

# Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework

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## Consultation Workshop Summary document

17 October 2016



[New Zealand Government](#)

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# Introduction

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of family violence and sexual violence in the world. The family violence system is fragmented and difficult for families to navigate. Key issues are: family violence is often not recognised; information is not always shared; a lack of coordination to refer people for assessment and support; and it is not always clear who is responsible for victim safety and managing the perpetrator's behaviour.

The Government is committed to reducing family violence and sexual violence and keeping victims safe. The Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence Work Programme was set up as an all-of-government work programme focused on improving the family violence system to better support victims and manage perpetrators more effectively. The work programme has a number of projects, including: piloting an Integrated Safety Response (ISR) model; creating a common Risk Assessment and Management Framework (RAMF); implementing a Family Violence and Sexual Violence Workforce Core Competency Framework, appointing agencies to lead coordination of primary prevention and perpetrator programmes.

The Ministry of Justice (the Ministry) is leading the RAMF development. RAMF seeks to create a shared understanding of family violence and its dynamics, as well as a consistent and coordinated approach across agencies and services to undertake: screening; risk assessment; risk management.

The Ministry developed a discussion document on RAMF and engaged with stakeholders via three mechanisms:

**Pre-engagement:** The RAMF project team engaged with key individuals in the family violence and sexual violence sector to check the discussion document before it was released for wider sector consultation. This feedback was reflected back into the discussion document.

**Online consultation:** The draft discussion document was released for sector input via an online consultation tool (Delib Citizen space). The discussion document was available online between 29 July and 16 September.

**Targeted sector workshops:** A series of targeted regional workshops were held with front-line practitioners and other stakeholders in the family violence and sexual violence sector (refer Table 1). This document summarises feedback from the workshops.

**Table 1: Overview of workshops by location, audience and numbers**

Date	Location	Audience	Number
16 August	Hamilton	Urban and rural primarily Māori family violence and sexual violence services	20
18 August	Ruakaka (Northland)	Mainly health, mental health, addiction, disability and social services	16
22 August	Auckland	Cross-section of people in the family violence and sexual violence sector and government agencies	49
23 August	Hastings	Cross-section of people in the family violence and sexual violence sector	18
24 August	Wellington	Cross-section of people in the family violence and sexual violence sector and government agencies	17
25 August	Christchurch	Cross-section of people in the family violence and sexual violence sector	25 <sup>1</sup>

The targeted consultation in Hamilton and Northland focused on gaining sector feedback on the Family Violence and Sexual Violence Workforce Core Competency Framework and RAMF. The Christchurch workshop sought feedback on Family Violence and Sexual Violence Core Capability Framework, RAMF and the Prevention work stream. Stakeholders indicated they appreciated the opportunity to learn and contribute in a coordinated way to the work of the three projects.

This report presents a summary of the key themes from the targeted sector workshops undertaken between 16 and 25 August on the RAMF document. The term 'stakeholders' is used to refer to those people who took part in the targeted workshops. The report presents an overview of the key themes from across the workshops, followed by individual summaries of each individual workshop.

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<sup>1</sup> Around 70 people attended the Christchurch workshop of which 25 were involved in discussions about the RAMF document.

# Summary of key themes

## Design process feedback

### 1. Opportunity to feedback back and connect

Those who took part in the targeted engagement appreciated the opportunity to meet with the ministry and provide feedback on the RAMF and discuss implementation challenges. The ability to connect with other stakeholders working in the family violence and sexual violence sector at the workshop was particularly appreciated as it fostered connections and deepened understanding of other services.

### 2. The design process was not sector-centred

Feedback from stakeholders highlighted that the RAMF design process was disconnected from the sector. In particular, a co-design process with Māori and Pacific peoples was absent. Although the Ministry undertook pre-engagement discussions, the sector would have preferred a wider process whereby they had more direct involvement in the early development of the RAMF to enhance its relevance and usefulness to their working reality. Feedback also indicated that the consultation process was rushed, and not all stakeholders were aware of the consultation.

## Environmental context for RAMF

### 1. A stretched sector

Feedback from those who took part in the targeted engagement emphasised that the family violence and sexual violence sector is extremely busy and in many cases overloaded. While stakeholders acknowledged improved screening as very important, they noted it would result in additional pressures on service providers. Stakeholders repeatedly highlighted that RAMF could not be incorporated into their workloads without additional support and resourcing.

# Summary of key themes on the document

## 1. Supportive of the RAMF concept

Overall those who took part in the targeted discussions are supportive of the concept of having clear pathways and processes for risk assessment and management. For some the RAMF document was seen as contributing towards developing a competent workforce who are comfortable with screening and knowing what to do next. The document was described as good start with further work required, including responding to and managing risk.

Stakeholders supported responding to perpetrators, victims and children within the family context rather than individual and isolated service provision.

## 2. Kaupapa Māori models are not reflected in RAMF

Stakeholders noted that Māori are the only group demographically identified in the document. However, the framework does not include kaupapa Māori models, the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the impact of colonisation on Māori. No Māori organisations are listed under 'Safety concerns'.

Stakeholders recommended that Māori have greater visibility in RAMF, and drive sector change using by Māori for Māori approaches. Stakeholders are seeking transformational change of the sector. To achieve this, holistic whānau-centred, strengths-based approaches are needed and resource needs to be shifted to Māori. Whānau Ora and E Tu Whānau were suggested as helpful models/resources to draw upon.

## 3. Framework needs to be relevant to cultural contexts

The framework needs to be relevant to the eight Pacific nations and their unique cultures and contexts with regard to family violence and sexual violence.

RAMF needs to recognise the unique needs of the migrants and refugees. Migrants face language and cultural barriers, and can be marginalised and abandoned by their communities. Their sponsors can also threaten to rescind their sponsorship, leaving victims exposed to deportation and further isolation from their community supports. There is also a lack of ethnic-specific services. There is a need to draw on existing models that have been demonstrated to be effective.

## 4. Clear and consistent language and definitions

Stakeholders commented that language used needs to be strength-based (i.e. not punitive or blaming), plain English and accessible. Across the Ministerial work streams, consistency of language is needed to discuss family violence and sexual violence.

Stakeholders also highlighted that families and whānau are not the same thing, and should not be used interchangeably. Some stakeholders wanted greater recognition of gendered patterns of harm to address women's and men's experiences of violence.

Many stakeholders liked the use of coercive control in the definition of the family violence. Stakeholders highlighted there is variability in the definitions of family violence used by organisations and individuals. Some use it to refer only to intimate partner violence (IPV), and others use it to include a range of forms of violence including IPV, child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, parent abuse etc. Having differing definitions of family violence creates barriers to effective communication, and safe and effective risk assessment and management. To address this concern, stakeholders are seeking clarity on what kind/s of violence are being referred to by RAMF. Some also commented that the documents uses the term 'family violence' when IPV is meant.

## 5. Clarifying the target audience and scope

Stakeholders sought clarity on the target audience for the document, in particular the involvement of education and health services. Stakeholders recommended that the RAMF document needs to make clear the different roles of stakeholders. Clarification was sought on the definition used for 'specialist' services.

RAMF needs to consider the inter-generational nature of family violence and sexual violence, and that many perpetrators have suffered inter-generational violence. This perspective particularly needs to inform risk management responses. There was also a call for trauma-informed responses.

Stakeholders reflected that the document needed to consider the risk factors for children, in particular the impacts of family violence on children. Training was also needed on the appropriate ways to talk to children about family violence and sexual violence. They also noted the need for more explicit links to work concerning children, including Children's Teams and the establishment of the new children's entity.

Stakeholders were also seeking the inclusion of historical and emotional trauma and focus on mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues.

## 6. Strengthen links to other work streams and frameworks

Stakeholders are aware of the range of activities occurring across the Ministerial work streams. In particular, the document needs to make explicit the links with Prevention, and the Family Violence and Sexual Violence Workforce Core Competency Framework. Questions were also raised about how RAMF aligned with existing context- or sector-specific risk assessment and management approaches, guidance and tools.

## 7. Information sharing and collaboration

The document needs to make clear how different agencies will work together, the information that can be shared, and the processes for sharing. Stakeholders noted that different government agencies have different information sharing practices. Information sharing about family violence within the health sector and by District Health Boards was noted as particularly challenging. Stakeholders highlighted the lack of clear policies and processes on information sharing can result in victims being revictimised by retelling of their story. Misinterpretation of the Privacy Act can impede information sharing<sup>2</sup>.

## 8. Screening

The important role of wider organisations in screening was noted. Stakeholders felt there is scope for their roles to be further developed. The role of the health and education sectors in screening was particularly noted. Stakeholders appreciated a lack of understanding of how to screen and what to do next is a barrier for people in services like health and education.

In screening, stakeholders reiterated that the safety of victims and children is paramount, and the need to recognise victims' fear the consequences of acting (e.g. losing their children). Success for screening was seen as supporting the 80% of victims who are not seeking help.

## 9. System-focused risk management approach

Stakeholders said the systems need to be responsible for taking action and recognise when there is a need to remove the burden on victims to act. However, stakeholders had differing views on when that responsibility might arise. Stakeholders wanted more information on risk management in the document.

## 10. Not an overly prescriptive approach

Stakeholders were concerned that a prescriptive approach to applying the RAMF would undermine their ability to build rapport and trust. Stakeholders are seeking approaches, guidance and tools that are flexible and allow them to have conversations to build rapport and then respond appropriately.

## 11. More support for the sector

Stakeholders are seeking tools to assess risk, and flow charts to aid understanding of referral pathways and information sharing in their locality. Stakeholders are particularly keen to have an overview of the organisations delivering services in their area. Stakeholders support the

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<sup>2</sup> This area of the law is currently under review.



development of simple, common tools and guidance to ensure organisations understand each other's decision making and can have clear discussions about what actions to take.

## Summary of key points on implementation

### 1. Resources

Services are stretched and if RAMF is implemented there be may insufficient services to meet need. Services gaps were noted for Māori, Pacific people, ethnic migrant groups, whānau, men, perpetrators and young people.

### 2. Strengthening relationships and trust

Stakeholders highlighted that effective integrated, well-coordinated services are underpinned by the ability to build effective relationships and trust with other services. They commented that agencies need to be resourced to build relationships within their communities to develop their knowledge and trust to make appropriate referrals.

### 3. Bottom-up top-down approach

To be successful, RAMF needs to be owned by the community with appropriate support and guidance from government. Communities are seeking self-determination and for groups in each community to be tasked with implementing RAMF. The need for community and government level champions was also noted. The voices of victims, including children, and perpetrators were also seen as vital.

### 4. Strengthen relationship between government agencies, NGOs and communities

Government agencies have an important role in risk assessment and management, and this role needs to be defined and explicit. Currently, there are known power imbalances between NGOs and statutory agencies. Stakeholders are seeking clarity on how and when to use statutory agencies, and how to improve these relationships.

Stakeholders noted that clients have a lack of trust in statutory agencies and can feel revictimised by the statutory process. As a result, their clients are reluctant to participate. This dilemma has not been captured in the RAMF document. Stakeholders noted the need for resources to build local and regional relationships. In particular, the interface between government agencies, NGO and the community needs strengthening.

## 5. Training

Stakeholders noted the need for training to enhance knowledge of family violence and sexual violence. Having shared training was proposed to create a shared understanding and to increase collaboration and trust. Many stakeholders noted a lack of training opportunities. In rural areas, resources are needed to cover transportation and logistical costs. Stakeholders also commented on the need for accreditation and quality assurance.

## 6. Contracting models

Current contracting models are creating a competitive funding model which impedes collaboration and effective referral pathways. Stakeholders also commented that short-term contracting impacts on forward planning, staffing and organisational sustainability. It also interferes with sharing of information and willingness to acknowledge lack of capacity and capability to deliver on contract requirements.

A lack of shared outcomes was noted and costs of reporting compliance differed across different agencies seeking the same type of services. Some stakeholders asked whether, or to what extent, giving effect to the approach in the RAMF will be made mandatory through contracting or in any other way.

## 7. Long-term programmes

Current contracts are seen as restricting services to short-term and inflexible programmes. Stakeholders are seeking flexibility in programmes to holistically address the needs of victims or perpetrators. Follow-up wraparound services are also sought to offer ongoing support and sustain behavioural change.

## 8. Information sharing

Stakeholders highlighted the need for information technology, (e.g. a shared database), to enable information sharing. Training is also needed on the Privacy Act, and its application for family violence and sexual violence and child abuse.

## 9. Navigators

Several stakeholders suggested the need for navigators or mentors to support victims through the system and assist them to access the best services for their needs.

## 10. Primary prevention role

Stakeholders highlighted the need for cohesiveness between prevention and intervention in the implementation of RAMF. Prevention is seen to be important to change attitudes to

family violence and sexual violence, particularly inter-generational issues, (e.g. education in schools on healthy relationships).

## 11. Implementation: in diverse contexts

Stakeholders questioned how the implementation of RAMF would be tailored to diverse populations and contexts. Implementation also needs to be linked across the wider family violence and sexual violence work streams. One suggestion put forward was to use the ISR pilot to test the implementation programmes of the various work streams before a national roll out. However, some NGOs are concerned with this approach as they are not involved in the ISR.

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