PSO), contracted by MSD.
- Oranga Tamariki contracted family violence programmes for children and young people using violence.
- Digital products to support people using violence: A range of MSD-funded digital products and services available through Change is Possible.
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) services for children and young people, and adults, who exhibit harmful sexual behaviour.
 - » Corrections contracted programmes for adults (predominately men) who have sexual offences against children
 - » MSD contracted programmes for adults who have engaged in HSB who are voluntarily seeking help for their behaviour
 - » Oranga Tamariki contracted programmes for children and young people who are displaying HSB.
- Concerning Sexual Ideation (CSI) Services: MSD contracted sexual violence services for non-mandated adults experiencing concerning sexual ideation

More information on the in-scope interventions can be found in the full report, *Strengthening the Stopping Violence System: A review of government-funded, community-based interventions for people who use family violence and/or sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand*.

The above interventions do not represent the full range of interventions that people who use violence may access. There are other interventions that people may access that are out

of scope for this Review, including interventions delivered within custodial settings (e.g., prison-based rehabilitation programmes including special Treatment Units and individual psychological treatment), broader mental health, restorative justice and addiction services, and services that provide long-term healing, support, and recovery for people, families and whānau, and communities affected by family violence and/or sexual violence.

A range of evidence sources informed the Review

The Review's findings and recommendations have been informed by:

- relevant government agency information about in-scope interventions
- targeted engagement with approximately 40 stakeholder groups from both government agencies and the community sector across family violence and sexual violence sector³
- a feedback survey in which 121 participants responded to 23 questions⁴
- advice and feedback from the Stopping Violence Reference Group, comprised of non-government stakeholders
- the Backbone Collective Survey on victim/survivor experiences of stopping violence interventions⁵
- key findings from the Corrections recent integrity monitoring of a sample of NVPs⁶
- key literature and research on interventions for people using violence.

The synthesis and analysis of these evidence inputs can be found in **Findings and Insights**.

Further detail on the methodology behind the engagements, literature, evidence, and our approach to analysis can be found in the full report, *Strengthening the Stopping Violence System: A review of government-funded, community-based interventions for people who use family violence and/or sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand*, and the accompanying Engagement Report.



3 Representing a sample of sector perspectives at a point in time.

4 Participants included representatives from non-government organisations, service providers, central government agencies, Crown Entities, Pacific, Māori and Iwi organisations, community groups and legal or advocacy groups.

5 The Backbone Collective. (2026). *Just ticking the box: Victim-survivor insights into the uses and abuses of stopping-violence programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand*. The Backbone Collective.

6 This involved the monitoring of eleven of the 44 NVP providers who are contracted by Department of Corrections | Ara Poutama Aotearoa. The NVP monitoring also included data tracking of 64 NVP participants, and interviews with 25 Probation staff.

Findings from the Review

Through this Review we have gathered a range of informative insights into government-funded community-based interventions for people who use violence.⁷ People we engaged with throughout the Review repeatedly highlighted the many strengths of communities and providers in delivering interventions for people using violence including developing innovative solutions tailored to their community, often with limited funding.

Across all evidence sources, there are key success factors that are likely to increase intervention effectiveness:

Safe and effective interventions

- Prioritising the safety of victim/survivors and children within any intervention for people who use violence, as well as any related activity (e.g., information sharing)
- Having tailored, flexible, and accessible support that responds to different behaviour change needs, readiness for change, circumstances and challenges of people who use violence
- Ensuring that interventions are trauma-informed, holistic, and relational
- Using a mix of evidence-based practice models, not one model or approach for all that combines specialist interventions with peer support
- Ensuring interventions are responsive and appropriate to variations between sexual violence and family violence, including when these co-occur
- Including options that can provide support for families and whānau if needed/wanted, led by victim/survivors' priorities for healing and safety
- Kaupapa Māori (by Māori, for Māori) approaches are essential for safe, appropriate, and effective engagement and healing for Māori, with improved access
- Ensuring that interventions are culturally safe and responsive, and can provide culturally integrated options, including for diverse populations
- Responding early and often, with long-term support and maintenance
- Elevating support for children and young people using violence and their parents

⁷ The Review does not seek to assess or represent the full stopping-violence system or all pathways through which people may experience accountability, support, or behaviour change.

System capability, alignment, and sustainability

- Increasing the accountability of people who use violence and the safety of victim/survivors across interventions and system responses
- Ensuring that systems and commissioning enable community leadership, expertise, collaboration, best practice, and continuous improvement
- Improving alignment across the justice system, health system, and social sectors, including identifying and removing barriers to access
- Ensuring that the specialist workforce is trained, supported, sustainable, and growing
- More sustainable funding for community providers and longer-term contracts including equitable funding for Kaupapa Māori providers
- Having clearly defined, measurable outcomes that can help determine the effectiveness of interventions over time.

While there are pockets of these key success factors operating already, the ideal future state applies these with more consistency, rigor, and accountability.

System issues and barriers

The Review found there is no overall approach to understanding and measuring effectiveness and outcomes. Currently there is no shared understanding of the multiple intersecting pathways and systemic factors that lead to family violence and/or sexual violence offending and pathways for intervention, including Kaupapa Māori approaches situated in a te ao Māori perspective. Without a shared understanding of the complex intersecting pathways to violence offending in an Aotearoa New Zealand context, there is no agreed approach to defining and measuring effectiveness. As a result, there is significant variation and diverse approaches to measurement, which is in part due to lack of funding for research.

Across the findings, several consistent system-level issues emerged, including:

- fragmentation across agencies and interventions
- a lack of shared understanding of effectiveness and outcomes
- a lack of consideration of victim/survivors in the stopping violence intervention system
- workforce capability and capacity constraints
- inequities in access and outcomes
- significant evidence gaps
- a limited focus on prevention and early intervention.

These system-level issues highlight the need for a more coordinated, consistent, and evidence-informed approach across government. Many of these insights are not new. Communities have been raising these issues with government agencies for some time.

Where to from here?

While there has been some improvement to the design, commissioning, contracting and funding of interventions for people who use violence (e.g., social commissioning and investment approaches, Te Aorerekura and the Action Plans), there are still barriers that remain for communities and these will compound as demand for services continues to increase. There are also population-level issues and barriers that are outside of the scope of this Review (e.g., racism, cost-of-living, health inequalities, homelessness, misogyny and gender biases). Addressing these is integral to stopping family violence and/or sexual violence.

However, there are many practical and achievable steps government agencies can take collectively and individually to make major improvements to the system and ultimately reduce violence and improve outcomes for communities in Aotearoa New Zealand:



Do more of what works. We know that interventions that are specialist and evidence-based, community-led, tailored, flexible, holistic, and whānau-centred are more likely to have better outcomes. Government can enable communities to deliver the services their communities need by being innovative in how we fund, commission, and monitor contracted interventions. We should also continue to strengthen approaches to integrated intervention models, such as multi-agency responses.



Support the workforce. The frontline workforce is key to the success of interventions for people who use violence. Government should support the existing workforce through fair, flexible, long-term funding, investing in capability building and support, and by strengthening pathways into the workforce.



Fill the gaps. This Review has shown that there is still a lot we don't know. Government should invest in research and evaluation to improve how we define and measure effectiveness, address gaps, and align and improve approaches to data collection across the sector.



Work collectively. This Review, and Te Aorerekura, recognises that to have the most long-lasting impact we must move forward together as a system. The system is disjointed and communities spend too much time and resources trying to navigate it. Government agencies must work together to address barriers and build a more cohesive, effective system.



Committed investment is needed. Many of the gaps identified in this Review reflect a lack of collective focus and investment in the system responding to people who use violence. Broad-scale, long lasting change requires significant investment and a coordinated effort to lead the next steps.

Recommendations for government agencies to improve interventions

The Review has produced recommendations for government agencies to implement in order to make long-lasting improvements to the system of interventions for people who use violence. Recommendations one and two will provide a foundation and mechanism for government agencies to implement the remaining recommendations.

These recommendations are focused on improving the system of interventions for people who use family violence and/or sexual violence, however they can and should include the wider system of family violence and sexual violence services, including those for victim/survivors and whanau and community supports. This will ensure the wider system progresses as a whole and reduce the existing silos and barriers.

The recommendations will require joint commitment and resourcing from government agencies to implement. However, there is scope to progress aspects of this working within existing baselines by adapting current approaches and ways of working. Recommendations should be considered as part of all Te Aorerekura action plans.

There is already work underway to make improvements to the system and these recommendations should align to and complement existing work programmes. Outside of these recommendations, government agencies will continue to take opportunities to align.

Recommendation 1: Formalise a stopping violence leadership group

A stopping violence leadership group will enable agencies to achieve greater integration and alignment of interventions for people who use family violence and/or sexual violence. It will create a mechanism for government to design, commission, and fund the system of interventions transparently and cohesively. This would enable government to strengthen accountability, reduce the fragmentation and misalignment of the current system, while recognising the different operating contexts of the family violence and sexual violence sectors, and non-mandated and judicially directed programmes.

The leadership group would include membership from all key agencies who fund interventions for people who use violence, as well as other key government agencies (e.g., the Centre, SIA). An agency or joint agency leads would provide a coordinating role across the stopping violence system to ensure clear mandate and accountability.

Recommendation 2: Agree a stopping violence work programme

The stopping violence leadership group should establish a joint work programme, focused initially on establishing a shared understanding of effectiveness and identifying opportunities for greater integration over time. The work programme would focus on activities that are needed to create a foundation for more longer-term transformative work. Activities in the work programme should include:



establishing a shared understanding of the pathways to family violence and/or sexual violence offending and opportunities for intervention within an Aotearoa New Zealand context



mapping the integrated system of interventions for people who use family violence and/or sexual violence, including those out of scope for this Review (e.g., custodial interventions, mental health support, alcohol and drug support)



addressing gaps in evidence and research to improve our understanding of what works and what doesn't within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, including gathering views and experiences from people who use/have used family violence and/or sexual violence



developing shared Theories of Change for family violence, sexual violence, and kaupapa Māori interventions, and ensuring individual programmes are supported by evidence-based Theories of Change



developing a shared understanding of effectiveness, shared outcome metrics, and enhanced measurement of impact across the stopping violence system



establishing mechanisms for integrating victim/survivor voice into the design, procurement, delivery, evaluation and monitoring of services for people who use violence



aligning approaches for how government agencies commission and fund interventions to reduce barriers for service providers and service users, and enable long-term support, and flexibility that allows providers to meet the needs of their communities



improving data collection, understanding of reach, and ability to target interventions and address gaps



developing joint quality assurance and monitoring mechanisms to strengthen safety and accountability for stopping violence interventions.

Once the stopping violence leadership group is established and the foundational work is agreed and underway, the following recommendations should be considered.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen and grow kaupapa Māori services

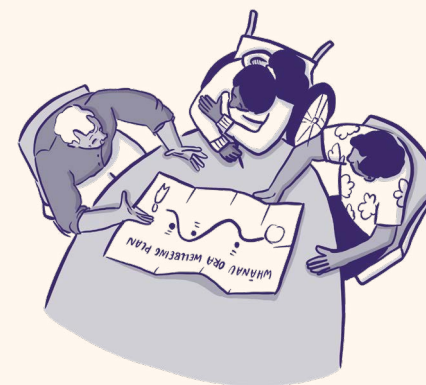
Sustainably and equitably resource and fund kaupapa Māori services to address unmet need, scale up existing service provision and enable additional kaupapa Māori providers to meet demand, implement kaupapa Māori workforce capability frameworks, good practice guidelines and outcomes framework, and kaupapa Māori research.

Recommendation 4: Build workforce capacity and capability

Design a workforce development plan that provides training pathways and accreditation for new and existing workforce frameworks.⁸ The Centre is developing a plan to improve workforce capacity and capability, and the findings of this Review support this approach and the development of nationally recognised training pathways for kaimahi working with people who use violence.

Recommendation 5: Focus on prevention and early intervention

Focus on prevention and early intervention for children and young people at risk of using family violence and/or sexual violence, and social change campaigns that address the social attitudes that enable family violence and sexual violence and act as barriers to help-seeking.



⁸ Including The Family Violence Entry-to-Expert (E2E) Capability Framework, the Specialist Family Violence Organisational Standards (SOS), the Family Violence Risk and Safety Practice Framework, Sexual Violence workforce capability frameworks, He Ara Toiora - A Kaupapa Māori Workforce Capability Framework for the Mahi Tūkino and Sexual Violence Sector, Te Ara Kōkōrangī, Te Ara Toiora: Good Practice for Preventing and Responding to Mahi Tūkino in Aotearoa and Good Practice Guidelines for Mainstream Crisis Support Services Responding to Sexual Violence.