

# An Innovative Response to Family Violence After the Canterbury Earthquake Events: Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration's Achievements, Successes, and Challenges

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## Abstract

*There has been an increase in the reported incidents of family violence, sexual violence and child abuse following the 2010 and 2011 earthquake events in Canterbury, New Zealand. These increases have occurred both in immediate- and longer-term timeframes following the earthquakes, in line with previous research findings concerning an international range of post-disaster settings. Challenging events like the Canterbury earthquakes and series of aftershocks highlight the importance of, and provide the catalyst for, strengthening connections and working with various communities of interest to explore new ways of responding to the complex issue of family violence. It was within this context that the Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration emerged and began implementing a range of responses focused on five strategic priority areas: Prevention, crisis response and intervention, youth, housing and staff learning and development. The current paper describes experiences from this collaborative effort and lessons learnt by the Collaboration's partners during the five years since its establishment. It describes the major achievements alongside key success factors and challenges as part of a unique contribution that enhanced awareness and responsiveness to the family violence experienced by Canterbury residents within the post-disaster setting. Over the past five years, the multi-dimensional, evidence-based package of system-level, whole-of-*

*community initiatives successfully implemented by the 45 Government and Non-Government-Organisation member agencies could not have been undertaken by any single agency or sector. The Collaboration's extended delivery of this unique package of prevention, workforce development and evidence-gathering strategies has made a significant contribution to the community, by assisting them to effectively recognise and respond to family violence following the Canterbury earthquake events.*

**Keywords:** family violence, collaboration, cross sector, disasters

Family Violence is a major issue that affects the lives of many New Zealanders and creates significant economic and social costs across New Zealand society. Compared to other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, New Zealand has high rates of family violence and partner sexual violence (New Zealand Press Association, 2011). The statistics in table 1 illustrate a high rate of domestic and sexual violence against women, a high percentage of children and adolescents experiencing family violence, a rapidly growing number of Police investigations of family violence, and pressure on services delivered by women's refuges. Family violence is estimated to cost New Zealand between \$1.4 and \$7 billion (NZD) each year (Kahui & Snivley, 2014), with the direct costs to Government of providing family and sexual violence services calculated at \$1.4 billion (NZD) (Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence, 2014).

The incidence of family violence in Canterbury is a significant concern for the region's community. In 2012, for example, Canterbury Police investigated over 7,400 family violence incidents. This equates to approximately 19 investigated family violence incidents per day (Personal communication, Stephen Hill, Canterbury Police District Communications manager, 2013).

The Canterbury magnitude mW 7.1 earthquake in September 2010, the magnitude MW 6.3 earthquake in February 2011, and the resulting loss of life, injury and massive damage to infrastructure and key services have strongly influenced family violence statistics. The

earthquakes have had indirect and direct impacts on the incidence of family violence in Canterbury, with patterns of heightened incidents and severity of violence and vulnerability during the aftermath (True, 2013).

Challenging events or crises like the Canterbury earthquakes highlight the importance of, and provide the catalyst for, strengthening connections between stakeholders to explore new ways of thinking, working and responding to the complex issue of family violence. During the immediate aftermath of the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes, key Canterbury Family Violence Sector leaders grasped the opportunity to explore innovative and system-level ways in which to collaborate to address the unique challenges and heightened needs faced by families/whānau who experienced family violence within this post-disaster context. In 2012, these Canterbury Family Violence Sector leaders established the Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration (the Collaboration).

This paper describes the family violence context in Canterbury during the first five years of post-disaster recovery and rebuild. It also outlines the experiences and lessons learnt by the Collaboration’s partners during that period, including its major achievements and the key success factors and challenges experienced during this collaborative effort.

### What Happens to Family Violence Rates in Post-Disaster Settings?

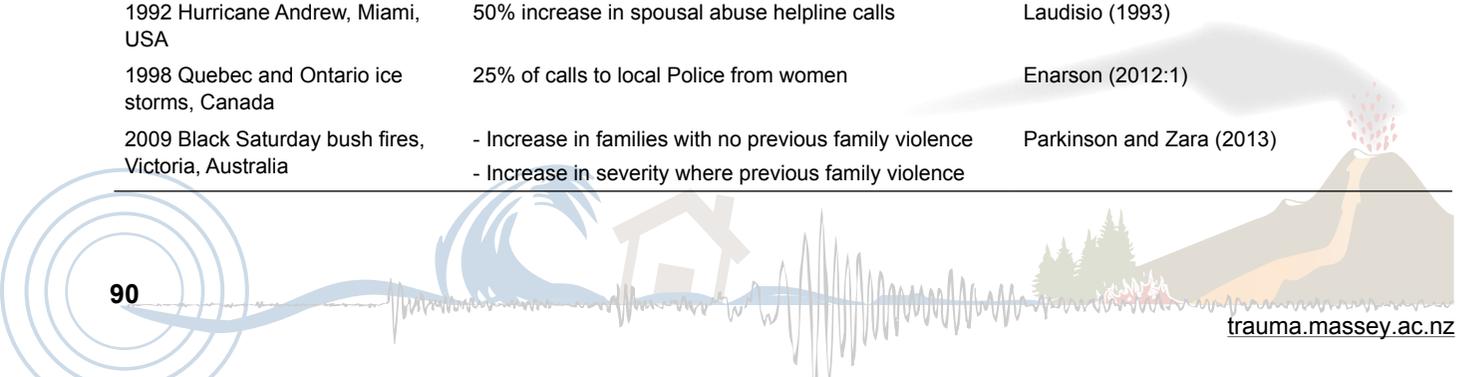
There is now a significant body of post-disaster research, from across multiple international jurisdictions in both developed and developing countries, that shows that family violence, including intimate partner violence, child abuse and sexual violence, increases after disasters (Anastario, Shehab & Lawry, 2009; Dasgupta, Siringir & Partha, 2010; Enarson, 2000; World Health Organisation, 2005). Most research has been undertaken in Canada, the United States and, more recently, Australia. Table 2 provides examples of

Table 1. *Examples of Statistics related to Family Violence in New Zealand*

Period	Problem/victim	Population affected	Reference
2000 to 2010	Intimate partner physical violence/women	33%	United Nations Women (2011)
2000 to 2010	Intimate partner sexual violence in life time/women	14%	United Nations Women (2011)
2009 to 2012	Family violence deaths/homicides	139 in total 35 per year	Family Violence Death Review Committee(2014)
2013	Police family violence investigations	95,981 in total	Statistics New Zealand (2015)
2014	Police family violence investigations	101,981 in total 1 every 5 ½ minutes 7% increase on 2013	Statistics New Zealand (2015)
	- 0-16 year olds	62% affected	
2013 to 2014	Women’s refuge service demand		National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges( 2014)
	- crisis calls	78,161 in total	
	- advocacy services	5,198 in total	
	- safe house accommodation	2,794 women/children	

Table 2. *Family Violence in International Post-Natural Disaster Settings*

Natural Disaster	Reported Family Violence	References
1980 Mount St. Helens eruption, Washington, USA	46% increase during the seven months post eruption compared to same period in previous year	Adams and Adams (1984)
1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, California, USA	50% increase in temporary restraining orders 300% increase in sexual assaults	Prodger (1990) Commission for the Prevention of Violence against Women (1989)
1992 Hurricane Andrew, Miami, USA	50% increase in spousal abuse helpline calls	Laudisio (1993)
1998 Quebec and Ontario ice storms, Canada	25% of calls to local Police from women	Enarson (2012:1)
2009 Black Saturday bush fires, Victoria, Australia	- Increase in families with no previous family violence - Increase in severity where previous family violence	Parkinson and Zara (2013)



reported family violence and response trends following natural disasters in developed countries.

In line with this international evidence, reports following New Zealand disastrous natural hazard events show that during the initial two years post disaster, family violence increases and incidents are more severe and more frequent (Houghton, 2010). These reports are summarised in table 3.

Post-disaster research across multiple countries has therefore established an evidence-base that shows that family violence increases in the immediate- and longer-term following disastrous natural hazard events. Other commentators in the literature have sought to explain this trend. Houghton (2009, 2010) and others (Jenkins & Phillips, 2008; Le-Ngoc, 2015; Parkinson & Zara, 2013; Soroptimist International of the Americas, 2011) note that in the aftermath of natural disasters, individuals and families experience loss, unpredictability and uncertainty. For example, people may lose their social support networks and experience increased isolation due to relocation to different city suburbs or regions. Loss of homes leads to frustration with temporary living conditions, such as overcrowding caused by multiple family members residing in one house, and uncertainty about accessing replacement accommodation in a post-disaster environment of limited affordable and appropriate housing stock. At the centre of these housing problems is uncertainty about the outcomes of insurance claims. Many people also experience loss and/or uncertainty about employment and income. It is argued that post-disaster uncertainties and loss of control over many aspects of daily life cause perpetrators of family violence to increase their controlling behaviour within family contexts with increased prevalence and severity of reported family violence.

In addition to these explanatory factors, findings from a number of post-disaster studies show that some

Table 3. *Family Violence in New Zealand Post-Natural Disaster Settings*

Natural Disaster	Reported Family Violence	Reference
2005 Whakatane Floods	100% to 200% increase over 2 years' post-disaster Trebled demand for women's refuge services	Houghton (2010)
2006 Timaru Snow Storms	100% increase over first year post disaster Doubled demand for women's refuge services from first-time help seekers	Houghton, Wilson, Smith & Johnston (2010)

community members frequently use unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as alcohol and drug use and aggressive behaviour, to cope with the stresses inherent in the post-disaster recovery and rebuild settings. These unhealthy coping mechanisms also appear to fuel family violence (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies & Canadian Red Cross, 2010; Le-Ngoc, 2015). Research undertaken since the Canterbury earthquake events showed a significant increase in the self-reported stress levels of the Greater Christchurch respondents in 2012, compared to reported pre-earthquake levels of stress (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, 2015); and nearly one-fifth (17%) of respondents in the All Right? Campaign research agreed that they drank more alcohol in 2012 than they had before the Canterbury earthquake events (Bolger, 2013).

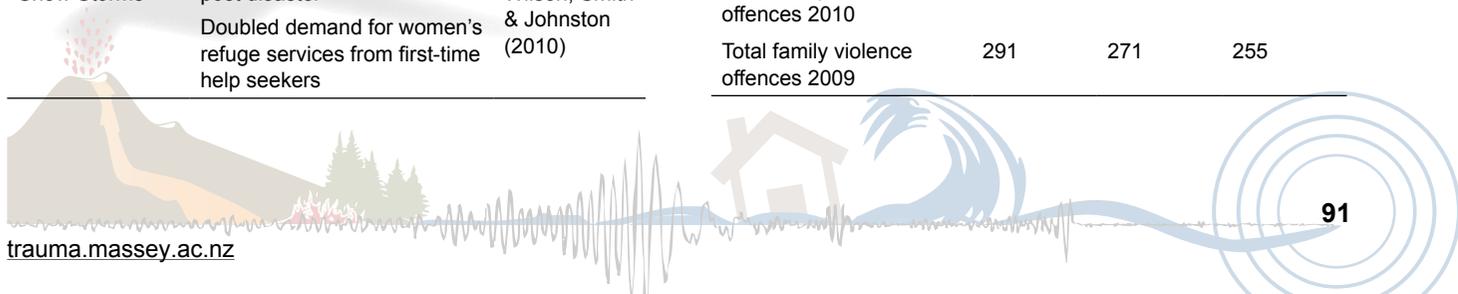
**Canterbury Earthquakes: Family violence trends**

In line with previous research findings in post-disaster settings, administrative data on the prevalence of family violence, sexual violence and child abuse in Canterbury suggest that there have been increases in reported instances. This appears to have occurred both immediately following the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes and over the longer term. Moreover, during the past 5 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the level of demand and case complexity for core Family Violence Sector services in this region.

Within the context of the series of Canterbury earthquake events and aftershocks experienced over the initial 5 and a half years, Parkinson (2011) noted that the New Zealand Police reported a 53 percent increase in callouts to family violence incidents over the weekend following the 04 September 2010 earthquake. Furthermore, provisional data sourced from the New Zealand Police's operational database shows increases in reported family violence in Canterbury for each month over the period September to November 2010, compared to the same period in the previous year (New Zealand Police, 2011). This data is summarised in table 4.

Table 4. *Recorded Family Violence Offences for Christchurch Central & Northern and Southern Canterbury*

	September	October	November
Total family violence offences 2010	434	282	302
Total family violence offences 2009	291	271	255



Following the 22 February Christchurch Earthquake, a Canterbury District Police spokesperson stated that, during the initial weeks following this natural disaster, there had been an increase in calls reporting family violence -as compared to calls received during the same period during the previous 4 years. Statistically, this amounted to 18 family-violence-related calls each day during the period 22 February 2011 to 09 March 2011, compared to 13 calls each day during the same period, in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 (Lynch, 2011). Also during this early period, women's refuges operating in Christchurch, reported a heavy demand for their services (True, 2013), with one family violence service reporting a 50 percent increase in calls received by their crisis helpline during the months following the February 2011 Christchurch Earthquake (Stewart, 2016). As shown in table 5, total family violence incidents reported to the Canterbury District Police increased in the first month after the Christchurch Earthquake. (New Zealand Police, 2011; Bellamy, 2014).

Table 5. *Recorded Family Violence Offences for Christchurch Central & Northern and Southern Canterbury*

	February	March	April	May
Total family violence offences 2011	262	291	171	253
Total family violence offences 2010	264	327	258	265

Provisional data sourced from the New Zealand Police's operational database suggest relatively low levels of reported family violence incidents during March to May 2011 compared with the numbers reported during the same months in the previous year. However, the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (2014) noted that lower reporting could be due to the pressures caused by the earthquake and the Ministry of Justice (2015) estimated that 76 percent of family violence incidents are not reported to the police. This phenomenon of low levels of family and sexual violence reporting during the immediate aftermath of the Canterbury earthquake events has also been reported in other post-disaster research (Parkinson, 2011).

Following the 14 February 2016, 5.7 mW magnitude earthquake in Canterbury, the Canterbury District Police reported there were 53 Police callouts to attend family violence incidents over the three post-earthquake day period. This was double the usual number of callouts received during the same period around 14 February during previous years. Comments from Christchurch Police suggest that this increase in family violence

was triggered by the stress caused by this aftershock earthquake and the increase in mental health issues that have emerged in the Canterbury community since the 2011 earthquake (Stewart, 2016).

There appears to be a paucity of post-disaster reports that examine the prevalence of family violence and/or the demand for family violence services during the period two or more years after a natural disaster (Parkinson & Zara, 2013). This is despite data that strongly suggests an increase in demand. For example, the number of family violence incidents attended by the Canterbury District Police appeared to increase in the short term after the Canterbury earthquakes, alongside an increase in demand for Family Violence Sector services. The available data also suggests that such increases have been sustained during the recovery and rebuild post-disaster phases. For example, 10,108 family violence investigations were undertaken by the Canterbury District Police during a twelve-month period in 2014 and 2015. Of these, 8,706 were undertaken in the Christchurch Metropolitan Area. This was an approximate 10 percent increase on the number of investigations reported during the same timeframe in 2013 and 2014 (Personal communication, Lisa-Marie Brooks, District Communications Manager, Canterbury District Police, January 2016). In addition, pre- and post-earthquake data from Christchurch-based women's refugee services affiliated to the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges suggest significant increases in the demand for their crisis line and refuge services in the first 2 to 3 years after the Canterbury earthquake events. In 2003, these women's refuge agencies received 2,779 crisis calls compared with 4,396 in 2013. In addition, 848 clients received women's refuge services in 2003 compared with 1,600 in 2013 – almost doubling the demand for services (Eleven, 2014).

Some examples of post-disaster literature also suggest that the prevalence of sexual violence and child abuse increase following disastrous natural hazard events (World Health Organisation, 2005). Annual recorded offences for sexual assault and related offences within the Canterbury District, noted in table 6, show a 24 percent increase in the year ended 30 June 2011, compared to the previous year. Note that the year ending 30 June, 2011 is the year in which the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquake events occurred. The numbers of recorded offences of this nature remained elevated during 2012, 2013 and 2014. Within this three-year period, there was a 28 percent increase in recorded

Table 6. *Sexual Assault and Related Offences Recorded for the Canterbury District\**

Year Ending 30 June 2010		Year Ending 30 June 2011		Year Ending 30 June 2012		Year Ending 30 June 2013		Year Ending 30 June 2014	
recorded	resolved								
310	160	384	206	381	193	486	264	423	177

\*Annual Recorded Offences for the Latest Fiscal Years, recorded by Statistics New Zealand.

Note: Recorded offence is an incident that is reported or detected by the police where police believe an offence is likely to have been committed. Resolved offence is where one or more offenders have been apprehended.

sexual assault and related offences for the year ended 30 June 2013 (Mathewson, 2012).

Substantiated reports of abuse also appear to have increased over the years following the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes. Of the total substantiated abuse cases within the Canterbury operational area of Child Youth and Family, the data show that such cases increased from 1,130 in 2009 to 1,650 in 2011, 1622 in 2012, 1,642 in 2013, 1,428 in 2014 and 1,146 in 2015 (Child Youth and Family, 2015).

## The Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration

The Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration operates as a partnership, rather than a legal entity such as a charitable trust. It is comprised of a Reference Group, a Steering Group and a number of work streams. The Reference Group includes all the Collaboration's partners working from within national and local government and non-government-organisation (NGO) agencies and across a diverse range of sectors, for example: family violence; justice; health; mental health; youth; education; social development; housing; community development. There are currently 45 partner agencies actively involved in the Collaboration. They are represented by 107 individuals, on behalf of 1,100 workers and 809 volunteers. Meeting every three months, the role of the Reference Group is to provide advice about the Collaboration's strategy and operation, and the human resources required to implement work stream projects. The Reference Group elects the members of the Steering Group, comprising 12 government and NGO leaders who meet monthly, to whom it delegates the authority to oversee the day-to-day operation of the Collaboration.

Each of the Collaboration's five work streams is led by a convenor. The work streams incorporate teams of people from the Collaboration's partner agencies who work on projects aligned to the identified strategic priority areas: prevention; crisis response and intervention; youth; housing; and staff learning and development.

The Collaboration has also nominated a host agency, Barnardos, to provide financial management and human resource management for the part-time project management and communications roles that provide backbone support for all the structural elements of this partnership (Turner, Merchant, Kania & Martin, 2012, July).

### Collaborative strategies for addressing post-disaster family violence

The post-disaster evidence base has guided the Collaboration's choice of projects undertaken by each of its work streams. This evidence suggests that effective strategies for delivering desired outcomes for individuals, families/whānau and communities concerned with family violence post-disaster include the following.

#### Primary and secondary prevention strategies.

These approaches aim to prevent and respond to family violence after a disaster (World Health Organisation, 2005). They involve delivering education and awareness campaigns that seek to bring about social change and influence social and cultural norms about violence within families. They also provide community members with guidance about how to recognise and report family violence, and provide information about available services and assistance. In addition, evidence suggests that prevention strategies should not only target the affected community as a whole, but also target identified at-risk groups within a given community. These at-risk groups have been shown to be at risk of poor social, psychological and/or physical outcomes after a natural disaster (Aday, 2001; Garcia-Ortega et al, 2012; National Disaster Management Authority – Gender and Child Cell, 2014; Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2004).

During the period from 2013 to 2015, the Collaboration therefore focused some of its initiatives on a few of the identified at-risk groups within the post-disaster Canterbury community. These included: refugee and migrant groups, particularly those who had moved to Christchurch seeking rebuild work (Olam & Stamper, 2006); people for whom English is a second language

(Hoffman, 2009); and young people (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Fendya, 2006).

**Workforce professional development across diverse sectors.** Many people disclose experiences of family violence to professionals who work outside the core family violence sector. With this in mind, building the capability of the wider cross-sector human service workforce has the potential to enhance access to appropriate services for those affected. (Parkinson, 2011; World Health Organisation, 2005).

**Data and research.** Commentators in the literature note the paucity of data collected about family violence across the rescue, recovery and rebuild stages following a disaster. Data is not only needed to better understand how each of these stages impacts on those affected by family violence. It is also needed to provide an evidence base to inform decision making about appropriate responses to address the presenting needs of this group (Parkinson, 2011).

### **Raising awareness of family violence in Canterbury post-earthquakes**

In terms of prevention strategies, the Collaboration has delivered three significant family violence awareness campaigns in Canterbury: The Canterbury Can Stand Up Against Violence Campaign; the Pasifika Campaign; and the White Ribbon Campaign. The first campaign was delivered during 2013 at a time when stress levels were high, resilience was reduced, and relationships were under strain. The key message of this Campaign was that: "Family violence is an important issue facing Canterbury" and families/whānau, friends and neighbours should never ignore it (Scott, 2013, para 6). Eight Canterbury celebrities served as campaign champions. These included: Sir Mark Solomon, Ngai Tahu Kaiwhakahaere; Reverend Mike Coleman, community advocate, minister and school counsellor; Jason Gunn and Janine Morrell-Gunn, renowned media personalities; Anna Galvan and Sophia Fenwick, Canterbury Tactix; Sela Faletolu, Director of No Limits Performing Arts and local youth leader and Lio Fasi, youth leader. Two thousand posters and 2,000 postcards picturing these champions and their messages were distributed, along with billboard advertising and advertising on the back of buses. Forty-eight of the Collaboration's partners participated in 14 community events, attended by thousands of Canterbury people. Family violence awareness and help-seeking resources were also distributed. One hundred percent

of the 360 people surveyed at these community events reported that the Collaboration's messages were clear and had increased their knowledge about family violence and accessing support. Moreover, results from a convenience sample of 106 local people participating in the Collaboration's 2014 Community Survey, showed that 80 percent had seen the Campaign's messages about living free from violence in Canterbury.

The second campaign, called the Pasifika Campaign, was launched in four Canterbury Pasifika churches where more than 500 families received family violence prevention messages in their own languages. This was accompanied by four weeks of family violence prevention messages delivered by the Collaboration's Pasifika youth leaders via the local community radio station, Mai FM.

In partnership with the Canterbury District Police and the Canterbury District Health Board, the Collaboration also delivered local White Ribbon Campaigns in November 2013, 2014 and 2015. These Campaigns involved a number of public events designed to increase the number of local people who showed leadership and commitment to promoting safe, healthy relationships within families/whānau. Over this period, community participation in Christchurch's White Ribbon march increased from 200 people in 2013 to over 1,500 in both 2014 and 2015. Local White Ribbon riders also distributed thousands of white ribbons and family violence prevention messages to children and young people within local schools.

For the Canterbury rebuild workforce and their families, the Collaboration in partnership with the local primary health organisation, Pegasus Health, designed and distributed 1,000 Wellbeing and Family Violence Information Packs through multiple channels. These channels included construction companies' rebuild workforce induction programmes, local refugee and migrant services, the local immigration service, local income support services, libraries, and schools. Between 2011 and 2015, there was an influx of rebuild workers and their families after Immigration New Zealand approved 4,739 temporary work visas specifically linked to the Christchurch rebuild. Many of these immigrants were unaware of the human services and supports available within the region, for example health services, men's support services, services for pre-school children, family violence services, and how to access them (Meier, 2015). Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggested that some brought their family violence experiences with

them and could seek helping services. Therefore, the Collaboration's purpose of distributing the Wellbeing and Family Violence Information Packs was to enhance awareness about family violence and pathways to services and supports for this Canterbury rebuild workforce and their families as a targeted group.

For young people, the Collaboration worked with No Limits, a performance group open to Pacific and Māori secondary school students, the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and He Waka Tapu, a Christchurch-based kaupapa Māori health and social service organisation, to deliver the Bus Stop Tour. This was a performance focused on the issues of family violence, alcohol and drugs and suicide, delivered within 15 Canterbury schools in 2015. Following every performance, students were provided with the opportunity to engage with the family violence sector professionals with whom they had an existing relationship, as well as staff from the local Strengthening Youth initiative and from the local helpline, Youthline.

This initiative offered young people the opportunity and resources to learn about signs that a young person is unsafe. Young people also received tips on helping their peers, and information on how to contact helping services. Overall this initiative reached 1,575 young people. The findings from an online survey, designed to evaluate the impact of the Bus Stop Tour and completed by 94 young people, indicated that 94 percent of respondents reported that the initiative had made them more aware of their peers' family violence experiences. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents reported that they had increased knowledge about where they could access help. Sixty-four percent said they were more confident about discussing and contacting a service for help with family violence. This was a significant improvement on the findings from an earlier, Youth Voices, project delivered by the Collaboration - during which young people in a sample of Canterbury secondary schools stated that they were reticent about seeking help for family violence experiences because of trust and confidentiality issues. By contrast, 90 percent of Bus Stop survey respondents reported they were more likely to recommend a helping service to a friend.

### **Building workforce capability**

Of the workforce development initiatives, the Collaboration sought to contribute to the sustainability of the workforce by encouraging young people to pursue their careers within the Family Violence Sector. It also

supported a *no wrong door* message, referring to how an organisation might link an individual or family to a service in a manner that is streamlined, effective and seamless from the clients' perspective, even if that service is not offered by that organisation or the particular sector in which they operate. This approach was supported in practice by building the capability of cross-sector professionals to recognise family violence experiences within the context of their respective clients' presenting needs and their capacity to respond effectively.

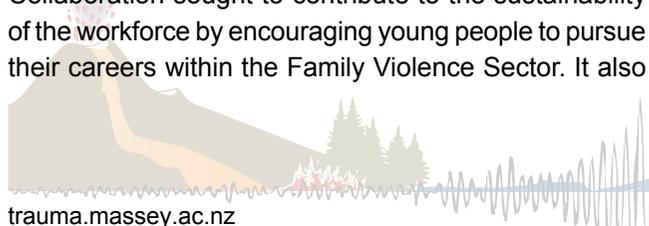
The Collaboration's initiatives that contributed to workforce professional development purposes included a video clip for Careers New Zealand. This video was disseminated on YouTube and tertiary education organisations' websites to describe the career paths, rewards and challenges of work undertaken by Family Violence Sector practitioners. There were 570 views during the first four months following release of the video clip.

Three symposiums for professional development were held on family violence topics, for example on the Family Violence System and Family Violence and the Law. Another symposium was held on the Sexual Violence Response System. These symposia were attended by almost 300 cross-sector and cross-discipline professionals. Feedback from participant evaluation forms indicated that most delegates gained new knowledge about family violence and sexual violence response systems and about where to seek expert help for their respective client groups. The participants indicated that they planned to integrate this learning into practice.

### **Family violence and accommodation data in post-disaster Canterbury**

Together with the Collaboration's achievements related to its prevention and workforce development initiatives, other Collaboration partners' efforts also achieved desirable outcomes for Canterbury people experiencing family violence. These outcomes resulted from collecting and disseminating housing and family violence situational and impact data.

Macdonald (2007) noted that the availability of emergency, temporary and long-term accommodation is a critical factor in people's decisions to leave violent relationships. Moreover, research undertaken by Chung, Kennedy, O'Brien and Wendt (2000) found that not being able to access a refuge safe-house and/or having to remain in a safe house for lengthy periods increased



the likelihood that people will continue to live in violent relationships or return to violent relationships. This may often be due to the unavailability of affordable temporary and long-term housing options (Chung et al., 2000)

Enarson (1997) and others (Tually, Faulkner, Cutler & Slatter, 2008) have found that these kinds of issues are further exacerbated after disasters because demand for emergency safe-house accommodation is greater than the supply. Also, those who do access such accommodation stay longer because of the diminished supply of affordable housing stock (Enarson, 1999). This diminished supply causes a bottle neck preventing many women accessing safe houses at times of family violence crises. These accommodation issues for those who experience family violence, described by these researchers in other post-disaster contexts, were mirrored in Canterbury after the earthquake events.

In order to influence and provide an evidence base for decisions concerning an appropriate response by leaders in the region's housing sector, the Collaboration completed two data collection activities. The Collaboration completed a literature review of effective measures to ameliorate the housing issues faced by people who experienced family violence. A survey was also administered, to collect real-time information about the accommodation circumstances of those who presented for services with family violence experiences during 2013. The findings from this survey showed that 47 percent of clients who presented for services from across a diverse range of sectors (including responses from health, mental health, education, social, elder care, youth, kaupapa Māori, sexual and family violence sectors) had both housing and family violence issues. The main housing issues reported were overcrowding (94%) and lack of affordable housing (94%), likely because of the diminished social housing stock and the escalated costs of renting from the private market.

The combined evidence base resulting was disseminated at a number of housing and wellbeing forums. It contributed to the government's decision to fund an 18-month short-term accommodation service for those experiencing the greatest vulnerability, including those experiencing family violence, within the post-disaster context. Accommodation was provided for a three-month period at 80 percent of the market rental, together with a support service to assist people in accessing more permanent accommodation.

### **Success factors**

During the 5 years since inception, the Collaboration has identified a number of factors that have supported its success, as well as others that have been challenging. Factors that appear to have had a powerful influence on the success of this multi-agency partnership are described below.

**Have a compelling reason for initiating a collaborative venture and a mutually agreed and beneficial purpose for its operation.** The compelling reason for the Collaboration's establishment was the increase in the prevalence and severity of family violence in post-disaster settings that had been signalled by an empirical evidence base. The Collaboration's vision and purpose had to take account of the diverse interests, philosophical positions and operational foci of many different groups and sectors comprising its membership. This meant that the purpose and vision nonetheless needed to add value to each of the partner organisation's goals to empower their involvement. The Collaboration's vision reflects these qualities: "A community that values respectful relationships. A community where families, whānau and individuals do not use physical, sexual or psychological violence" (Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration, 2012, para 4).

**Build on predisposing factors.** Three predisposing factors supported the emergence of the Collaboration. Firstly, the Canterbury human services sector had a strong history of connectedness through various within-sector and across-sector alliances and networks. Secondly, everyone in Canterbury had shared an experience of the earthquake sequence. This shared experience created a culture of connection, innovation and flexibility driven by the loss of pre-disaster infrastructure. The hallmark of what was being referred to as the new normal was cooperation, rather than competition. Thirdly, evidence (Cuevas & Rennison, 2016; Murphy & Fanslow, 2012; Payne & Gainey, 2015) had strongly suggested that effectively tackling the complex problem of family violence requires collaborative, system-wide and ecological approaches.

**Adopt a combination of system-network, coordination, and backbone models of operation.** Bureaucratic models of operation and hierarchical leadership do not work within the kind of collaborative ventures operationalised by the Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration. Rather, this Collaboration can be conceptualised as a living system that has

intentionally crossed boundaries to engage different sectors, groups and disciplines in collectively responding to family violence across the region. The inclusion and participation of a wide range of partners, from central and local government, private and non-government-organisation sectors, iwi and Māori groups, academia and citizens, together with the adoption of a more distributed leadership approach, has been critical for enabling responsiveness and innovation. Encouraging leadership across the Collaboration while including partners with diverse lenses on the problem of family violence has been critical to keep abreast of the ever-changing environment within which the Collaboration operates. Among other benefits, this has helped to grasp opportunities as they emerge. It has also provided the basis for promoting creative solutions that have meaning for the Collaboration's community. This has in turn led to a large group of motivated collaborators contributing the work required to shift ideas into action.

At the same time, some coordination and backbone support was required to bring order and alignment to the chaos of an otherwise open-system approach. For the Collaboration, this backbone support involved systematically supporting the activities that emerged across the various elements of its structure. These activities have included: building internal- and external-stakeholder support for the collective purpose; collecting and disseminating various forms of data to support decision making; mobilising the financial resources required for viability; and providing mechanisms for the Collaboration to advocate for wider system change.

**Use diverse, inclusive and regular channels of communication.** The Collaboration has used diverse forms of communication to support its combination of distributed leadership within a system network. Regular and purposeful face-to-face meetings have been essential for the partners to build relationships, trust and understanding of diverse perspectives. Quality conversation in person brought together their thoughts and ideas, towards collective solutions and actions that contributed to the outcomes being sought by the Collaboration.

The work of the Collaboration's eight official, and other non-official, champions has been indispensable in bridging connections with regional and national bodies of influence. This has also helped raise awareness, while advocating in support of the Collaboration's endeavours. In addition, the use of information technology and social

media have enabled the expertise and advice of the partners to be shared across the Collaboration and beyond, to a range of external stakeholders.

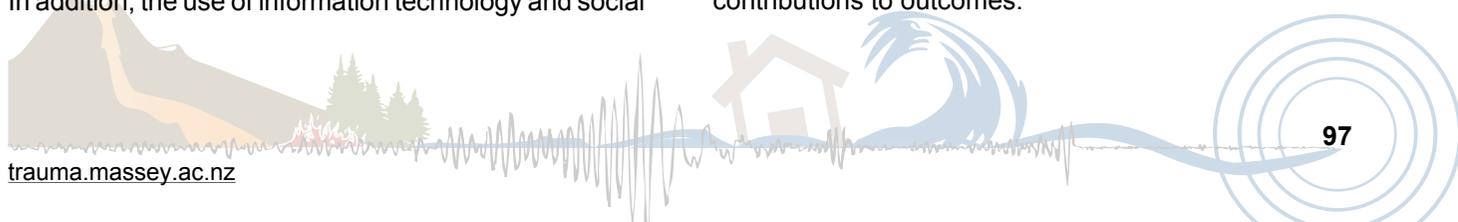
### **Challenges experienced**

While the Collaboration has learned about and shared a range of success factors during its implementation journey, it has also experienced a number of challenges. These challenges have each had a particular bearing on its continued viability and sustainability.

On occasions, maintaining the momentum of the partners' engagement and active participation in the Collaboration's efforts has been difficult. A key underlying reason for this difficulty is that human capabilities and capacities for implementing the Collaboration's projects has been voluntary in nature, over and above each member's responsibilities to their employing agency. Moreover, the workforce in this post-disaster setting has been experiencing various levels of exhaustion from multiple, personal and professional impacts of the Canterbury earthquakes. To counter this issue of waning participatory capacity and capability, the Collaboration has encouraged new membership and, on the advice of the Reference Group, has adjusted the focus and number of projects it undertakes.

Securing funding for the Collaboration has also been an on-going challenge, particularly in a contracting environment that has traditionally provided financial resources for programmes of a defined length and delivered by single organisations. Moreover, the Collaboration has had to manage potential conflicts of interest and risk between member NGO's competing for funding from the same sources, to support the delivery of their own services.

While the Collaboration recognises that demonstrating results is critical for its sustainability, it has been continually difficult to access outcome data concerning the individuals and groups targeted by the Collaboration's. The Collaboration found that there was a paucity of relevant key performance indicators to meaningfully assess the degree of correlation between the Collaboration's interventions and observed outcomes. Moreover, the system-level nature of the Collaboration's interventions and the likelihood that these interventions were only one of many factors that influenced outcomes has made it difficult to determine contributions to outcomes.



Finally, the Collaboration has experienced difficulties accessing administrative data in a regulatory environment that requires agencies to carefully manage privacy and confidentiality. Despite this challenge, the Collaboration has endeavoured to collect knowledge, behavioural and/or attitudinal change data from target populations engaging with its activities.

## Conclusion

Following Canterbury's series of earthquakes and aftershocks since 2010, the data show that there has been an increase in the numbers and severity of reported family violence incidents, both in the immediate- and longer-term after this disaster. It was within this context that the Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration emerged and, over the initial five years, successfully delivered a multi-dimensional, evidence-based package of system-level, whole-of-community initiatives. These initiatives are family violence response initiatives that could not be undertaken by any single agency or sector. The Collaboration's delivery of this unique package of prevention, workforce development and evidence-gathering strategies during the recovery and rebuild post-disaster phases has made a significant contribution. In sum, this contribution has been to assist members of the local community with effectively recognising and responding to family violence following the Canterbury earthquake events.

Based on the Canterbury Family Violence Collaboration's experiences, we offer the following recommendations for delivering post-disaster collaborative initiatives:

- 1) *Build on pre-existing success factors*: The efficiency with which post-disaster collaborative ventures are established and strategies mobilised is greatly enhanced when they are founded upon existing connections and trusted relationships. Furthermore, drawing on existing evidence of what works increases the potential for delivering effective collaborative initiatives.
- 2) *Establish a compelling and inclusive purpose*: The success of cross-sector and cross-discipline collaborative work depends on communicating a purpose that takes account of, and adds value to, the diverse interests of contributing agencies
- 3) *Provide the collaboration with a balanced open-system and support structure*: For collaborative ventures to remain responsive and innovative

they need to remain open to new and diverse membership and adopt a distributive leadership style. The open system supports the creation of connections amongst diverse groups and networks and this in turn simulates the development of creative solutions to enduring and complex problems. Distributive leadership not only enables the vigilance of many agencies to identify emerging community needs in the ever-changing post-disaster environment, but also builds commitment as people work on solutions together. To balance the potential chaos of this open system model, collaborations need a dedicated human resource that coordinates efforts and maintains momentum across the various activities undertaken by the partners. Critical capabilities for this support function include supporting strategic planning and policy development; engaging stakeholder support and advocacy; mobilising financial resources; and carrying out performance monitoring.

- 4) *Be strategic about the collaboration's viability and sustainability*: In part, the sustainability of collaborative ventures depends on demonstrating achievements. Therefore, priority should be given to gathering and disseminating evidence about the outcomes achieved for the communities served. In addition, collaborations should pay attention to securing on-going financial and in-kind resources. On the one hand, this requires less reliance on time-limited disaster funding and more effort to build a diverse income portfolio. On the other hand it requires collaborations to continually seek new partners. New partners provide fresh perspectives and energy that ensure responsiveness to changing community needs while countering workforce fatigue.

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