



White Paper for Vulnerable Children

Brief overview with implications for
the WAVES Network

Presented to the WAVES Interagency Meeting,
4 December 2012

White Paper for Vulnerable Children

- Defines 'vulnerable' as:

Vulnerable children are children who are at significant risk of harm to their wellbeing, now and into the future, as a consequence of the environment in which they are being raised, and in some cases, due to their own complex needs. Environmental factors that influence child vulnerability include not having their basic emotional, physical, social, developmental and/or cultural needs met at home or in their wider community. (White Paper, Volume II, p.31)

- Identifies exposure to violence in the family as one of the factors contributing to children's vulnerability (Vol.II Ch.1.)



Our submission recommendations reflected in White Paper proposals

- *Child Protect* helpline run by an NGO
- Expansion of services provided by government to more children.
- More public accountability for CYF.
- Better links between education, health, and social services sectors.
- Enhanced information sharing across social and government services.
- A public awareness campaign to improve public knowledge about child abuse/neglect.
- Coordinated regional/local networks of children's services (although at this stage it is not clear whether this will be limited to case coordination)
- Strengthening CYF relationships with local iwi.
- A *Working with Children Code of Practice* for professionals.
- Requirement for services working with children to have policies and protocols around responding to concerns about child abuse.
- Agreed minimum qualifications and training standards for children's service workers.



White Paper - other changes proposed

- Vulnerable Kids Information System to track high-risk children as well as adults and offenders, *apparently with a focus on risk assessment of children in welfare families.*
- Families Commission unit to review programmes effectiveness (2014) and ensure "the right balance and mix of services" to address families' needs (2013) – *we still don't really know what that will look like but expect there will be some retrenchment of funding for existing services as a result.*
- Government agencies being able to apply for Child Abuse Prevention Orders preventing high risk individuals from living or associating with children, which may mean future children in abusive families will be removed at birth. *Again it is unclear how these orders will be used and whether will be used to protect children from witnessing violence at home.*
- Opportunities not taken up: children's wellbeing, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, UNCROC, Children's Act – cross party support.
- Emphasis continues on targeting not universal services.



Potential for Children Living with FV

- Depends on how highly govt prioritises living with FV as a risk factor, likely to be combined with other risk factors e.g. abuse/neglect.
- Government has agreed that living with violence is a risk to children, the sector now has a foot in the door to advocate for children living with FV.
- FV sector could promote use of non-contact orders to reduce some of the deficiencies in legal sector responses to FV e.g. Joel Loughley and JJ Lawrence – what if victim services could advocate at bail hearings for court to issue (as part of bail conditions) child non-contact orders to recidivist IPV offenders who are known to cruise families?
- Child services coordinators could expand awareness of FV and improve communication about FV between sectors working with children.
- Possibly expand opportunities for the FV sector to identify and support children living with FV.

