

Review summary

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

Key findings

Engagements highlighted the many strengths of communities and providers delivering interventions, including the development of innovative solutions tailored to their communities, often with limited funding.

System level issues have emerged throughout the Review, including:

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

The Review also found that despite recent improvements to commissioning and service design, barriers for communities remain and are likely to worsen with rising demand.

Addressing broader societal factors is also integral to stopping family and/or sexual violence. These include racism, cost-of-living pressures, health inequities, homelessness, and gender bias.

Scope

The Review focused on government-contracted, community-based interventions.

The Review is a cross-agency initiative between the Department of Corrections, the Ministries of Justice and Social Development, Oranga Tamariki, NZ Police, and the Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention.

Stopping violence is a priority focus area in the second Te Aorerekura Action Plan (2025-2030).

Evidence sources

The Review's findings and recommendations were informed by:

- relevant government agency information
- 40 stakeholder engagements
- survey insights from 121 participants
- advice and feedback from non-governmental stakeholders on the Stopping Violence Reference Group
- The Backbone Collective survey on victim/survivor experiences of stopping violence interventions
- findings from the Corrections recent integrity monitoring of a sample of NVPs
- key literature and research.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Formalise a stopping violence leadership group

A stopping violence leadership group will enable agencies to achieve greater integration and alignment of interventions. 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 stopping violence leadership group would include membership from all key agencies who fund interventions for people who use violence and 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 work programme would focus on activities that are needed to create a foundation for more longer-term transformative work, including:

- establishing a shared understanding of the pathways to offending and opportunities for intervention
- mapping the integrated system of interventions for people who use violence
- addressing gaps in evidence and research
- developing shared Theories of Change 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
- aligning approaches for how government agencies commission and fund interventions
- 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.

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. 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.