

Strong and safe communities – effective interventions for adult victims of sexual violence

Report on workshop for service providers and advocates

Background

- 1 On 9 November 2007, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) held a workshop with sexual violence service providers to discuss the sexual violence research project (the project). The workshop was organised with the support of Auckland Sexual Abuse HELP and was held at their premises. This report provides a summary of the issues raised at the workshop.

Purpose and format of the workshop

- 2 The purpose of the workshop was to outline the project's scope and aims and to obtain service providers' views on the project. The agenda is attached (Appendix A). Twelve representatives from nine organisations participated. A list of participating organisations is attached (Appendix B).
- 3 After a round of introductions, Dr Denise Lievore, the project's Research Manager, gave a presentation on the prevalence and nature of sexual violence against adults in New Zealand and an overview of the project's objectives and approach.
- 4 The workshop discussions centred on:
 - sexual violence research – concerns and suggestions
 - strengths and weaknesses in current systems.

Summary of key themes

- 5 The first theme covered a range of topics, from general concerns and suggestions about the project to specific issues related to the four work streams. These concerns are reflected in the sub-headings for the next section. They cover:
 - general concerns and suggestions
 - interviews with victims
 - key informant survey

- case tracking/attrition study
 - literature review.
- 6 The second theme covered issues related to strengths and weaknesses in current systems. They were:
- gaps in victim services
 - Police
 - the criminal justice system.

Theme 1: Sexual violence research – general concerns and suggestions

- 7 The participants stated that they felt both 'hopeful and alarmed' about the research. One source of hope was that the spotlight was finally on sexual violence as a result of the project, the Taskforce for Action on Sexual Violence (TASV), and the establishment of the National Network - Ending Sexual Violence Together (NNEST). At the same time, they raised issues for further consideration.
- 8 General concerns about the project centred around:
- limited funding
 - the tight timeframe and broad scope
 - what role sexual violence services could play in the project
 - resource constraints faced by sexual violence workers who participate in the research (i.e. time and money)
 - what measures would be used as indicators of well-being; participants emphasised that conviction of an offender does not necessarily contribute to victims' well-being
 - why the Ministry of Social Development is not involved in the project
 - the possible inclusion of non-specialist services in the project Advisory Group.
- 9 The participants agreed on the importance of raising community conversations about sexual violence. They offered a variety of general suggestions about the research.
- Adolescents and young women should be included in the research, despite the difficulties in getting them to talk about their experiences.
 - A robust gender analysis is essential, especially regarding rape myths. This could include a clear description of the impact of sexual violence on male and female victims.

- The overall focus of the project should be on solutions rather than problems. This could include consideration of processes for implementing solutions.
- Recent New Zealand research includes work by Linda Beckett on victim services and by Suzie Blackwell on jury decisions.

Interviews with victims

- 10 In relation to interviews with victims, the participants questioned:
- how researchers would gain access to victims
 - how privacy and confidentiality issues would be dealt with
 - whether there would be provision for follow-up of clients taking part in interviews
 - whether the research would be able to capture the views of victims who do not report sexual violence to formal agencies.

Key informant survey

- 11 Some participants felt that the key informant study was the most important work stream. The discussion touched on:
- the importance of not over-researching victims
 - mechanisms to protect confidentiality of state sector informants
 - the possibility of conducting an internet survey.

Case-tracking/attrition study

- 12 The participants commented on the complexity of the case-tracking/attrition study. They supported the idea of replicating Liz Kelly's research, which tracked the prosecution of reported rapes and key attrition points across Europe.
- 13 They commented that interaction with service providers was vital if the study was to include focus groups or discussions with service providers and victims. They wondered:
- how the information could be captured
 - how the study could trace victims who withdraw from the criminal justice process.
- 14 A number of suggestions were put forward in relation to this study.
- Given differences in services and resources across New Zealand, comparison of only three Police areas is unlikely to reflect the true situation. Ideally, case-tracking would take place in six areas (i.e. two rural, two urban and two student centres).

- Medical services and doctors could be a source of information.
- One potential way of recruiting victims who withdraw from the criminal justice process would be for Police to provide them with a pamphlet about the project and the researchers' contact details.

Literature review

- 15 There was concern on the one hand that overseas best practice models might not be appropriate for the New Zealand population. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that the literature base in New Zealand is likely to be very limited.
- 16 Service providers were open to being consulted about 'best practice' models.
- 17 The literature review could incorporate evidence on the long-term health effects of sexual violence and the implications for non-crisis medical care.

Theme 2: strengths and weaknesses in current systems

- 18 Participants raised a range of issues around system responses to sexual violence, including the victim services sector, Police, and the wider criminal justice system.
- 19 Positive examples of service delivery included:
- multi-agency centres
 - victim services' link with Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care (DSAC) and Police; in particular, there was a perception that training and education contributes to the success of these arrangements
 - 24-hour crisis services
 - ACC funding for counselling.

Gaps in victim services

- 20 The participants stated that there were gaps in terms of:
- victims' access to services
 - networking between services
 - the level of knowledge, training and education among different service providers
 - funding for post-counselling social work.

Police

- 21 The participants were appreciative of the fact that there was a dedicated sexual assault team in Auckland. They believed that under-reporting is a serious issue.

- 22 They also suggested victims should be compensated for items with evidentiary value that are taken from them, such as clothes and bedding.

Criminal Justice System

- 23 The participants believed that the criminal justice system does not work for victims because of:

- the way judges make decisions
- the fact that complainants are unsupported through the process
- defence lawyers' attacks on victims' credibility and use of prior sexual history to undermine credibility.

- 24 Suggestions for addressing some of these issues included:

- compensation for service providers who accompany clients to court, because having support is in the best interests of their clients
- victim support from people who understand legal issues, such as lawyers
- exploring the suitability of restorative justice options.

Agenda

Friday, 9 November 2007

Effective Interventions for Adult Victims of Sexual Violence – Stakeholder Workshop for Service Providers / Advocates

Objectives

The purpose of the workshop is to introduce the research project to service providers and advocates for sexual violence survivors and to establish a sound platform for the research by gathering their ideas on key issues.

Time	Task
10.00 am	Welcome / karakia / mihi (Sonya Rimene)
10.30 am	Effective interventions for adult victims of sexual violence project (Denise Lievore)
11.00 am	Discussions on these topics:
	In terms of this research project, what are the particular interests and priorities of your sector?
	What are the major challenges and sensitivities that might arise?
11.30am Morning tea / light lunch	As practitioners / advocates, what are your observations on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> trends in decision-making for particular groups of victims service provision and needs (e.g. what works, gaps, recent developments) better practice and practice models for different groups of victims (here and overseas)
	What role might sexual violence services play in the research? What are the implications of this?
	How can we raise conversations about healthy sexuality and sexual relationships in diverse communities?
	Summary of key points
1.00 pm	Conclusion

Participants

Non-government organisations

- Project Restore/WAVE
- Counselling Services Centre
- DSAC
- DSAC/Pohutukawa Clinic
- Te Puaruruhau
- West Auckland Counselling and Psychotherapy
- Rape Prevention Education
- Auckland Sexual Abuse HELP
- National Collective Rape Crisis

Government Agencies

- Ministry of Women's Affairs
- Ministry of Justice

Apologies

- Preventing Violence in the Home
- Tu Wahine Trust
- Miriam Centre
- Drug Rape Trust NZ
- Tiaki Tinana
- Department of Psychology, University of Auckland
- Waitakere Abuse Trauma Counselling