

BACKGROUND

1. At the April 2009 meeting with the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Christian church leaders the concept of a strategy to support families was discussed. This paper provides more detail on this concept.
2. The concept has been further developed with input from Church Leaders in conjunction with their appointed social justice advisors, New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) and Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and policy advisors from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Office of the Minister of Finance.
3. This paper proposes a coordinated strategy that:
 - A. respects **culture and diversity** within families
 - B. creates a strong **shared vision and goals** for the well-being of all families
 - C. seeks **clear political championing** of the concepts
 - D. provides a **practical implementation framework** based on:
 - I. **accountability for outcomes** for families,
 - II. **co-ordinated individual family plans**
 - III. **contractual commitment by government agencies to collaborate** and support grass roots collaboration.
 - IV. the distinctive **role of community based agencies in building trust with vulnerable families**
4. The paper offers some **examples of how this approach can be implemented** on a limited scale in the next two years.
5. These ideas are widely supported within the community and government social sectors. What is required is political leadership to bring the elements of this policy proposal together and give it effective traction.
6. Recent policy announcements by the Minister of Social Development are highly consistent with the principles within this framework i.e.
 - multi-agency safety plans associated with infants where abuse is suspected
 - first response community based trial where domestic violence is suspected
 - strong links with the health sector in the don't shake a baby campaign
 - the plan to convene an experts forum to determine next steps in abuse reduction
 - the piloting of trust based contracts with NGOs that focus on client outcomes and model government agency co-ordination.

We would like to work with the government to enhance these concepts within a comprehensive response to child and family well-being.
7. It is important to articulate a national vision, goals and objectives that all government agencies and the community are working towards (akin to the Positive Aging concepts for older people). Development has already occurred led by the Family Services National Advisory Council (FSNAC) – a national group of Social Service agency leaders with strong Maori and Pacific representation. It is our view that there is widespread consensus about the high level goals from their vision – Ngā Moemoeā. This paper uses Ngā Moemoeā as a starting point.

MODEL VISION AND GOAL

THE VISION

Family & Whānau Is The Heart Of Our Society

We Recognise The Rich Diversity Of All Whānau & Family Types In New Zealand.

FAMILIES & WHĀNAU

- Look After The Wellbeing Of Their Members
- Love Nurture And Protect Their Children
- Care For Their Members Who Need Care Because Of Disabilities, Sickness Or Age
- Provide Material And Emotional Support
- Pass On Stories, Laughter, Culture, Knowledge, Values, Attitudes, Property Rights And Obligations From One Generation To The Next

THE GOAL

Families and whānau are strong, skilled and connected to their communities. They are able to support their members' well-being, identity, participation in work, education and all aspects of society throughout their lives.

OBJECTIVES TO SUPPORT THE GOAL

A. The diverse cultural and structural forms of family and of whānau are respected

This is supported by Human Rights legislation, Race Relations activity, the Treaty of Waitangi and settlement processes, arts and cultural activity.

- Families who experience racism or other forms of discrimination will be vulnerable in relation to this objective.

B. Families and whānau take responsibility for their members' well-being and for making a positive contribution to the community, economy and society.

This is supported by activity that connects families to others in their community, cultural activity that supports values of interdependence, economic policy that creates a vibrant job-rich economy, and by democratic political processes.

- Families who are disconnected from community support, or experience prolonged unemployment, or have no strong cultural identity, or are effectively disenfranchised will be vulnerable in relation to this objective.

C. Families and whānau have access and information and support when they need it that allows them to make choices about their lives.

This is supported by the intergenerational transference of parenting and other life skills, by non-threatening, culturally relevant, accessible: health, education, and social services; and by supportive communities.

- Families where there are limited life skills, who are disconnected from community by such factors as poverty, violence, substance abuse or mental health, or for whom available support services are ineffective will be vulnerable in relation to this objective.

D. Families and whānau have sufficient resources to provide a secure, safe, healthy life to their members.

This is supported by economic and education policy that creates high employment at adequate wages, by income support policies, the availability of a variety of forms of affordable housing and by effective health services.

- Families who experience prolonged unemployment, low wages or inadequate housing will be vulnerable in relation to this objective.

FOCUS ON VULNERABLE FAMILIES RE OBJECTIVES C & D.

8. This paper will now focus on a framework of response to vulnerable families in relation to their access to information and support (Objective C) and resources (Objective D).
9. There are ample indicators that there are an unacceptable number of vulnerable families in this situation. For examples: abuse and neglect cases doubled from 6295 to 12,453 between 2001 and 2006; family violence related offences have risen 54% in six years; New Zealand has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the developed world there is a steady population of around 6,000 children whose parents are teenagers.
10. A range of social and economic policies, support services, and community based activities map to the objectives that support the vision and goal (see Implementation Matrix appendix one). All families in New Zealand access some level of universal assistance such as maternity or education in order to assist them achieve a strong family. **Where families are particularly vulnerable they require more targeted assistance.** This assistance requires a range of agencies and supports to work effectively together. The on-going and increasing negative trend for vulnerable children and families indicates that co-ordination and intervention is not effective.

COLLABORATIVE FAMILY SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

Coordination and Accountability for Outcomes is Required

11. Coordination and accountability need to occur from top to bottom within the support system. At the service delivery coal face there are well established models of bringing families together with a range of support agencies to collectively agree a plan of response to their needs;(for example Family Group Conferences under the CYPF Act, Family Start meetings and Whanau planning meetings at the more preventive end of the continuum of need). The newly announced Multi Agency Safety Plans are another example. These processes can be highly effective but the early intervention approaches (i.e. Family Start and Whanau meetings) are hampered by a lack of clear mandate for government agencies to participate and a lack of accountability for those co-ordinating the planning process to ensure that the goals and outcomes established in the plans are achieved. They are essentially processes that rely on the good will of local participants, both community and government. At the government agency level there has been a long term problem of silo thinking and acting (identified in such reports and policies as the Brown review of Care and Protection, the base line review of Dept CYF, the strategy on family violence). For example both Education and Health play large roles in the lives of vulnerable children but there is no effective means to ensure that they actively contribute to and collaborate with the Ministry of Social Development in addressing the well-being of children in vulnerable families. This leads to wasted resources and wasted opportunities to be effective. The proposed Family Support Framework links together the activities of the support agencies by utilising purchasing and contracting agreements, along with strong political leadership, to achieve the overarching Vision and Goal.

Tools for Facilitating the Support Framework

15. The annual **purchasing agreements** between government agencies and their ministers will be one critical tool. These agreements must refer to and require reporting against the Framework for Strong New Zealand Families and the overarching vision. They must provide strong incentives for agency CEOs and senior management to plan for and achieve collaborative support activities that are consistent with the practical implementation framework.
16. Cabinet needs to reinforce and model this collaboration and accountability by ensuring that **a senior ministerial committee takes responsibility** for the Framework for Strong Families and Whānau and that they review their departments' performance against the framework.
17. The **provision of services contracts** between NGOs and their government funding agencies are equally important tools. We support the core elements of the High Trust Contract pilots announced by the Minister of Social Developments; ie contracts must be **outcomes focussed**, provide flexibility for the provider to deliver the services that are most needed by their client families, require providers to provide quality services and to be well governed and managed. These contracts should place a premium on the delivery of collaborative service processes such as Strengthening Families and Multi-Agency Safety Plans and on **reporting back on the outcomes from the plans**.
18. This will require a **key contact or key relationship role** to be recognised within the contracting arrangements. It is important to recognise the distinct contribution of the NGO providers in this context. NGOs have an advantage in building trust with families, particularly those who are vulnerable and who often do not trust government services. There is a considerable body of international and New Zealand evidence to demonstrate that **this relationship of trust is the critical factor in achieving lasting positive outcomes for families**.¹

IMMEDIATE DELIVERABLES

19. Church Leaders, the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services and its member agencies will continue to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Social Development and other key organisations to promote the concept at multiple levels.
20. There are a number of potential ways in which this framework can be applied on a limited basis within the next two years.
 - The **multi-agency safety plans pilot** can be used to monitor the degree of collaboration that occurs between government agencies and their non-

¹ Research by Dr Scott Miller and Dr Barry Duncan has indicated that the relationship between the client and the worker is twice as instrumental in achieving change as the model or programme used. Grass Roots Voices NZCCSS 2009 interviewed families themselves and identified a trust based relationship with the families social worker was the key to successful change.

government colleagues. It could be used to test the mechanism of performance agreements between Departmental CEO's and their ministers and ministerial committee oversight of the collaborative process.

- A process of **strengthening the early intervention provision of maternity and well-child services** is already being considered by MOH. The framework proposed in this paper could be modelled in one major maternity service in a metropolitan area. Maternity services are universally available to families and, therefore, form an excellent point of contact to build trust with parents and work with them to identify the benefits of targeted additional support. Strengthening maternity services would introduce a cooperative approach to ensuring the well-being of the child, the mother and the wider family and whānau. This would build on the policy announced around the shaken baby prevention pilot and could learn from and extend those pilots. It would require **formally linking maternity services to a wider multi-agency planning process for the well-being of the child and family such as Strengthening Families**.
 - A similar approach could be taken to the population of **teenage mothers** wherever they may be within New Zealand. This could target new teenage mothers and apply the link to maternity services mentioned above and/or the full population of approx 6000 teenage mothers could be supported via the process.
21. These options provide a **tight focus** within which to test the coal face and national levels of coordination and accountability for outcomes, while achieving concrete social benefits.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The Church Leaders recommend you:

1. Adopt an overarching vision, goal and set of objectives for families in New Zealand based on Ngā Moemoeā as developed by the Family Services National Advisory Council (FSNAC).
2. Promote the vision to the Independent Experts Forum as it identifies more steps to reduce child abuse and neglect as part of the response to the needs of vulnerable families.
3. Develop and trial annual departmental funding agreements, service delivery contracts and family plans that will enable the operational framework to give effect to the vision using current work on Multi Agency Safety plans and Trust Based Contract pilots as a base.
4. Establish a ministerial committee to provide Cabinet oversight and leadership of the proposed framework.
5. Work with the vision, goal and framework provide a focal point for the discussions between the Minister of Social Development and the critical social service providers' conversations about future funding of this sector.
6. Approve the trial a joined-up maternity/well child/family well-being service that give practical application to the framework for either one main centre maternity service or the target group of teenage mothers.

Appendix One
Support System

Strong New Zealand Family Goal
Given Effect Though
Specific Government/Community Priorities

Government and Non- Government organisations work together to provide joined up services.	Family Support	Maternity Support 0-2 years old	Child Support 3 - 17 years old	Youth Support 17 - 24 years old	Parent Support
There is strong leadership across Government and community organisations	Families connected to Healthy, Safe, Cohesive Communities	Universal Ante-Natal Support	Good Quality Early Childhood Education and Childcare with family involvement	Quality Tertiary Education and Training	Parent Education Access to preventive advice and support when needed
There is an effective network of capable community organisations.	Reasonable Levels of Income and Appropriate Housing	Post-Natal Support Home Visits Immunisation Well Child Checks	Effective Primary and Secondary Education Linking parents to others	Specialist Youth Mental and Physical Health Services	Specific Support for Vulnerable Parents Young Parents At Risk Parents
Supports and services are culturally appropriate, accessible and achieve results	Appropriate Support for Families with Members who have Disabilities	Targeted Additional Support First Response Pilot Multi- Agency Safety Plans	Specialist Support Challenging behaviour Youth Justice Care and Protection Social work in schools	Access to Age Appropriate Cultural and Recreational Activities	Early Intervention and Crisis Support Core Social Work Budget Advice Drug and Alcohol
	Access to Community Facilities and Public Transport	Supportive Communities and Families	Specialist Child Health Supports	Access to Reasonable Employment Opportunities	Relationship Support and Family Crisis Support