

Review of interagency arrangements for family violence and sexual violence prevention: a summary

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Introduction

In December 2025, the Chair of the Executive Board for the Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence (the Board) decided to undertake a review of interagency arrangements.

This review was prompted in part by the departure of the previous leader of the Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention. This created an opportunity to evaluate how the arrangements were working and ensure clarity of role and expectations ahead of the recruitment of a new leader.

In embarking on the review, the Board noted that a lot has been achieved since the first National Strategy in 2020. The Board considered that the Interagency Executive Board model had proved to be effective at sustaining interagency collaboration but also remained a new way of working that demanded ongoing reflection.

This document provides an overview of the review conducted by the Board including information gathering, findings, recommendations and final decisions.

Purpose and scope

The purpose of the review was to look at the current needs for the family and sexual violence prevention system, and consider what kind of structures, capabilities and leadership would meet that need. All aspects of the Board's role and scope, and the Centre's role and functions, were open to advice. It was expected that this review would include:

1. Considering how successes in the delivery of the National Strategy have been supported by current arrangements, and identification of barriers that have been experienced.
2. Considering challenges and opportunities facing the Board.
3. Assessing the ability of the current configuration, capacity and capability of the Board and Centre, to meet these opportunities. This includes assessing perception and impact of the role the Centre has, and is equipped to, play.
4. Options for how functions could be most effectively and efficiently met, governed and supported by the IEB, Centre or other arrangements/agencies¹.
5. Providing advice on recommended option(s), including risks and opportunities, and a plan for next steps to enable decision-making and implementation.

Process of the review

Information gathering

As part of the review, an independent consultant, Hannah Cameron, was contracted to gather information and make recommendations for consideration by the Board. This information gathering included key document and financial analysis as well as meeting with people involved with the Board to explore their views on what was working well, what could be improved, and what should be the next steps for the Board.

¹ The use of the term 'agencies' in this document refers to those government departments that are within the remit of the Interdepartmental Executive Board.

Findings and recommendations were discussed with the Board in February 2026 and are summarised in the appendix to this document.

A discussion was also held with the responsible Minister to confirm that the government did not propose any change to the statutory basis of the Board, the hosting arrangements for the Centre or the Cabinet-mandated Board functions. The review process therefore focused on enabling the Board to discharge those system leadership functions to achieve the greatest impact.

Capability and resource analysis

Following the recommendations from information gathering, the Board agreed to take a stronger role in determining the allocation of the Appropriation. This included agreeing to consider in detail the capabilities that are required to enable the Board to deliver its functions.

In March 2026, the Board agreed 12 capabilities that were needed to deliver on the Board's system leadership functions. The Board agreed in principle to a framework which would enable consideration of which of the 12 capabilities should be:

- Centre-led (the Centre's primary focus for the future)
- Centre-coordinated (areas where the Centre would play a lighter touch coordinating role with reduced capacity for undertaking work by itself)
- delegated to another agency for leadership (resources would be re-allocated to enable the work to be completed by the agreed lead agency).

Further advice was commissioned regarding the current and future distribution of the Appropriation to deliver capabilities, and on options for three capability areas that may have potential for delegated leadership by another agency.

A particular focus was the arrangements for the delivery of a nationally consistent Multi-agency Response given the priority placed on this initiative by the government. The Board noted that the current implementation of a new target operating model is underway in four localities led by the Centre. The Board were concerned that the current implementation process had overly complex project management arrangements that operational agencies had struggled to understand. The Board agreed that this task required more transparent resourcing, a dedicated focus and stronger operational capability.

Analysis of current resource deployment, and engagement with Centre leadership also identified improvements that could be made to the Centre. These improvements included streamlining some management and business support arrangements.

In April, the Board considered detailed analysis of current resource deployment, options analysis in relation to delegated leadership and proposed future budget allocations. Recommendations for potential change were also discussed with the responsible Minister.

Board decisions

Based on the review, the Board has examined the capabilities needed to enable it to deliver on its functions, consulted with the Minister on how to meet government expectations and made the following decisions:

Executive Director

The Board agreed to change the title of the Centre's leader to **Executive Director**. This change in title reflected feedback that the term "Chief Executive" has caused some confusion. The Board agreed that the revised title better reflects the role and clarifies that the Board holds the statutory accountability. The position description for the Executive Director has been updated to reflect the Board's priorities and expectations for the Centre. Recruitment for the new Executive Director role began in May.

Role of the Centre

The Board agreed that changes are needed to sharpen the Centre's focus on its core responsibilities and ensure it is appropriately sized and structured for its role. The Board confirmed the **core priorities** for the Centre as:

- strategy and investment planning
- analysis and insights (in partnership with the Social Investment Agency)
- performance and reporting
- Ministerial support and communications
- system design and standards.

The Board agreed that the Centre should have a reduced role in respect to strategic policy alignment, sector relationships and workforce implementation. The Centre will continue to coordinate and monitor, but agencies should take responsibility for implementing and considering the impact of their decisions and activities on family violence and sexual violence outcomes. To make this successful, the Board will seek to hold all agencies to account for progress, and for adopting whole of government standards and approaches.

To reduce confusion and duplication, the Board has directed the Centre to work with agencies on a protocol to govern the management of sector relationships. The Board also agreed that a Board-approved research and evaluation strategy and research programme is required to identify priorities and guide any commissioning regardless of the funding source.

Multi-agency Response

The Board agreed that a new Multi-Agency Response unit should be established to provide dedicated leadership for the nationally consistent operating model in four localities. The Board consider that a dedicated unit of 8-10 FTE is required at national level to support the operational aspects of delivery, with a strong director with strategic and operational experience.

After reviewing options, it was decided that this unit will be hosted by the Centre for the next year. This team would have a ring-fenced allocation of funding from the Board. In 2027, the Board will consider and advise Ministers regarding the further roll out of the programme across the country. This will include reviewing the right capability and capacity for the national team and where it should be hosted in the longer term.

The Board propose to clarify Agency Commitments which will set out the role and obligations of different government agencies for the multi-agency responses. Once the Board has agreed their Agency Commitments, these would be endorsed by the Family Violence and Sexual Violence Ministerial Group, and then regular reports will be provided to the responsible Minister, on how well agencies are delivering their obligations.

Ensuring effectiveness and value for money

The Board wishes to minimise duplication of effort between the Centre and agencies and therefore expects that the future Centre will be smaller in size, enabling resources to be redirected towards delivery where possible.

The Board also expects that the Centre is structured in a way that is efficient, effective and reflects the structure of similar teams across the public service. This includes removing management layers where possible and reducing administrative support in favour of good processes and the use of technology.

Board accountability

It is the intention of the responsible Minister to reinforce the accountability of the Board to monitor system performance and provide a comprehensive and cohesive approach to family violence and sexual violence prevention across government. This will include specific performance expectations for Board Member Chief Executives. This will make expectations clearer and strengthen individual accountability for collective delivery.

In particular, the responsible Minister intends to place a stronger expectation on Board members and their agencies to align engagement with the sector, and for the Board to update Ministers regularly on relevant activities.

Appendix One: Findings from information gathering

Executive summary

As part of the review, an independent consultant, Hannah Cameron, was contracted to meet with people involved with the Board to explore their views on what was working well, what could be improved, and what should be the next steps for the Board to drive impactful change. The findings and recommendations from this process are summarised in this appendix.

Feedback from review participants

All participants agreed that strong visible leadership in government on family violence and sexual violence continues to be critical. They also agreed that the national strategy and action plans provide clarity for government and the sector on priorities.

All officials interviewed appreciate the thorough work completed by The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention (the Centre) in bringing together evidence and insights and setting a framework for an approach on multi-agency coordination and workforce capability.

Participants believe that the Board is not yet driving system change or significant practical impact, and a primary challenge is holding agencies to account for delivery.

Many people interviewed expressed sympathy with the very challenging role that the Centre was trying to play. However, they also identified a risk that the Centre may be starting to become another fragmented entity, with its own work programme, rather than delivering alignment across government.

Recommendations

The need for a joined-up system approach to family violence and sexual violence has not changed. One single agency cannot understand the issues as a whole and take a system view on the best way forward. The last five years have seen the building of the vision and some bones of a system approach, but the Board has not yet delivered on the theory of collective accountability.

To move forward, there is a need to clarify roles across government agencies and the Centre, with more focus on monitoring performance and using data and investment as tools. Next steps could include the following four areas:

- Refresh the system lead role of the Board and its members
- Clarify and refocus the role of the Centre
- Review funding allocated for system leadership
- Review hosting and implementation arrangements to reduce duplication

Methodology

As part of the Board's review of interagency arrangements, from 20 January to 4 February 2026, Hannah Cameron met with members of the Board, senior officials from each of the agencies involved with the Board and officials from the Centre to explore their views on what was working well, what could be improved, and what should be the next steps for government.

The focus of discussion was not on the nature of violence, or the right interventions and services to prevent and respond to family violence and sexual violence. Questions were focused on the government arrangements that could best identify what was needed and drive impactful change.

The scope of this process did not include seeking views and perspectives from outside government. Discussions were held with some stakeholders from outside government to provide some context for the findings, but significant themes are not recorded from these discussions.

Almost every person mentioned the political context for the work, Ministerial arrangements and the priorities of Ministers are important factors in driving priorities for the public service. These matters are outside the scope of the Board's review so are not captured here.

Discussions were candid and informal in nature and notes were general rather than a direct recording. This approach ensured honesty about working experiences. In this summary, examples of individual comments are included in italics, these are not attributable quotes but are based on notes taken and used to illustrate wider themes.

Feedback from participants

This section summarises the key themes that emerged from conversations. The clear intent from participants was to be constructive and consider areas for potential change. All participants discussed the challenge of this work as one of the toughest problems for government.

There is an ongoing need for strategic coordination and leadership

All participants agreed that strong visible leadership in government on family violence and sexual violence was critical. Many described how the history of past attempts to coordinate from a single agency lead had left gaps and failed to bring a comprehensive understanding of violence and trauma, to related work areas.

Participants agreed that the national strategy and action plans provide clarity for government and the sector on priorities and have described specific outputs required by agencies, many of which have been delivered. All officials interviewed appreciated the thorough work completed by the Centre on bringing together evidence.

We need to have someone who can step back and look at the system and provide an objective and unbiased view.

Almost all participants indicated that, despite all the challenges of making the Board work, working without some form of coordinating structure around family violence and sexual violence would be even harder.

The counterfactual is just a mess.

The Board has not yet turned shared accountability into impact at local level

Participants were clear that the model has not yet progressed to demonstrate how a cohesive, whole of government strategy can be translated into integrated delivery that is responsive to the needs of victims, perpetrators, children, families and whānau.

The Board is operating as a strategic coordinator but has not shifted to overseeing and governing the system.

There was no clear view of the responsibility for the perceived lack of impact, participants most often mentioned the political context, the effectiveness of the Board and the lack of incentives for agencies to fully participate in system collaboration.

A small representation of views from outside government indicated the external perception that siloes continue, with agencies continuing to operate outside the strategy and creating their own separate programmes and commissioning approaches.

The Board could do more to hold agencies to account

Participants felt that the Board is not yet driving system change because it is not practiced at monitoring, testing, and holding other agencies accountable for delivery.

There is not enough tough monitoring and traffic light reporting.

Specific agency accountabilities and responsibilities are seen to trump cross-agency commitments. This means that the Chair has ended up holding accountability with little visible back-up from the rest of the Board. There are also challenges in Chief Executives being sufficiently up to speed with the complexity of the work to drive change, and in their ability to engage with an in-depth evidence-based approach.

Chief Executives are spending meetings at the 'informing' level rather than deciding and driving.

The existing CE-subgroup arrangement is good, it has freed up time for CEs of agencies not directly involved in the action plan, while facilitating in-depth engagement in the governance process of the action plan for the relevant CEs.

Board members felt that the Centre has focused on harmonising, rather than identifying blockages and escalating to the Board.

Give them a framework, let them deliver it and monitor the hell out of them.

The Centre has become too large and is doing too much.

Many people interviewed started their comments by expressing sympathy with the very challenging role that the Centre was trying to play. Overall discussions revealed a confusion about the roles the Centre was supposed to take and what it has ended up doing.

It appears that the Board has allowed the Centre to be seen as the sum of the Board's efforts, rather than the Centre's role being to support the Board with effective mechanisms to delegate work and funding out into the system and monitor performance.

We have created something that is starting to look too much like another department, duplicating service design and delivery.

There is poor visibility outside of the Centre of how the appropriation administered by the Board has been deployed. The funding is seen as 'belonging' to the Centre rather than the whole system and there is a no transparency about how much is devoted to Centre personnel vs distributed to sector organisations.

The centre needs to be a smaller team, more connected with agencies rather than creating its own work in isolation.

Several participants also described highly detailed papers which were hard to penetrate and were delivered without enough time for officials to read them ahead of key meetings.

Agencies can be ambivalent in their expectations of the system approach

Discussions with agencies revealed an ambivalence about how they wanted a system approach to operate. Every participant was committed to the vision in principle, but many discussions included views that seemed contradictory.

For example, agencies stated that they were keen for the Centre to do the work and deliver high-level frameworks to guide their work. But on the other hand, they did not feel that any resulting frameworks sufficiently reflected the realities for their agency and therefore were reluctant to adopt and implement them.

Some agencies felt that the Centre had not sufficiently valued the work and expertise that was already present in agencies and wanted more ongoing engagement in developing work. Conversely, the Centre described challenges in accessing information and engagement from agencies, and this was also backed up by some agency representatives.

There has been an inability to identify the point at which design work needs to change into action.

The Centre has done good work to diagnose issues and describe a cohesive approach but has struggled to turn this into practical action. One participant suggested that they can let the ‘perfect get in the way of the good’.

Multi-agency teams are operating successfully in multiple locations and there is strong agreement that a nationally consistent approach with good governance and reporting is needed to create a platform for any future investment. Participants generally agreed that the diagnosis and information in this area is good, but there has been a delay in translating this into action.

While the Centre believes that it has developed a Target Operating Model and components necessary for success, few of those interviewed felt that they really understood what this was or could articulate its key features.

The Centre’s work on operational design is too detailed and theoretical and doesn’t reflect realities in regions.

Many participants described overly complex programme structures. One individual identified that the Centre has been swamped by complexity by trying to translate the principles into action at local level, rather than aiming for simple and clear components that need to be visible in all communities. There was feedback that the Centre was not well placed to undertake detailed service design, and that this work needed to be more embedded into operational realities.

There is a lack of clarity relating to the use of ‘expertise’ to inform the Board’s work

The Centre has taken a lead on relationship management with key sector groups, but this is still misunderstood, and even resented, by some member agencies who hold large contracts with the same organisations. While the Centre can describe the insights that they are drawing from these relationships, they appear more focused on building the Centre’s own knowledge base rather than applying insights to enable the wider system.

Overall, discussions revealed a lack of consensus on what constituted ‘expertise’, and what the Centre’s role should be in this regard. Some participants questioned the idea that the Centre should aspire to be a centre of expertise on family violence and sexual violence. It was proposed that instead it should hold the institutional memory for the system, facilitate the consolidation of insights and channel the expertise from the sector or academia out across the system.

Stakeholders outside government celebrated the Centre’s willingness to consider the voice of victims/survivors and be a conduit for systemic issues. However, they indicated frustration at the Centre’s ability to turn these insights into action.

Investment analysis and strategy is the key to creating a more coherent system and this should be a stronger focus for the Board.

Many participants identified the need to provide a more robust view of the return on current investment, including analysis of the cost of violence. The work on previous budget packages appears to have been the most impactful work of the collective effort to date. Many felt that a whole-of-government investment strategy could be very powerful if backed up by data analysis and evidence of effectiveness.

We need to work harder to identify where Cabinet is not getting return on investment.

Some participants indicated a need to test an approach to investment strategy in a specific area, with a framework for what is effective and a shared approach to commissioning. This may, or may not, include consolidating funding for a particular type of service under one agency.

We do have questions about the efficacy of providers, and whether what is commissioned is the best it can be, but there are challenges when agencies with different approaches try to align funding.

There is some confusion over the value add offered by the Social Investment Agency (SIA) and the Centre respectively in terms of analysis and investment advice. There was general agreement that the role of data analysis and identification of investment choices fits within the remit for the SIA, but that they are not yet ready to take on this role in the family violence and sexual violence area.

It appears that at this stage, the capability for data analysis is developing in both agencies in a complementary way – with the Centre providing specific expertise on the bringing together of data relating to violence and victimisation. There is potential to continue to build this work, but it will require better sharing of data across government which needs to be mandated and encouraged by the Board.

International comparison

A scan of similar jurisdictions has indicated that most have a structure focused on violence against women, or on family violence and sexual violence which consists of:

- A ministerial group to review data and progress, and drive delivery
- Officials committee(s) or boards to oversee and coordinate implementation of a strategy/action plan, compile evidence and data and provide advice to Ministers. Interagency committees may also oversee funding distribution, although in most jurisdictions this is more devolved
- An independent body to provide advice on best practice and or research, often incorporating the perspective of victim/survivors
- Advisor groups that bring together advocates and experts, often to provide advice direct to Ministers.

Findings

The Board has made progress at setting strategy but has not yet delivered on the theory of collective accountability. The need for a joined-up system approach to family violence and sexual violence has not changed. To move forward, there is a need to clarify roles, with more focus on monitoring performance and using data and investment as tools.

This work is hard and requires commitment at all levels.

Family violence and sexual violence are pervasive, complex problems. The collective response is also complex and involves many agencies with overlapping interests. Working in a collective way is swimming against the normal flow of Chief Executive accountabilities and requires significant effort from members of the Board.

The Board needs to maintain momentum and keep moving forward.

The history of interagency collaboration in this area has demonstrated previous arrangements were equally, if not more, challenging to implement. If the Board were disbanded, it is highly likely that a new interagency initiative would arise within a few years. And this would likely begin again with describing and diagnosing the problem, rather than moving forward into action. The Board should not let the perfect get in the way of the good.

The Board could be on the cusp of making impact but delivering on this requires a refresh to the approach.

The last five years have seen the building of the vision and some bones of a system approach. The next stage of evolution requires a renewal of cross-government commitment, and some different ways of working where member agencies take system leadership roles and make use of other interagency vehicles for change.

The Centre has a positive internal culture and smart people who believe in the mission.

There appears to be a promising mix of capabilities in the Centre, including individuals with data analysis, system leadership and facilitation skills. There is reasonable continuity and institutional knowledge, given the challenges inherent in this work, and also fresh thinking from people without deep backgrounds in family violence and sexual violence prevention.

The Centre needs to be smaller, more focused, and more skilled at monitoring and facilitation rather than delivering its own work programme.

The passion that exists in the Centre has led to them trying to do too much themselves. Agency officials can find the Centre's role confusing, and do not always feel that they are engaged in developing solutions. There are likely too many staff employed to develop and deliver training, or to engage directly with localities to help them on the journey, rather than working through agencies that are already active in communities to complete this work.

There is confused understanding of 'expertise' and whether this is the Centre's purpose.

An effective response involves multiple types of expertise including victim/survivor/perpetrator experience, provider/service-level experience, community/cultural understanding and the knowledge of data and research evidence. In the Family Violence Sexual Violence field, these types of expertise seem to be referred to in an interchangeable way.

Recommendations

Refresh the system lead role of the Board and its members

The functions set for the Board by Cabinet appear sound and do not need to be changed. Ministers and agencies need to refresh their understanding of the role and purpose of the Board. This could include the Board showing how its activity can be more focused and how it can have impact on other priorities for government.

Board members should be the face of the Interdepartmental Executive Board, with the Centre sitting behind as a secretariat, advisor and enabler. Board members need to bring all their levers and information to the table, share responsibility for priority actions and need to monitor each other for compliance.

The Board can refresh its ways of working, with Board members taking system leadership of different aspects of the Board's work programme. They can also delegate to their deputies more authority to drive specific priorities. The Board should also take steps to ensure that it is taking an evidence-based approach, including reviewing its channels for different types of expertise.

Recommended actions:

- Retain a statutory Interdepartmental Executive Board to enable whole of government alignment, and collective accountability for system improvement and performance.
- Refresh the system leadership responsibilities of Board members, to ensure that the Board keeps a focus on its functions.
- Clarify priorities for 2026 with the Minister, and set clear deliverables and responsibilities, with sponsorship being shared across Board members.
- The Public Service Commissioner to regularly review the membership and performance of the Board as part of Chief Executive performance processes.

Clarify and re-focus the role of the Centre

The need to clarify and re-focus the role of the Centre was a consistent theme from most participants. The Centre should be focused on supporting the Board to hold agencies to account, monitoring priority deliverables, system investment advice, and facilitating the whole of government standards for Board agreement and agency implementation.

There is potential to build a stronger model for the Centre facilitating sprint teams and pools of intelligence in specific areas of capability e.g., data analysis, service design, and investment strategy.

This may require a change process, but the Board should proceed carefully to maintain momentum, setting up a 'ring fenced' cross-agency team to deliver the MAR work may help. There may also be other functions required outside government to develop evidence and hear the voice of victim/survivors.

Recommended actions:

- Re-focus the Centre on a more tightly defined role.

- Build a stronger model for the Centre facilitating sprint teams and pools of intelligence in specific areas to provide advice and then building mechanisms to deliver actions.
- Look more closely at the concept of expertise and create more transparent mechanisms for receiving advice

Review funding allocated for system leadership

The ability to administer an appropriation is a key feature that sets the Board apart from other cross-agency initiatives. This enables Parliamentary and public scrutiny of the government's activity to prevent and respond to family violence and sexual violence in a joined-up way.

This is a valuable tool for system leadership that has not been harnessed. The Appropriation should be owned and deployed by the Board and all agencies, rather than delegated for sole use by the Centre.

Recommended actions:

- Retain Board accountability for the Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence Appropriation and ensure Board ownership of high-level allocation decisions.
- Enable management of funding by other Departments beyond the Centre with appropriate accountabilities.
- Consider whether system leadership (e.g., multi-agency administration) funding held and managed by other agencies should also be administered by the Board.

Review hosting and implementation arrangements to reduce duplication

Given the proposed changes to the Centre's role, it is appropriate to also assess whether they would operate differently, or more effectively if hosted from a different department.

On balance, the priority is to clarify the core role of the Centre and identify functions currently delivered by the Centre that could be delegated across the system. While this is underway, it makes sense to retain the Centre hosting arrangements in the Ministry of Justice.

In the longer term, the greatest synergy of capability and functions exists with the Social Investment Agency. A shift to hosting by the SIA could support the system functions that participants have seen as holding the greatest potential - investment strategy, data and evidence.

- Retain the Centre hosting arrangements in Ministry of Justice, with a new Executive Director appointed to manage the change process. Defer consideration of hosting of Centre by SIA until the SIA has established readiness.
- Ring fence the staff/resources that are not delivering Centre's core functions and look to transfer these aspects of the Board to be managed by other agencies.