

**Great Start Waitakere – Protecting our Tamariki**  
*Preventing violence against under 5s in the home in Waitakere*  
**August 2003**



## **Project Summary**

### **Background to Protecting our Tamariki**




Collaboration to enhance community safety has been developing for some time in Waitakere. Led by Safe Waitakere, an interagency City Safety Plan was undertaken in 2000 and a follow up Safe Under 5 Agency Audit completed in 2001. Both of these processes raised great concerns about safety of the City's youngest residents – especially from family violence.

### **What is Protecting Our Tamariki?**

A new project, led and funded by Safe Waitakere (Safe Waitakere Injury Prevention and Waitakere Safer Community Council Trust), was initiated in November 2002 with the aim of:

**Identifying key strategies and actions to prevent violence against young children in the home in Waitakere City.**

Though spanning the general area of family violence, the main focus of Protecting our Tamariki has been on

-  younger children (under 5) and their families in Waitakere City.
-  primary prevention of violence, rather than focusing on identified 'at-risk' children/families, or on children who have already come to the attention of medical services, support services, schools and/or the police.
-  preventing violence against children within their home environment.

The strength of the Protecting our Tamariki Action Plan that has resulted over the last 9 months is that it incorporates actions across a number of different levels, sectors and communities. It's a package of interlinked projects that collectively will make a positive change to family violence outcomes in Waitakere.

### **Who's been involved?**

In December 2002, an interagency advisory group was brought together by Safe Waitakere to guide the development of the Protecting our Tamariki project.

A number of local and national family violence "experts" were interviewed as part of the research that informed the selection of local projects for action.

Following the completion of the draft Action Plan in May, a community forum was also held to workshop suggested priority projects. Around 70 people from a range of community and government agencies attended this forum, which gave a strong mandate both for the broad direction of Protecting our Tamariki and for individual

projects within the plan. Maori and Pacific caucuses were established at the Forum and have continued to meet on an ongoing basis.

### **Links to the Waitakere Wellbeing Collaboration Process**

The Waitakere Wellbeing Collaboration Process, which seeks to facilitate greater collaboration between government and community agencies in Waitakere, is now the new “umbrella home” for this Action Plan. Though the Protecting our Tamariki project was conceived and initially developed outside of this flagship city process, significant overlap in the participation/ membership of both projects led to an early decision to link/integrate the two together.

### **How has the Action Plan been put together?**

An overview of the primary family violence prevention literature was undertaken to see out “what might work”, with findings from this work compiled into a background research report.

### **Some Key Findings from the Research**

- ✚ In terms of stopping violence against children from happening in the first place, there is unfortunately no silver bullet.
- ✚ It is recognized that a multi-dimensional long term approach is needed – which means developing a range of preventative projects/programmes rather than a single one, because the issues/needs/trigger points for individuals, families and communities are all different
- ✚ Careful consideration needs to be given to the development of ethnically and culturally supportive prevention strategies and projects - as a “one size fits all” approach will simply not work.
- ✚ Research also reinforces the need to build on/expand existing services and providers, rather than develop a number of brand new services and providers.

Some of the many factors believed to contribute to stopping violence in families and society include<sup>1</sup>:

- ✚ Increasing the value society places on children
- ✚ Increasing economic self sufficiency of families
- ✚ Enhancing community resources, networks and social supports
- ✚ Discouraging corporal punishment
- ✚ Promoting accessible/affordable healthcare
- ✚ Improving social services – taking a holistic approach, focusing on strengths of families/whanau, looking at needs of preschoolers **and** their caregivers
- ✚ Treating alcohol and drug abuse
- ✚ Identifying and treating mental health problems
- ✚ Promoting available and affordable childcare
- ✚ Increasing participation in early childhood education – enhancing child development and creative play,
- ✚ Preventing unwanted pregnancies
- ✚ Targeting increased investment in lower socio-economic areas and starting positive interventions/support as early as possible in a child’s life.
- ✚ Increasing parental understanding of child development and parenting roles especially via homevisiting type programmes

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<sup>1</sup> Fanslow J, McGregor K, Coggan C, Bennett S, and McKenzie D “Research into Programmes to Prevent Intentional Injury and Violence to Children” Injury Prevention Research Centre Report Series No. 52

### Projects Included within the Plan

The research above, combined with key informant interviews and the following criteria to form the core basis for project selection:

- ✚ opportunities offered by the project to enhance collaboration between and within sectors
- ✚ observations of the local, regional and national wellbeing scene and opportunities arising
- ✚ gut instinct!

### Projects Within the Plan

- ✚ Strategic Action Group for Under 5s
- ✚ Health Sector Training in Family Violence Prevention
- ✚ Family Violence Prevention Training for Home Visitors and other Child Focused Agencies
- ✚ Importance of the First Five Years of Life
- ✚ Alternatives to Physical Violence Campaign
- ✚ Promotion and Celebration of Waitakere's Children
- ✚ Mental Wellbeing of Parents
- ✚ Locality based Project that focuses on Outcomes for Under 5s
- ✚ Maori Health and Social Service Provider Capacity Building
- ✚ Pacific Family Violence Prevention Radio Campaign

### Next Steps

- ✚ The Protecting our Tamariki Plan was launched on August 28<sup>th</sup> and is seen as a five year project. A number of project convenors have been identified and teams are now being brought together to further develop project scopes and timeframes.

### Funding to Implement Plan Critical

Funding to assist with project implementation plans will be critical. We are now much clearer on what we want and need to do to stop family violence and its impacts on small children BUT acquiring resources to develop appropriate programmes, training, campaigns, promotions and support structures is our next big challenge.

Resources for overall project coordination are seen as essential, along with funding for evaluation – both in terms of the overall project framework (which will be ongoing via the work of a new Strategic Working Group for Under 5s) and individual projects.

### For Further Information about Protecting our Tamariki please contact:

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