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Meeting the needs
of people affected
by family violence
and sexual
violence



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Meeting the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence

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Auditor-General’s overview

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangarangatanga maha o te motu, tēnā koutou.

Family violence and sexual violence affect hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders every year. About one in three New Zealand women will experience physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

The social, economic, and cultural consequences of family violence and sexual violence are widespread and enduring. People affected by family violence and sexual violence often have multiple and complex needs. As well as immediate and ongoing safety needs, they can also need treatment and support for injuries and trauma, income support, and housing assistance.

In 2021, we published the report *Working in new ways to address family violence and sexual violence*. In that report, we described how effectively a joint venture involving 10 government agencies had been set up to support efforts to significantly reduce family violence and sexual violence.

In this report, we build on that earlier work and look at how a group of government agencies are working individually, together, and with tangata whenua, communities, and non-government organisations to understand and respond to the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence. We refer to the broad range of communities and non-government organisations working with government agencies as “community partners”.

In December 2021, the joint venture was replaced by Te Puna Aonui – an interdepartmental executive board that was set up to make it easier for government agencies to work together to eliminate family violence and sexual violence.

The agencies that are part of Te Puna Aonui are the Accident Compensation Corporation, Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Education, Manatū Hauora Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Development, the New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki, Te Puni Kōkiri, and Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission. We refer to these agencies collectively as “Te Puna Aonui agencies”.

Te Puna Aonui is responsible for implementing *Te Aorerekura*, which is the national strategy to eliminate family violence and sexual violence in 25 years. *Te Aorerekura* was launched on 7 December 2021. It makes clear that tangata whenua and community partners are essential to designing, leading, and delivering solutions to achieve its ambition.

What we found

Te Puna Aonui agencies are charged with addressing two significant challenges. These are:

- understanding and addressing the complex problems of family violence and sexual violence; and
- transforming the way agencies work together and with tangata whenua and community partners to achieve this.

Te Puna Aonui agencies are engaged in considerable work on the first of these challenges. There is broad support for *Te Aorerekura*, the clear statement that it provides about the nature and causes of family violence and sexual violence and the need for government agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners to work together to find lasting solutions.

Responding to family violence and sexual violence often involves understanding and meeting the multiple and diverse needs of those affected. Several Te Puna Aonui agencies are carrying out work to improve their understanding of, and response to, the needs of different communities at a national and a local level.

Te Puna Aonui agencies are working individually and with other agencies to better understand the capabilities they need to meet these diverse needs and to respond in ways that are more accessible to people who need them. Some agencies are working to understand how whānau-centred approaches can assist people, families, and whānau affected by family violence and sexual violence.

Realising the potential of Te Puna Aonui by establishing new ways for Te Puna Aonui agencies to effectively work together and with tangata whenua and community partners remains critical but challenging.

Each of the agencies involved needs to consider what being part of Te Puna Aonui means for its work and priorities. Agencies need to connect the work of their staff at a national and local level. They also need to position themselves well to learn from each other's experiences. All of this is crucial to achieving the purpose of *Te Aorerekura*.

However, Te Puna Aonui agencies are not consistently doing these things, which means that they are not always learning from each other. Opportunities to support the development of local initiatives for responding to family violence and sexual violence are being lost.

Te Puna Aonui agencies also need to focus on how they work with tangata whenua and community partners. My staff found that tangata whenua and community partners do not always feel listened to or included in decision-making.

There are few opportunities for people affected by violence to influence decisions about the kinds of responses that are made available or how they are made available.

Creating and maintaining trust between Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners is important to achieving the purpose of *Te Aorerekura*. Some community partners have a lack of trust in government.

My staff saw hard work to build trust from staff in Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners. Some new approaches to working collaboratively are helping to build trust and improve the ways that all parties work to meet the needs of individuals, families, and whānau.

My staff also saw how trust can be eroded. Several issues will continue to undermine efforts to build trust if they are not addressed. These include persistent problems with sharing information about incidents of family violence and sexual violence. Although Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners agree on the legal ability to share information, they do not always agree about what information should be shared, what purposes it should be shared for, and who should have access to it.

Similarly, Te Puna Aonui agencies also do not always use the information they get from monitoring and evaluating responses to family violence and sexual violence to improve the assistance offered to people affected by that violence.

There are also clear pressures on the capacity of those working in the family violence and sexual violence response system to meet affected people's needs. Those working in the system are not co-ordinating efforts to address these pressures as well as they could be. Without adequate resources, it is difficult to see how they will achieve their outcomes.

What I recommend

There is a real tension between the need to move more quickly and the time it can take to develop the relationships with tangata whenua and community partners necessary for change. However, I am concerned that, after nearly five years of agencies working together under new structures, Te Puna Aonui agencies have not made more progress in the way they operate. This work needs more urgent focus.

Although the work of individual agencies might improve some current responses to family violence and sexual violence, it is not, in my view, consistently supporting the changes needed to achieve the aims of *Te Aorerekura*.

The recommendations I have made are intended to address the issues we identified during our audit, support Te Puna Aonui agencies to build on the cross-agency approach's strengths, and help develop and maintain better connections between the agencies and with tangata whenua and community partners.

Te Puna Aonui agencies have advised that they are already carrying out work to address our recommendations. If these efforts and work to change how social sector services are commissioned are successful, they will help to introduce a system that places the needs of individuals, families, and whānau at the heart of decision-making. They should also support more productive relationships between Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners.

Working effectively to address family violence and sexual violence is important to improve the lives of many New Zealanders. This is an issue I will continue to focus on in the future.

I thank staff in the national and local offices of Te Puna Aonui agencies, staff in the business unit of Te Puna Aonui, and representatives of tangata whenua groups, communities, and non-government organisations for their co-operation during our audit.

We carried out this audit when many public servants were working under extraordinary circumstances responding to outbreaks of the Omicron variant of Covid-19. I acknowledge in particular their additional effort to engage with my staff during this period.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JMR Ryan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Ryan
Controller and Auditor-General | Tumuaki o te Mana Arotake

19 June 2023

Our recommendations

We recommend that Te Puna Aonui agencies:

1. work together and with advocacy groups for those affected by family violence and sexual violence to find safe and appropriate ways to hear directly from people who experience or use violence, to improve how responses to family violence and sexual violence are provided;
2. support the transformational change set out in *Te Aorerekura* by working with tangata whenua and community partners to agree on how they will develop and implement a partnership approach and clarify their respective roles, authority, and accountabilities;
3. each ensure that they are better connecting work taking place at the national and local levels to support the development of local initiatives and ensure that these initiatives are informing the development of responses to family violence and sexual violence more generally;
4. work together and with community partners to agree on legally appropriate and robust protocols for sharing information about incidents of family violence and sexual violence to support responding in ways that best support the individuals, families, and whānau affected. The protocols will need to ensure that people whose information is being collected understand why their information is being collected and who can use that information;
5. gather information from their monitoring of programmes and initiatives, share it with communities and non-government organisations, and together use this information to improve existing responses or design new responses; and
6. work together and with local initiatives and community partners to identify, prioritise, and manage the capacity constraints that currently affect the ability of the family violence and sexual violence system to respond effectively. Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners could consider including this work in the next action plan for *Te Aorerekura*.

1

Introduction

- 1.1 In this Part, we outline:
 - why we did the audit;
 - what we looked at;
 - what we did not look at;
 - how we carried out the audit; and
 - the structure of our report.
- 1.2 Family violence and sexual violence affect hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders every year. This violence has widespread and enduring social, economic, and cultural consequences.
- 1.3 In June 2021, we published the report *Working in new ways to address family violence and sexual violence*. In that report, we described how effectively a joint venture involving 10 government agencies had been set up to support efforts to significantly reduce family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.4 In this report, we describe how effectively those agencies work individually, together, and with tangata whenua, communities, and non-government organisations to understand and meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence. We refer to the broad range of communities and non-government organisations as “community partners”.
- 1.5 Since our 2021 report, the joint venture to address family violence and sexual violence has been replaced by an interdepartmental executive board called Te Puna Aonui.¹ In December 2021, the Government announced that it had created an interdepartmental executive board to lead government efforts to eliminate family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.6 The agencies in Te Puna Aonui are:
 - the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC);
 - Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections;
 - the Ministry of Education;
 - Manatū Hauora Ministry of Health;
 - the Ministry of Justice;
 - the Ministry of Social Development;
 - the New Zealand Police (the Police);
 - Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission;
 - Oranga Tamariki; and
 - Te Puni Kōkiri.

- 1.7 In this report, we refer to these agencies collectively as “Te Puna Aonui agencies”.
- 1.8 There are also four associate agencies: the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Ministry for Women, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, and the Ministry for Ethnic Communities. Associate members can be involved in issues relevant to them.
- 1.9 On 7 December 2021, the Government launched *Te Aorerekura*, which is the national strategy to eliminate family violence and sexual violence. The strategy’s purpose is to eliminate family violence and sexual violence in New Zealand in 25 years. Te Puna Aonui is responsible for implementing *Te Aorerekura*.

Why we did the audit

- 1.10 We wanted to assess how effectively Te Puna Aonui agencies understand and meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence. We wanted to highlight areas of good practice and identify opportunities for the agencies to improve as they work towards achieving the purpose of *Te Aorerekura*.
- 1.11 We looked at how Te Puna Aonui agencies support responses to family violence and sexual violence. In this report, we use the term “response” to describe the actions Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners take when providing early intervention, crisis responses, and long-term support to meet the needs of people, families, and whānau affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.12 Responding properly to family violence and sexual violence often involves understanding and meeting the diverse and multiple needs of people affected by that violence. These could include physical and mental health needs, housing needs, income support, ensuring the safety of those affected by violence, and holding those who use violence accountable.
- 1.13 Therefore, responses to violence do not fit into the responsibilities of individual government agencies.
- 1.14 *Te Aorerekura* makes clear that tangata whenua and community partners are essential to designing, leading, and delivering solutions to make change. This suggests fundamental changes to how government agencies work with tangata whenua and community partners, including changes to who is involved in designing policy, delivering responses, and making decisions.
- 1.15 Te Puna Aonui agencies need to find new ways to work together while creating partnerships with tangata whenua and community partners. As we stated in our 2021 report, partnerships form when the parties involved agree what the purpose of their partnership is, what their respective roles are, and what all parties need to do for the partnership to operate effectively.

- 1.16 We recognise that meaningful partnerships take time to develop and that eliminating family violence and sexual violence is a generational challenge. We carried out this work during a time of significant change in how Te Puna Aonui agencies work together and with tangata whenua and community partners.
- 1.17 However, we also recognise that the systemic changes *Te Aorerekura* calls for need to happen soon to support eliminating family violence and sexual violence within a generation. We wanted to assess how well Te Puna Aonui agencies are progressing with these systemic changes and what challenges they need to address to do it effectively.

What we looked at

- 1.18 We looked at how Te Puna Aonui agencies support responses to family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.19 We looked at responses to family violence and sexual violence because the system for preventing, detecting, and responding to family violence and sexual violence currently focuses on this work. However, we acknowledge that responding to family violence and sexual violence effectively is only one part of the work that Te Puna Aonui agencies do.
- 1.20 Our audit focused on three main points. They are:
- how well Te Puna Aonui agencies understand the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence;
 - how well Te Puna Aonui agencies are planning to meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence; and
 - how well Te Puna Aonui agencies are working to deliver responses in ways that best meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.21 We also looked at how information about incidents of family violence is shared to support effective responses and how responses are monitored to support decision-making about improving those responses.

What we did not look at

- 1.22 We did not look specifically at work Te Puna Aonui agencies are doing to strengthen efforts to prevent violence from occurring or to support longer-term healing and recovery. Therefore, this report does not address all the work that agencies are doing to help those affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.23 However, we consider that our recommendations can help Te Puna Aonui agencies' work on prevention and healing. They focus, in part, on building relationships between agencies and with tangata whenua and community partners. In our view, this will help support work to achieve the purpose of *Te Aorerekura* more broadly.
- 1.24 We did not look at policy decisions about the development and implementation of *Te Aorerekura* or setting up Te Puna Aonui.
- 1.25 We did not evaluate the merits of individual responses or the effectiveness of individual organisations (including community partners) in providing particular responses. We also did not assess whether decisions to fund or stop funding particular responses were the right decisions.

How we carried out the audit

- 1.26 To carry out the audit, we:
- reviewed and analysed relevant documents from Te Puna Aonui agencies and the business unit of Te Puna Aonui;
 - carried out more than 80 interviews with people from:
 - the national offices of Te Puna Aonui agencies;
 - the business unit of Te Puna Aonui;
 - community partners working with Te Puna Aonui agencies and the business unit of Te Puna Aonui; and
 - Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua groups, and community partners engaged in four local initiatives (see paragraph 2.35);
 - visited organisations working with those affected by family violence and sexual violence in Auckland and Canterbury;² and
 - spoke with experts and working/advisory group members with specialist knowledge and experience of working with people affected by family violence and sexual violence.

² Restrictions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted our travel plans, so we carried out some interviews remotely.

Structure of our report

- 1.27 In Part 2, we discuss the complexity involved in eliminating family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.28 In Part 3, we discuss how well Te Puna Aonui agencies understand the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.29 In Part 4, we discuss how well Te Puna Aonui agencies are meeting the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.30 In Part 5, we look at how well Te Puna Aonui agencies are addressing capacity issues that affect their ability to meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence.

The complex task of eliminating family violence and sexual violence

2

- 2.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- the complexity of family violence and sexual violence;
 - what Te Puna Aonui is;
 - *Te Aorerekura* – the national strategy to eliminate family violence and sexual violence; and
 - the operating environment of Te Puna Aonui agencies.

Family violence and sexual violence are complex problems

- 2.2 *Te Aorerekura* defines family violence as a pattern of behaviour where a person coerces, controls, or harms another person they are in a close personal relationship with. It includes intimate partner violence, elder abuse, child abuse, dating violence, stalking, and violence towards another family or whānau member. It can manifest as physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and/or spiritual abuse, and it can involve economic abuse or exploitation.
- 2.3 *Te Aorerekura* defines sexual violence as any sexual behaviour towards another person without that person's freely given consent. It includes sexual violation, incest, rape, assault, exploitation, trafficking, grooming, sexual harassment, and unwanted kissing or touching. Sexual violence also includes digital or online sexual harm.
- 2.4 Women, children and young people, tangata whenua, Pacific peoples, disabled people, older people, LGBTQIA+ communities, ethnic communities, and people experiencing compounding forms of disadvantage and discrimination are at a higher risk of experiencing these forms of violence.
- 2.5 People can belong to one or more marginalised groups (which is known as intersectionality). Intersectionality shapes the diversity of people's experiences and the harmful effects that violence has.
- 2.6 The consequences of violence are wide-ranging and often intergenerational. This means that responses often need to be tailored to a person's specific circumstances. It is likely that multiple responses will be needed and that multiple agencies will need to be involved.
- 2.7 The level of each agency's involvement in addressing family violence and sexual violence also varies. Each agency will also have a different focus, including preventing family violence and sexual violence, responding to the immediate needs of those affected by that violence, and supporting their long-term recovery.
- 2.8 As Cabinet was advised, collaborative and sustainable responses are needed to eliminate family violence and sexual violence. Agencies also need to have clear roles and responsibilities that cover multiple levels and areas of expertise.

Te Puna Aonui and its role

- 2.9 Te Puna Aonui is an interdepartmental executive board created under section 26 of the Public Service Act 2020. An interdepartmental executive board is a formal collaborative arrangement that involves two or more government departments. It allows those agencies to align and co-ordinate their strategic policy, planning, and budgeting activities. Te Puna Aonui involves 10 government agencies (see paragraph 1.6).
- 2.10 Interdepartmental executive boards are used to support priority work that spans multiple agencies' responsibilities. For Te Puna Aonui, the priority area is implementing *Te Aorerekura* – the national strategy for eliminating family violence and sexual violence. Te Puna Aonui replaced the Joint Venture for Family Violence and Sexual Violence in this role.
- 2.11 A Board comprising the chief executives of the 10 Te Puna Aonui agencies governs Te Puna Aonui. The Public Service Commissioner is the independent chairperson of the Board. Te Puna Aonui has its own chief executive and a dedicated business unit that supports the Board to deliver on its functions.
- 2.12 Therefore, Te Puna Aonui describes the 10 agencies as a collective, the chief executives of those agencies, and the chief executive and business unit of Te Puna Aonui.
- 2.13 Te Puna Aonui uses the same accountability mechanisms that exist between a departmental chief executive and a Minister, and the members of the Board are jointly responsible for the operations of Te Puna Aonui.
- 2.14 The Minister for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence is the responsible Minister for Te Puna Aonui. The Board reports and is accountable to this Minister.
- 2.15 Te Puna Aonui emphasised that introducing this formal collective accountability was a significant change to how Te Puna Aonui agencies operate. The Board must consider new ideas and problems collectively and at multiple levels between their agencies to find collective solutions.
- 2.16 The role of Te Puna Aonui includes:
- providing whole-of-government strategy, policy, and budgeting advice to Ministers on eliminating family violence and sexual violence;
 - providing analysis and evidence to support Ministers to make decisions about specific interventions;
 - providing Ministers with oversight of interventions and outcomes throughout the whole family violence and sexual violence response system to identify any links, gaps, or opportunities;

- monitoring, supporting, and co-ordinating the implementation of *Te Aorerekura* and other priority and cross-agency initiatives; and
 - managing relationships between government agencies and organisations that work to address family violence and sexual violence.
- 2.17 Te Puna Aonui is also developing an outcomes framework and a learning and monitoring system to support these functions and to report on progress and performance against the action plan for *Te Aorerekura*.
- 2.18 Te Puna Aonui does not replicate or replace its agencies' functions and responsibilities. Te Puna Aonui agencies hold the policy, strategy, and funding levers to support the elimination of violence. They also remain responsible to their own Ministers for delivering other services and implementing Cabinet decisions – including progressing actions in relation to *Te Aorerekura*.
- 2.19 Te Pūkotahitanga, the Tangata Whenua Ministerial Advisory Group, was appointed in June 2022 to provide independent advice on implementing *Te Aorerekura*. Setting up Te Pūkotahitanga is action 8 in the *Te Aorerekura* action plan. It is an integral part of creating a community-led system for responding to family violence and sexual violence.

***Te Aorerekura* – the national strategy to eliminate family violence and sexual violence**

- 2.20 *Te Aorerekura* was launched on 7 December 2021. The foreword to *Te Aorerekura* explains its ambition:
- Te Aorerekura sets a collective ambition to create peaceful homes where children, families and whānau thrive; to enable safe communities where all people are respected; and to support the wellbeing of our nation. It represents an evolution in our journey to address violence in our homes and communities.³*
- 2.21 To support this ambition, *Te Aorerekura* adopts the Tokotoru prevention and well-being model. Tokotoru (which means the unbreakable three) highlights the following three interconnected dimensions:
- strengthening (factors that protect against family violence and sexual violence);
 - responding (holistic early intervention, crisis responses, and long-term support); and
 - healing (spaces and support that enable healing, recovery, and restoration).

³ New Zealand Government (2021), *Te Aorerekura: The enduring spirit of affection – the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence*, at tepunaonui.govt.nz.

- 2.22 All three of these dimensions are needed to eliminate violence.⁴ *Te Aorerekura* states that eliminating violence requires rebalancing efforts towards prevention and support for longer-term healing and recovery.
- 2.23 The ability and willingness of Te Puna Aonui agencies to work together and differently are central to eliminating family violence and sexual violence. However, that is not enough.
- 2.24 Under *Te Aorerekura*, government agencies need to work with tangata whenua, specialists in family violence and sexual violence, and communities to respond to family violence and sexual violence in ways that meet the needs of diverse communities.⁵
- 2.25 *Te Aorerekura* outlines six interconnected “shifts” that government agencies, tangata whenua, specialist sectors, and communities need to make to eliminate family violence and sexual violence. These shifts are:
- **Shift 1: Towards strength-based well-being** – Adopt a strength-based well-being approach that integrates prevention, responses, and healing by adopting the Tokotoru model, with a focus on changing the social conditions, structures, and norms that perpetuate harm;
 - **Shift 2: Towards mobilising communities** – Mobilise communities through sustainable trust-based relationships and commissioning decisions that are grounded in Te Tiriti and by sharing evidence about what works;
 - **Shift 3: Towards skilled, culturally competent, and sustainable workforces** – Resourcing and equipping the specialist, general, and informal workforces to safely respond, heal, prevent harm, and enable well-being;
 - **Shift 4: Towards investment in primary prevention** – Invest in a Te Tiriti-based primary prevention model that strengthens the protective factors so that family violence and sexual violence do not occur;
 - **Shift 5: Towards safe, accessible, and integrated responses** – Ensure that accessible, safe, and integrated responses meet specific needs, do not perpetuate trauma, and achieve safety and accountability; and
 - **Shift 6: Towards increased capacity for healing** – Increase capacity for healing to acknowledge and address trauma for people and whānau.

4 The Auckland Co-design Lab and the Southern Initiative developed the Tokotoru model. See aucklandco-lab.nz for more information about Auckland Co-design Lab and tsi.nz for more information about the Southern Initiative.

5 Communities include people who live in the same places and people who share identities or interests (for example, disabled people, LGBTQIA+ people, and migrant communities).

- 2.26 *Te Aorerekura* has an action plan that sets out 40 initial government actions for December 2021 to December 2023.⁶ It is intended that the action plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually after an annual *Te Aorerekura* hui.

Te Puna Aonui agencies' operating environment is complex and always changing

Te Puna Aonui agencies must implement *Te Aorerekura* alongside other priorities

- 2.27 Te Puna Aonui agencies are tasked with supporting the implementation of *Te Aorerekura*. They must do this while also managing and implementing other government- and agency-specific strategies, priorities, and operating models.
- 2.28 For example, the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is an overarching framework that aims to align the work of government agencies and other organisations to make New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people. Eliminating family violence and sexual violence is central to achieving that strategy's outcomes.
- 2.29 Examples of agency-specific strategies include:
- *Hōkai Rangī*, which is Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections' strategy to address the over-representation of Māori in the corrections system and deliver better outcomes for Māori; and
 - *Te Ao Mārama*, which is a judicially led initiative, supported by the Ministry of Justice, that aims to significantly change the way district courts operate.
- 2.30 Te Puna Aonui agencies must co-ordinate the delivery of the six shifts in *Te Aorerekura* with their own and cross-agency strategies while accommodating significant structural changes that are likely to affect how they provide responses to meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 2.31 These structural changes include the health system reforms, which created two new entities – Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand and Te Aka Whai Ora Māori Health Authority. These entities each have a role in ensuring that the health system can meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 2.32 Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People was set up in July 2022. Whaikaha intends to improve the partnership between the government and the disabled community, and to transform the disability support system. *Te Aorerekura* states that government agencies need to better understand the experiences of disabled people affected by violence. Whaikaha's work will be important in achieving that.

⁶ New Zealand Government (2021), *Te Aorerekura: The enduring spirit of affection – Action Plan for the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual violence*, at tepunaonui.govt.nz.

- 2.33 Te Puna Aonui agencies need to understand, collectively and individually, how these strategies and structural changes support their work to implement *Te Aorerekura* and its action plan. They also need to communicate this understanding to their staff, tangata whenua, and community partners.

Te Puna Aonui agencies must support new ways of working at a local level

- 2.34 Te Puna Aonui agencies have an important role in supporting the development of local approaches to working between agencies and with tangata whenua and community partners.
- 2.35 Several local or regional initiatives support government agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners to work together to address family violence and sexual violence. For our audit, we looked at:
- the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board;
 - the Integrated Safety Response Canterbury;
 - Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke Waitamatā; and
 - Te Kura (in Hawke's Bay).
- 2.36 These four initiatives have an important role in informing the development of the community-led responses that *Te Aorerekura* calls for.
- 2.37 The South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board is a place-based initiative that was set up in 2016. It brings together local decision-makers and practitioners from government agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners to work with people, families, and whānau to identify, test, and learn what works (and what doesn't) in its communities. Its work includes responses to family violence.
- 2.38 The Integrated Safety Response Canterbury, set up in 2016, focuses on responding to family violence. It works with tangata whenua and community partners to ensure the immediate safety of victims and their children. It also works with perpetrators to prevent further violence.
- 2.39 The Integrated Safety Response Canterbury's funding covers its dedicated staff, daily risk assessment and triage, family safety plans, an electronic case management system, and an intensive case-management approach to working collectively with high-risk families.
- 2.40 Under the Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke Waitematā and Te Kura initiatives, government agencies, iwi, and community partners take a collaborative approach to reducing family harm and preventing re-victimisation.

- 2.41 Police fund some roles to enable this way of working, but the Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke Waitematā and Te Kura initiatives do not receive the funding that the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Safety Response Canterbury do. Therefore, they must rely on agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners setting aside time from their other commitments to participate.

Important changes to how Te Puna Aonui agencies work with community partners

- 2.42 Changes that could support closer working relationships between government agencies and community partners are under way. The first involves changing how government agencies, including Te Puna Aonui agencies, commission social services.
- 2.43 In 2018, the Minister of Social Development asked the chief executives of social sector agencies (who work together as the Social Wellbeing Board) to find ways to improve the government’s commissioning approach.⁷ The aim of this work was to support those organisations providing social sector services to be effective and responsive to need in their communities.
- 2.44 The Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki led work on social sector commissioning that was well advanced when we began our audit. The *Social sector commissioning: 2022–2028 action plan* was released in October 2022. A project board that included people from the non-government sector created this action plan.
- 2.45 This document describes a plan to implement a relational approach to commissioning services in the social sector. A relational approach emphasises the importance of trusted meaningful relationships at the centre of all activity. The action plan states that relationships:
- ... encourage new ways to fund and co-fund services, empowering individuals, families, whānau, and communities to self-determine how they wish to engage with services that support their aspirations.*⁸
- 2.46 Because changes to social sector commissioning were likely, we did not look at approaches to commissioning as part of our audit. However, commissioning was of concern to many people we spoke to (see paragraphs 4.41 and 4.43).
- 2.47 Steps have also been taken to support a more connected public service at the regional level. The Public Service Act 2020 allows system leads – who are mandated to lead a particular area or function throughout the public service – to be appointed.

7 The chief executives that make up the Board of Te Puna Aonui are also part of the Social Wellbeing Board.

8 Ministry of Social Development (2022), *Social sector commissioning: 2022–2028 action plan*, at msd.govt.nz.

- 2.48 The Ministry of Social Development's chief executive has been appointed as a system lead with a focus on how the public service organises, aligns, and delivers services in the regions and how the regions stay connected to national priorities.
- 2.49 Regional Public Service Commissioners have also been appointed. They are intended to strengthen regional system leadership by co-ordinating and aligning central government decision-makers.
- 2.50 Regional Public Service Commissioners focus on planning and delivering well-being outcomes in their regions. They also focus on ensuring that there is regional alignment and national-level input, where needed, to achieve outcomes for communities.
- 2.51 Regional Public Service Commissioners support the system and system leaders to work with iwi, Māori organisations, community partners, and regional stakeholders.

Working together to understand people's needs

- 3.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- the extent that Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners share an understanding of family violence, sexual violence, and the need for systemic change; and
 - the progress that Te Puna Aonui agencies have made in understanding the needs of people affected by violence.
- 3.2 We expected Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners to be developing a collective understanding of:
- the problems of family violence and sexual violence; and
 - the needs of those affected by family violence and sexual violence.

Summary of findings

- 3.3 *Te Aorerekura* includes definitions of family violence and sexual violence that Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners increasingly share. The definitions were developed through extensive engagement with different groups, communities, and organisations and were well supported by those we spoke to.
- 3.4 The process of completing *Te Aorerekura* was challenging for some community representatives. The business unit of Te Puna Aonui is carrying out work to address some of the concerns about the process that people raised.
- 3.5 Te Puna Aonui agencies are also doing work to better understand the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence. The agencies could strengthen this work by developing stronger relationships with tangata whenua and community partners.
- 3.6 Te Puna Aonui agencies could form more direct connections with people who have lived experience of family violence and sexual violence that are safe, fit for purpose, and not re-triggering for those people. This would improve agencies' understanding of people's needs.

***Te Aorerekura* represents a shared understanding of family violence and sexual violence**

***Te Aorerekura* clearly defines family violence and sexual violence, describes the drivers of violence, and sets out the system changes needed to address them**

- 3.7 *Te Aorerekura* provides clear definitions of family violence and sexual violence. It describes the nature of family violence and sexual violence, the drivers of violence, the connection to the well-being of people, families, and whānau, and the need to widen the focus of responses to include prevention and long-term healing.
- 3.8 *Te Aorerekura* also demonstrates an understanding of the power structures that perpetuate violence and how they affect different communities and groups.
- 3.9 *Te Aorerekura* is based on 20 years of reports and research into family violence and sexual violence, and the needs of affected individuals, whānau, families, and communities. At the same time, it states that more work needs to be done to understand different communities' experiences of family violence and sexual violence.
- 3.10 Completing *Te Aorerekura* was a challenging process for all involved. The business unit of Te Puna Aonui engaged extensively with tangata whenua and specific groups (including Pasifika, LGBTQIA+ people, older people and kaumatua, survivors of family violence and sexual violence, people who use violence, and ethnic, migrant, and former refugee communities). The business unit of Te Puna Aonui also engaged with organisations that work to address family violence and sexual violence.
- 3.11 Community representatives we spoke to recognised and appreciated that tangata whenua and communities were engaged with, and included in, the process of finalising *Te Aorerekura*.
- 3.12 We heard positive feedback from some tangata whenua representatives about the process for completing *Te Aorerekura*.
- 3.13 People we spoke to supported *Te Aorerekura* and the understanding of family violence and sexual violence it sets out. We also heard support for how *Te Aorerekura* focuses on the broader well-being of individuals, whānau, families, and communities. *Te Aorerekura* identifies housing, health, income, and food security as determinants of well-being.

More could have been done to ensure that the process for completing *Te Aorerekura* supported the development of partnerships with communities

- 3.14 Some people we spoke to felt that the process of completing *Te Aorerekura* was dominated by government agencies' aims rather than based on a commitment to partnership.
- 3.15 We heard that community partners felt that their involvement was rushed and that government officials did not always appreciate the work involved in accurately representing their communities' views.
- 3.16 Some did not feel that their community's experiences of family violence and sexual violence were reflected enough in *Te Aorerekura*. Others were concerned that groups purporting to speak for their community did not have the necessary knowledge or expertise in family violence and sexual violence.
- 3.17 Creating trust between government agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners is a foundational aspect of *Te Aorerekura*. It was clear to us that some people we spoke to did not have much trust in government and that the process of preparing *Te Aorerekura* had not improved this trust.
- 3.18 It is important to create trust so it can support a partnership approach to achieving various aspects of the *Te Aorerekura* action plan. As we discuss in paragraph 3.56, officials in the business unit of Te Puna Aonui are working with community partners to develop a partnership approach for future work.
- 3.19 This is an opportunity for the business unit of Te Puna Aonui to improve its future work with communities. It also presents an opportunity for Te Puna Aonui agencies to gain further insight into what a partnership approach to working with communities could involve.

Te Puna Aonui agencies could improve their understanding of people's needs by incorporating communities' knowledge and experience

The family violence and sexual violence response system does not serve all communities well

- 3.20 *Te Aorerekura* is about building a better system for preventing, detecting, and responding to family violence and sexual violence, and supporting the long-term healing of those affected by it. This involves establishing a shared view of the system's current state, what needs to be done differently, what more is needed, and how tangata whenua, government agencies, and community partners can work together to make all this happen.

- 3.21 We began our audit about six months after *Te Aorerekura* launched. We were interested in how Te Puna Aonui agencies are improving their understanding of what people affected by family violence and sexual violence need.
- 3.22 Much of the work we saw at a national and local level is driven by the understanding that current responses do not serve some communities well. A particular focus for many people we spoke to was how accessible responses are.
- 3.23 Ensuring that people can access responses is a significant and complex task. It involves understanding the multiple and diverse characteristics of the individuals, families, and whānau who seek help (for example, their cultural identity, language skills, gender, age, and whether they have a disability). It also involves understanding their needs and preferences for how responses are provided.
- 3.24 Te Puna Aonui agencies are developing responses to meet the needs of Māori communities. For example, the Ministry of Justice noted the need to engage more kaupapa Māori community partners in some regions. Te Puna Aonui agencies are also carrying out work to develop whānau-centred responses and other ways of meeting the needs of Māori communities (see paragraphs 4.16-4.23).
- 3.25 People from a range of Te Puna Aonui agencies at the national and local level acknowledged the clear need for responses that better support disabled people.
- 3.26 Community advocates and staff in some Te Puna Aonui agencies also identified a lack of responses for men who are affected by violence. Some agencies identified the need to develop responses that are more sensitive to the needs of LGBTQIA+ people, older people, and immigrant communities.

Te Puna Aonui agencies are working to better understand needs

- 3.27 Several Te Puna Aonui agencies are doing work to better understand the needs of different communities.
- 3.28 The Ministry of Social Development is leading work to better understand and “map” the system for responding to family violence and sexual violence, which responses are being funded, and which communities and needs are under-served by current responses.
- 3.29 ACC is doing work to better understand the needs of people affected by sexual violence. This involves understanding how people come into and out of their services and creating a better understanding of when and how people seek help.
- 3.30 ACC has refreshed its customer advisory panel on sexual violence. This panel comprises representatives from organisations that provide responses to sexual violence and also those who advocate for the rights of survivors.

- 3.31 Engagement between ACC and the panel has improved. The panel members are engaged earlier in work to improve the sexual violence responses that are available through ACC.
- 3.32 The Ministry of Justice is working to understand the needs of people engaged in the court process – in particular, how people's situations affect how they are able to engage with the court process and in mandated non-violence programmes. The Ministry of Justice is also working to understand their wider needs and how to better connect them to the social services they might need.
- 3.33 We also saw evidence of Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections doing work to better understand the experiences and needs of Māori in the corrections system. This involves applying a te ao Māori lens to the development of new programmes aimed at working specifically with Māori offenders.
- 3.34 The Police worked with an independent organisation to carry out a survey about how the Police responded to women, transgender people, and non-binary people who have been affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 3.35 Some collaborative work is also under way. People who experience sexual violence can access immediate crisis support through agencies that the Ministry of Social Development funds. The Ministry of Social Development and ACC worked together to better understand how the transition between crisis support and ACC-funded services works. This included how clients access both services and how the agencies could bridge any gaps people may experience between immediate crisis support and longer-term support.

Local initiatives support greater collaboration to understand peoples' needs

- 3.36 Each of the local initiatives we looked at encourage collaboration between Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners. Those involved in these collaborations are improving their collective understanding of what is needed for responses to work well.
- 3.37 The local initiatives we looked at are all unique in the scope of their work and their approach to working between agencies and with tangata whenua and community partners. Each initiative involves Safety Assessment Meetings (commonly referred to as SAM tables).
- 3.38 SAM tables bring together government agencies and community partners to discuss the needs of families and whānau who are the subject of reports of Police callouts for family violence. This includes staff from ACC, Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Education, Oranga Tamariki, the Police, and Te Whatu Ora.

- 3.39 Bringing these groups together provides a broader range of knowledge about the needs of individuals, families, and whānau. This allows for more effective and holistic risk assessment, safety planning, and referrals for whānau and families needing support.

Te Puna Aonui agencies could improve their understanding of the experiences of tangata whenua, community partners, and local initiatives

- 3.40 Te Puna Aonui agencies could do more to incorporate communities' knowledge and experience in their work. This would help them to better understand the needs of those affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 3.41 Some concerns we heard are similar to concerns about the process of completing *Te Aorerekura*. For example, we heard that engaging with staff from Te Puna Aonui agencies, especially staff in national offices, is inconsistent and focuses on the agency's priorities.
- 3.42 Some people told us that Te Puna Aonui agencies determine the time frames for work and that this has led to some in the community feeling that their work with the agencies was rushed. Others were concerned that, although the agencies ask for community input, they often disregard it.
- 3.43 In our view, Te Puna Aonui agencies need to build trust with tangata whenua and community partners to support the partnership approach described in *Te Aorerekura*. We recognise that building trust means that Te Puna Aonui agencies need to form new or different relationships with tangata whenua and community partners and that this takes time.
- 3.44 We saw examples of Te Puna Aonui agencies prioritising their relationships. The local initiatives we looked at also provided examples of agencies seeking to build relationships with tangata whenua and community partners.
- 3.45 There are opportunities for Te Puna Aonui agencies to learn from these examples and apply lessons about how to develop a partnership approach. However, we did not see Te Puna Aonui agencies taking these opportunities.

Te Puna Aonui agencies need to listen to people who have been affected by violence

- 3.46 Te Puna Aonui agencies could improve their understanding of people's needs by making better connections with people affected by family violence and sexual violence.

- 3.47 Because community partners work directly with individuals, families, and whānau, they are often relied on to represent the experiences of people affected by family violence and sexual violence. However, the extent that they can speak to those experiences has limits. This is especially the case for people who, for whatever reason, do not engage with the organisations providing responses.
- 3.48 Research has shown that some people affected by family violence and sexual violence do not seek help from non-government organisations or government agencies. For example, a 2020 survey funded by the Ministry of Social Development found that more than half of women affected by family violence were too scared to talk about the abuse and that 37% did not feel safe seeking support. Research has also shown that people sometimes rely on informal community networks for support.
- 3.49 Practical barriers also prevent some people from accessing help. For example, we were told that, for the most part, refuges and other responses are not accessible for people with physical disabilities.
- 3.50 Understanding the experiences of people affected by family violence and sexual violence, including their reasons for not seeking or accessing help from non-government organisations and government agencies, is important to developing appropriate support to assist them.
- 3.51 We acknowledge that Te Puna Aonui agencies need to be careful about engaging with people who have been affected by or who use violence. Agencies have a duty of care and ethical responsibility to ensure that engagement is safe, fit for purpose, and not re-triggering.
- 3.52 Engaging safely and sensitively needs skills and experience that agencies might not have. This was a concern of some staff in Te Puna Aonui agencies.
- 3.53 We also acknowledge that some Te Puna Aonui agencies are finding ways to engage with communities, whānau, families, and individuals affected by violence more directly. ACC told us that it has engaged with client advocates about the future design of its integrated service for sensitive claims.
- 3.54 When responding to our findings, the Ministry of Social Development told us that it has commissioned work to explore the help-seeking behaviours of men who use violence and who are not currently accessing family violence services. The Ministry has also engaged with young people when designing a violence prevention campaign for young people called *Love Better*.

- 3.55 Oranga Tamariki has Engagement Principles and Guidance that support safe, sensitive, and respectful engagement with tamariki and rangatahi in care. It told us that it used this engagement to influence its policy, practice, and systems development.
- 3.56 The business unit of Te Puna Aonui told us that it is also working to develop enduring mechanisms for different communities to guide the Government's work programme and monitor the implementation of *Te Aorerekura*. Communities covered by this work include tangata whenua, LGBTQIA+ people, ethnic communities, Pacific peoples, disabled people, older people, children and young people, victims and survivors, and users of violence.
- 3.57 In our view, this work provides an opportunity for Te Puna Aonui agencies to find safe and sensitive ways to engage with those directly affected by family violence and sexual violence.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that Te Puna Aonui agencies work together and with advocacy groups for those affected by family violence and sexual violence to find safe and appropriate ways to hear directly from people who experience or use violence, to improve how responses to family violence and sexual violence are provided.

How Te Puna Aonui agencies are meeting people's needs

- 4.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- how Te Puna Aonui agencies are improving how they meet people's needs;
 - the need for Te Puna Aonui agencies to develop a partnership approach to working with tangata whenua and community partners;
 - how improvements to the way Te Puna Aonui agencies share information between each other and with community partners could help them meet people's needs better; and
 - the need for Te Puna Aonui agencies to better use monitoring and evaluation to support improved responses.
- 4.2 We wanted to assess how Te Puna Aonui agencies work individually, together, and with tangata whenua and community partners to improve how they meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 4.3 We expected Te Puna Aonui agencies to be:
- working individually, together, and with tangata whenua and community partners to understand how best to meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence;
 - focusing on developing a partnership approach to working together and with tangata whenua and community partners to best meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence;
 - appropriately sharing information about incidents of family violence and sexual violence to best meet the needs of people affected by that violence while protecting their privacy; and
 - monitoring and evaluating responses to support decision-making about improving the responses.

Summary of findings

- 4.4 Te Puna Aonui agencies are working at the national and local level to improve how they meet the needs of people affected by family violence and sexual violence. This work includes increasing the capability of agency staff and community partners to respond to people's needs appropriately, improving the accessibility of services, and changing the way social services are commissioned.
- 4.5 More progress is needed to develop new ways of working. Te Puna Aonui agencies need to focus on developing partnerships with tangata whenua and community partners. This means that each agency needs to consider the support tangata whenua, community partners, and their own staff need to work in this way.

- 4.6 Te Puna Aonui agencies could provide further clarity for their staff about how their individual agency's strategies, work programmes, and priorities relate to, and can be balanced with, their collective work to deliver the purpose of *Te Aorerekura*.
- 4.7 Local initiatives could provide valuable insights into the importance of forming relationships with tangata whenua and community partners, and how long it will take to achieve this. Te Puna Aonui agencies' national offices need to be more connected to the work of their staff at a national and local level so they can learn from these insights and help develop the initiatives further.
- 4.8 There are ongoing problems and a lack of trust in how information about people affected by family violence and sexual violence is shared. Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners need to work together to address these issues, build trust throughout the system, and support work to better meet people's needs.
- 4.9 Te Puna Aonui agencies could do more with the information they collect from their monitoring and evaluating of responses to family violence and sexual violence. *Te Aorerekura* states that developing a learning system is an important part of the system change. However, this will take time to develop. In the meantime, Te Puna Aonui agencies could improve the way they use information from their monitoring and evaluating of responses.

Te Puna Aonui agencies are improving how they meet people's needs

Work is under way to improve the capability of staff at Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners

- 4.10 Improving capability in organisations that support people affected by family violence and sexual violence is a significant part of *Te Aorerekura*. We saw how Te Puna Aonui agencies led work with community partners to help improve the capability of those who work with people affected by family violence. This was done primarily by introducing capability frameworks for specialist and non-specialist workforces.
- 4.11 We were told that each Te Puna Aonui agency has developed a plan for providing generalist family violence training to their workforce.
- 4.12 We also saw some Te Puna Aonui agencies support the capability of community partners and agency staff. For example, the Ministry of Justice brought together communities of practice to support community partners who provide non-violence programmes to share their insights with each other, including insights on the needs of their staff.

- 4.13 Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections is looking to improve the contributions that its staff could make to SAM tables used throughout the country to triage Police reports about family violence (see paragraphs 3.37-3.39). This includes creating new roles to improve information sharing and helping to develop best practice for discussing cases.
- 4.14 Some local initiatives are also considering how to use their collective capability to respond in ways that best meet people's needs. The South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board is developing the skills needed to support community-led and whānau-centred ways of working.
- 4.15 People involved in the Integrated Safety Response Canterbury told us that Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners work together, which helps them to identify strengths and weaknesses in capability.

Some Te Puna Aonui agencies are trialling whānau-centred ways of working

- 4.16 Whānau-centred approaches are holistic and strengths-based approaches that place people, whānau, and families at the centre of decision-making. They are open to all New Zealanders. Under these approaches, people are supported by their chosen networks, with an awareness of the safety, protection, well-being, and accountability of all those involved.
- 4.17 Developing and using whānau-centred approaches to address family violence and sexual violence are important parts of *Te Aorerekura* and its action plan. Some Te Puna Aonui agencies are trialling using whānau-centred approaches and longer-term support.
- 4.18 Te Puni Kōkiri (through its Whānau-Centred Facilitation programme) and the Ministry of Social Development (through its Whānau Resilience programme) are improving responses by learning from whānau-centred approaches. These are relatively small programmes that involve working with community partners to build their capability to deliver whānau-centred approaches.
- 4.19 The Ngā Tini Whetū programme involves ACC, Oranga Tamariki, and Te Puni Kōkiri working with the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency to gain a broader understanding of the needs of people affected by family violence. It aims to support whānau by reducing the number of family violence incidents and averting care, protection, or youth justice interventions from Oranga Tamariki.
- 4.20 The programme involves 800 whānau in the North Island. It initially ran for two years and was extended for another four years through funding provided by Budget 2022.

- 4.21 People who are part of local initiatives are improving their collective understanding of what is needed for responses to work well for whānau. We heard about the importance of understanding the broader context of people's lives.
- 4.22 Some people avoid seeking help because they fear that their children will be taken from whānau or families. For others, practical issues get in the way, such as childcare arrangements, transport, or a lack of secure housing alternatives.
- 4.23 The South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board is helping Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners to better understand the work needed to remove barriers and work in whānau-centred ways. It partners with a marae-based organisation to support a more dynamic and wrap-around approach for whānau.

Local initiatives are helping to strengthen and broaden responses to violence

- 4.24 The four local initiatives we looked at support Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners to work together. The South Auckland Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Safety Response Canterbury are specifically funded to support agencies and community partners to be involved in those initiatives.
- 4.25 Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke Waitematā and Te Kura mostly rely on the people and organisations involved to voluntarily commit their time and resources. The Ministry of Social Development provides some funding to support the involvement of tangata whenua and community partners in SAM tables.
- 4.26 We saw in each initiative a focus on developing relationships with Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners. Although developing these relationships can take a lot of time and resources, they play a crucial role in connecting Te Puna Aonui agencies to individuals, families, and whānau. This helps to build a better understanding of what responses are effective and who should lead them.
- 4.27 The South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board has a broad focus on whānau well-being that includes, but is not limited to, responding to family violence. It developed a Multi-Disciplinary Cross Agency Team, where agency staff and community partners work with whānau in crisis and build resilience.

- 4.28 Community partners involved in the Integrated Safety Response Canterbury told us of the value of working with other community partners. Two collaborative groups of community partners have been formed – a tangata whenua and tauiwi collaboration – that support those involved to work together to help people affected by family violence. Community partners are also working with government agencies to consider which organisation is best placed to respond to a given family violence report.
- 4.29 Similarly, community partners involved in Te Kura told us how their involvement is helping to build a network of community partners. These community partners increasingly understand the strengths that each party can bring to a response. They can refer people to partners in their network who they feel are more equipped to work with particular communities such as tangata whenua, Pasifika, and men who use violence.
- 4.30 People who are part of Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke Waitematā told us that the approach is helping connect Te Puna Aonui agencies with tangata whenua and community partners. This collaboration has removed the burden of navigating the system of responses from individuals, families, and whānau.
- 4.31 For example, staff from the Ministry of Social Development are working with the Police to connect people to a range of services without them needing to go to a Ministry of Social Development office.

Some work is under way to improve the accessibility of responses

- 4.32 Ensuring that responses to family violence and sexual violence are accessible is a significant and complex task. It involves understanding the multiple and diverse characteristics of the people seeking help, as well as their needs and preferences about how responses are provided.
- 4.33 Improvements are needed to enable more people to have better access to the responses that best meet their needs. Te Puna Aonui agencies are aware of this, and some are carrying out work to ensure that people feel comfortable when getting help that best meets their needs.
- 4.34 In paragraphs 4.16-4.23, we discussed the work of some agencies to support and develop whānau-centred approaches. We also saw how ACC has developed a rongoā Māori service as an additional treatment path for those it covers.
- 4.35 In response to our initial findings, ACC told us that, more broadly, it is partnering with tangata whenua to develop kaupapa Māori solutions – indigenously, localised, whānau-centred solutions designed by Māori for Māori. Providing people who experience sexual violence with better access to appropriate responses is central to its work on evolving its integrated service for sensitive claims.

- 4.36 Some Te Puna Aonui agencies are giving community partners greater flexibility to respond to people in ways that better meet their needs. For example, the Ministry of Justice built on the experience of operating during the Covid-19 pandemic and is increasingly allowing community partners to speak with people remotely rather than in person. This is an important option for some people, such as those who live in remote areas, lack access to transport, or have trouble with physical access to buildings.
- 4.37 The Ministry of Justice also told us that it could do more to improve the accessibility of responses. The Ministry wants to engage more kaupapa Māori community partners in some regions and look at responses that would meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ and disabled communities.

Significant change in how government agencies will work with community partners has been signalled

- 4.38 The approach Te Puna Aonui agencies take to commissioning responses poses challenges for the formation and progress of relationships between those agencies and community partners.
- 4.39 Commissioning responses is also an important factor in building a system that can support individuals, families, and whānau to access appropriate care as they move through the family violence and sexual violence response system.
- 4.40 We did not look at approaches to commissioning. This was because the work of the Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki on social sector commissioning is likely to result in significant changes. However, many of those we spoke with from Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners highlighted that commissioning needs to change.
- 4.41 Approaches to commissioning responses can be programme-based and highly siloed. Administering, reporting on, and renewing contracts place a significant burden on community organisations. For one community organisation we spoke to, offering long-term and wrap-around care meant managing about 40 contracts between multiple agencies.
- 4.42 The cross-government *Social sector commissioning: 2022–2028 action plan* could fundamentally change how Te Puna Aonui agencies work with tangata whenua and community partners. This change will not be straightforward and, as the action plan states, developing trust between government, tangata whenua, and community partners is critical to its success.
- 4.43 However, not all the community partners we spoke to trusted that significant change could be made. People were getting increasingly frustrated with a

perceived lack of action on social sector commissioning and how it affects the ability of community partners to offer long-term support to people affected by violence. Te Puna Aonui agencies need to make progress on building trust and relationships with their community partners to counter this frustration.

More progress on supporting transformative change is needed

Working in new ways remains a challenge

- 4.44 One of the main challenges for Te Puna Aonui agencies is finding new ways to work within agencies, between agencies, and with tangata whenua and community partners. Although improvements are being made, establishing new ways of working remains a challenge.
- 4.45 Many strategies and priorities guide Te Puna Aonui agencies. As one person told us, multiple strategies intersect and require agencies to be more responsive to local needs, tangata whenua, and communities.
- 4.46 These strategies and priorities can get in the way of working collaboratively. For example, staff in one Te Puna Aonui agency stated that progress on working on some cross-agency issues is not being made because each agency is too focused on its own priorities and ways of doing things. In their view, progress could be made if agencies focus on the solutions needed to help people and communities affected by violence.
- 4.47 At a local level, making sense of different agency priorities and strategies can complicate the work of developing cross-agency responses to family violence and sexual violence. For example, there is a lack of clarity about how local staff are supposed to navigate competing priorities. This can affect their ability to devote time and resources to local initiatives to improve responses to family violence and sexual violence.
- 4.48 A lack of trust in government was a theme that often emerged from our discussions with tangata whenua and community partners. Tangata whenua, community partners, and community advocates told us that their engagement with staff from Te Puna Aonui agencies is often sporadic and focuses on agency priorities.
- 4.49 One tangata whenua group working with a Te Puna Aonui agency felt that the agency ignores community expertise. Members of the tangata whenua group felt that, when they shared their expertise, the agency undermined their personal integrity.

- 4.50 Other community partners told us that they are not involved in important decisions about how they are expected to work with agencies. In their view, at times, Te Puna Aonui agencies go ahead with new initiatives without proper consultation or understanding the pressures the sector is under.
- 4.51 Community partners told us that they generally see value in these new ways of working. However, they do not always feel they can influence their development, even though they have an important role in delivering them. Nor do they always have the capacity to engage in the initiatives.
- 4.52 We heard about a community organisation in one region that has an established network of community organisations and government agencies to improve responses to family violence. However, this network was not fully considered when a new SAM table was set up. Representatives of community partners and staff in Te Puna Aonui agencies noted how community partners feel less able to contribute to the SAM table to influence its operations.
- 4.53 We also heard concerns that Te Puna Aonui agencies are not focusing enough on responses to sexual violence. We spoke to representatives from community organisations that help people affected by sexual violence. Some told us that most cross-agency work treats the sexual violence sector as an afterthought.
- 4.54 Some work to improve how Te Puna Aonui agencies work with tangata whenua and community partners is under way. For example, we saw how Regional Public Service Commissioners are working to provide more clarity for those working at a local level. This includes providing guidance to locally based staff from Te Puna Aonui agencies on balancing an individual agency's strategies and priorities with work to deliver the purpose of *Te Aorerekura*.
- 4.55 Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections released an implementation plan for *Te Aorerekura* in May 2023. This plan shows the links between *Hōkai Rangi* (its own strategy) and *Te Aorerekura*, and how they work together to help people live lives free of family violence and sexual violence.
- 4.56 In response to our findings, the Police advised that it has been working to connect its strategy (called *Our Business*) to *Te Aorerekura*. It has developed an action plan that outlines the contributions the Police makes to *Te Aorerekura*, additional activity for strengthening its responses to family violence, and how the Police's family violence activities connect to other priorities, such as the Police's Māori strategy (*Te Huringa o Te Tai*).
- 4.57 Manatū Hauora Ministry of Health advised us that it is adopting a "localities approach" that will give iwi and communities a strong voice in deciding priorities and the wider determinants of health in their local area.

- 4.58 In our view, leaders in Te Puna Aonui agencies could provide further clarity for their staff. All staff need to understand how their individual agency's strategies, work programmes, and priorities relate to, and can be balanced with, the agencies' collective work to deliver the purpose of *Te Aorerekura*.

Better connection between local initiatives and the broader work of Te Puna Aonui agencies is needed

- 4.59 Te Puna Aonui agencies are working together and with tangata whenua and community partners through locally based initiatives. These local initiatives were set up, in part, to test and learn from different approaches to collectively address family violence reports.
- 4.60 The initiatives support all those involved to better understand and meet the needs of people affected by violence.
- 4.61 The local initiatives also provide an example of trust developing between Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners. To differing degrees, the initiatives support creating positive relationships and trust between the organisations involved. This trust helps them to more effectively help people affected by violence.
- 4.62 However, we also found that the work of local initiatives is largely unconnected to Te Puna Aonui agencies' broader work. Opportunities to learn from the work going on in these initiatives are being lost. One staff member from a local initiative told us that they are operating in a bubble. There is no place to report the lessons they learn through their work.
- 4.63 This lack of connection can also mean that Te Puna Aonui agencies are not assisting with the development of local initiatives as much as they could.
- 4.64 Te Puna Aonui agencies need to address issues such as this. To do so, all Te Puna Aonui agencies need to be familiar with the work of their staff in these initiatives.

Te Puna Aonui agencies need to agree with tangata whenua and community partners on how they will work together

- 4.65 Transforming the way that government agencies work together and with tangata whenua and community partners is a significant challenge for Te Puna Aonui agencies. Clarity about the roles, authority, and accountabilities of the organisations involved is needed. This clarity is critical to delivering on the purpose of *Te Aorerekura*.

- 4.66 Te Puna Aonui agencies need to work with tangata whenua and community partners to answer fundamental questions about system transformation that *Te Aorerekura* raises. For example:
- Where does authority and decision-making need to sit to support the development of a system that is whānau centred and locally led?
 - What does a whānau-centred and locally led system mean for how Te Puna Aonui agencies approach their policy work – who needs to be involved, when do they need to be involved, and in what capacity?
 - What support do tangata whenua and community partners need to work with Te Puna Aonui agencies to develop a whānau-centred and locally led system? What support do local staff at Te Puna Aonui agencies need to help achieve this change?
- 4.67 In our view, answering these questions will help create the trust between Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners that is needed for them to work together effectively.
- 4.68 We recognise that work on some of these issues is under way. In particular, the business unit of Te Puna Aonui is leading work on action 5 of the action plan in *Te Aorerekura*. This is about working with tangata whenua, community partners, and subject-matter experts to support the development of locally led approaches to addressing family violence and sexual violence. Developing these approaches will take time.
- 4.69 However, this is not a task for the business unit of Te Puna Aonui alone. Each Te Puna Aonui agency needs to consider how it supports its staff to work in whānau-centred and locally led ways.
- 4.70 In our view, all Te Puna Aonui agencies can act now to improve how they work with other agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners to respond to family violence and sexual violence while building a better system.
- 4.71 The Board of Te Puna Aonui needs to also ensure that Te Puna Aonui agencies are well positioned to learn from the experience of other agencies as they better understand what responses people need and the skills their staff need to respond in those ways. Ensuring that Te Puna Aonui agencies are connected to, learning from, and helping to develop local initiatives needs to be a priority.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that Te Puna Aonui agencies support the transformational change set out in *Te Aorerekura* by working with tangata whenua and community partners to agree on how they will develop and implement a partnership approach and clarify their respective roles, authority, and accountabilities.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that Te Puna Aonui agencies each ensure that they are better connecting work taking place at the national and local levels to support the development of local initiatives and ensure that these initiatives are informing the development of responses to family violence and sexual violence more generally.

Information sharing needs to be improved to support more effective responses to family violence and sexual violence

Sharing information appropriately supports improved responses

- 4.72 Te Puna Aonui agencies need to develop appropriate approaches to sharing information about incidents of violence and the people affected by it with each other and with community partners. This will help improve responses to family violence and sexual violence.
- 4.73 Provisions in several Acts (the Privacy Act 2020, the Family Violence Act 2018, and Oranga Tamariki Act 1989) allow for information to be shared to respond appropriately. The Ministry of Justice also produced comprehensive guidance on information sharing under the Family Violence Act 2018.
- 4.74 Effectively sharing information about incidents of violence allows those involved in a response to place the violence in the context of all the challenges that an individual, family, or whānau may be facing. For example, it allows responses to be planned that take into account any safety, health, educational, income, housing, or behavioural needs that an individual, family, or whānau might have.
- 4.75 Those involved in a response must take great care when sharing information. Some people we spoke to emphasised that the information shared is about the people, families, and whānau affected by violence and could be deeply personal in nature. Those involved in a response must consider people's right to privacy and their dignity whenever they share information.

- 4.76 There are real and potentially serious risks involved in sharing information. Inappropriate sharing of information – such as too little consideration of what information is shared, how it is shared, and who may see the information – can further endanger those affected by violence. This could undermine the trust of people who sought help from government agencies or community organisations.

More clarity about what information can and should be shared is needed

- 4.77 We saw approaches that support appropriate and considered information exchanges between Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners. The Integrated Safety Response Canterbury and South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board have well-developed processes, clear guidelines, and training on information sharing between agencies and with community partners.
- 4.78 Some Te Puna Aonui agency staff and community partners told us that this collaborative approach led to an increase in trust and confidence in sharing information, better collaboration, and, in their view, better outcomes.
- 4.79 Furthermore, in response to our findings, Manatū Hauora Ministry of Health stated that Te Whatu Ora and Te Aka Whai Ora have drafted a privacy impact assessment to provide health professionals with clarity on their responsibilities when accessing and sharing patient information about incidents of family violence.
- 4.80 In general, however, we saw variable approaches, uncertainty, and some frustration and mistrust about how information is shared. This included how information is shared between Te Puna Aonui agencies and with community partners.
- 4.81 People we talked to who are involved in responding to incidents of violence understood that sharing information is important to supporting effective responses. They were also aware of legislative support for sharing information.
- 4.82 There was sometimes less clarity about the process of sharing information, including who should have access to the information, what purposes they should access it for, and how sharing information should be balanced with protecting the privacy and dignity of those the information is about.
- 4.83 People in Te Puna Aonui agencies told us that this lack of clarity is frustrating. It also contributes to the lack of trust in Te Puna Aonui agencies' approaches to sharing information that some community partners have.

- 4.84 This lack of clarity also restricts the ability of agencies to provide responses in ways that best support individuals, families, and whānau. Some community partners told us that Te Puna Aonui agencies do not provide them with adequate information about the people they are working with.
- 4.85 We heard about an organisation that had been working for an extended period to understand the trauma a young person had suffered. The organisation then discovered that an agency it was working with already knew the information. Similarly, we heard how staff from one Te Puna Aonui agency struggled to meet the needs of people they were working with because the agency did not have important information about them, such as health or education information.
- 4.86 We also heard some concerns about Te Puna Aonui agencies oversharing information and the difficulty of balancing sharing too little or too much information. Some community partners were concerned that agencies request information without considering whether they really need it.
- 4.87 Others felt that people involved in the SAM tables have access to information that they do not need, or have information that is related to incidents outside of the communities they work in. There was also some concern that individuals, families, and whānau affected by family violence and sexual violence are not being told that their information is being shared.

Better sharing of good practice could improve confidence in information sharing

- 4.88 Our work showed that people throughout the family violence and sexual violence system carefully consider how to balance the risk of sharing and not sharing information. However, in some instances, they lack clear policies and agreements to support this decision-making.
- 4.89 Te Puna Aonui agencies need to work together and with community partners to build on existing good practice for recording and sharing information and develop frameworks and guidance where none currently exist.
- 4.90 A consistent approach to this work throughout Te Puna Aonui agencies will help to build trust and confidence in processes and support effective responses for those affected by family violence and sexual violence.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that Te Puna Aonui agencies work together and with community partners to agree on legally appropriate and robust protocols for sharing information about incidents of family violence and sexual violence to support responding in ways that best support the individuals, families, and whānau affected. The protocols will need to ensure that people whose information is being collected understand why their information is being collected and who can use that information.

Improvements to monitoring and evaluation could be made

There were positive developments in monitoring and evaluation in some Te Puna Aonui agencies

- 4.91 *Te Aorerekura* recognises that monitoring and evaluation are critical to improving the family violence and sexual violence response system. The first action plan includes developing a continuous learning system that collects evidence, advice from tangata whenua, and the voices of communities to support continuous improvement.
- 4.92 The *Social sector commissioning: 2022–2028 action plan* also identifies monitoring, evaluation, and continuous learning as critical to making effective change to how services are commissioned. The plan includes establishing a commissioning hub that will support ongoing learning by setting up regular monitoring and reporting.
- 4.93 Monitoring and evaluation are also important for individual Te Puna Aonui agencies as they work to improve their own contributions to the family violence and sexual violence response system. We heard about the importance of evidence-driven practice in building trust throughout the system.
- 4.94 We saw some agencies taking steps to use information that community partners provide in their monitoring reports to support improved responses to family violence and sexual violence. For example, the Ministry of Social Development is carrying out work to involve community partners in designing outcome measures.
- 4.95 We heard that, although this work is resource intensive, it is changing how the Ministry of Social Development approaches its work and that it is building trust in communities. The Ministry is also planning an integrated approach to evaluation. This will consider a programme of work rather than separately evaluating individual responses within that programme.

- 4.96 Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections and the Ministry of Justice carry out joint monitoring of family violence programmes. We were told that these agencies built on their closer collaboration on contracts for non-violence programmes and are considering how to share data, information, research, and feedback from community partners to improve contracts for family violence programmes.
- 4.97 Other agencies are also considering the cross-system impacts of their evaluative work. Te Puni Kōkiri intends for its Whānau-Centred Facilitation initiative to help create a whānau-centred policy framework that will inform the work of other Te Puna Aonui agencies.
- 4.98 The South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board is still developing its approach to monitoring, learning, and acting on insights. Its approach is based on understanding the local enablers of, and barriers to, whānau well-being and acting quickly on the insights that its work delivers. These include better understanding what partnership means, how the government can be accountable to communities, and where decision-making should lie.
- 4.99 We also saw leaders in some local initiatives reflecting on how to use the lessons learned from evaluations to improve local responses. For example, the Integrated Safety Response Canterbury's leadership group holds regular strategic reviews. It uses these to reflect on what is working, discuss with community and government partners where to target resources, and understand current gaps in responses.

Te Puna Aonui agencies can act now to support improvements to monitoring and evaluation

- 4.100 *Te Aorerekura* acknowledges the need for improvements in monitoring, evaluating, and learning. The Social Wellbeing Agency is leading the development of a learning system, which will take time. However, in our view, Te Puna Aonui agencies could do more now to better use the information that they get from monitoring and evaluation.
- 4.101 These improvements could help improve current responses to family violence and sexual violence and support better monitoring, evaluation, and learning throughout the system.
- 4.102 Agencies individually monitor and evaluate responses. Therefore, the systemic gaps and issues that prevent people from accessing responses are unlikely to be identified, and the systemic changes described in *Te Aorerekura* are unlikely to be made. Te Puna Aonui agencies should be working together to share the insights gained from their monitoring and evaluation.

- 4.103 Te Puna Aonui agencies also need to use the insights gained from monitoring and evaluating local initiatives. Lessons learned through local initiatives did not appear to be consistently informing decision-making about improving responses. Some people, including regionally based staff from Te Puna Aonui agencies, doubted that Te Puna Aonui agencies in Wellington are set up to learn from local initiatives.
- 4.104 Community partners also need to see how Te Puna Aonui agencies use the information they provide. Community partners are required to provide regular monitoring information to Te Puna Aonui agencies that fund them. Doing this involves a lot of work, and community partners do not see how the agencies use this information.
- 4.105 ACC is working to address this problem. In response to our findings, ACC stated that it is carrying out an evaluation, monitoring, and research programme that aims to collect data at a community, system, and population level. ACC plans to enable the community partners and individuals involved to have access to this data. This is to help ensure that initiatives, services, and responses to sexual violence are evidence-driven and meet the needs of communities.
- 4.106 However, some staff in Te Puna Aonui agencies acknowledged that they do not routinely review the information that community partners give them. This means that opportunities to learn from the experiences of community partners and to address any problems they may identify are being lost.
- 4.107 Although the overarching frameworks for monitoring and learning in *Te Aorerekura* are being developed, all Te Puna Aonui agencies need to systematically seek, acknowledge, evaluate, and use information from existing responses. They need to share the outcomes with each other and – importantly – with community partners who supply the information.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that Te Puna Aonui agencies gather information from their monitoring of programmes and initiatives, share it with communities and non-government organisations, and together use this information to improve existing responses or design new responses.

Addressing capacity issues

- 5.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- how capacity constraints affect responses to family violence and sexual violence; and
 - the need for collective action to address these constraints and improve responses to family violence and sexual violence.
- 5.2 We wanted to assess how Te Puna Aonui agencies are working together and with tangata whenua and community partners to understand what capacity is needed to provide responses that meet people's needs.
- 5.3 We expected Te Puna Aonui agencies to be working with other Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners to:
- determine the availability and type of responses throughout New Zealand; and
 - understand the capacity available throughout New Zealand to respond in ways that meet people's needs.

Summary of findings

- 5.4 The capacity of the family violence and sexual violence system to respond effectively is constrained. There are pressures on the workforce in all parts of the system, and they affect the ability to respond to family violence and sexual violence.
- 5.5 Individual agencies are carrying out work to address some capacity constraints. However, this has resulted in competition between agencies and community-level organisations for staff in such crucial areas as mental health, counselling for addictions, and social work. This is leaving some parts of the system less well served than others.
- 5.6 Collective action by Te Puna Aonui is needed to understand where capacity is most pressured and how agencies can work with community partners to address that pressure.

Capacity constraints are affecting the ability to respond to family violence and sexual violence

Te Puna Aonui agencies are taking steps to understand the system's current capacity

- 5.7 Having the capacity to respond to incidents of family violence and sexual violence is a critical component of improving the system. Understanding demand and the current capacity of the system is a first step to ensuring that it has, and will sustain, the capacity it needs.

- 5.8 We saw Te Puna Aonui agencies working individually to understand the demand for the responses that they offer. Some individual agencies are focusing on creating links between initiatives, but it was not always possible to see strong links between work happening in separate agencies.
- 5.9 Some local initiatives are also working to understand the demand for responses. The South Auckland Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Safety Response Canterbury are carrying out work to understand trends in demand to improve their responses.
- 5.10 The Ministry of Social Development is leading work to map family violence and sexual violence responses throughout the country. This work also involves ACC, Oranga Tamariki, the Police, and Manatū Hauora Ministry of Health.
- 5.11 We also saw that the Police and Oranga Tamariki have developed an awareness of unmet need as a result of the evaluation and research from some local initiatives. In response to the unmet need, they created a targeted “Flexi-fund”. This provides time-bound support for children involved in cases of family violence.
- 5.12 We found that, at a national level, ACC is increasing its understanding of system-wide capacity issues through its work to evolve the integrated service for sensitive claims. This work is considering how it can better meet demand for sexual violence support and treatment.
- 5.13 We also saw the Ministry of Justice, Ara Poutama Department of Corrections, and the Ministry of Social Development working together to understand the range of responses that would assist people going through the court system.

Capacity issues are affecting local initiatives

- 5.14 Capacity constraints are affecting the ability of agency staff and community partners to engage regularly in local initiatives. We saw in the Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke Waitematā and Te Kura initiatives that consistent involvement of staff from Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners is not always possible.
- 5.15 Staff from Te Puna Aonui agencies told us that they want to spend more time at local offices to provide cross-agency support to people affected by violence, but do not have the capacity to do so.
- 5.16 It was clear to us that community partners appreciate opportunities to work with Te Puna Aonui agencies and other community partners. However, some community partners are struggling to engage consistently.
- 5.17 Locally based initiatives respond to instances of violence that are notified to the Police. This can be a significant drain on community resources and represents only one part of the demand that community partners address. Many people experiencing violence approach community-based organisations directly.

- 5.18 Community partners have to balance their commitment to local initiatives with their work to help those who come to them through different channels. This is a particular problem for local initiatives, such as Whāngaia Ngā Pā Harakeke Waitematā and Te Kura, that do not provide additional funding to those involved. Some told us that they feel overwhelmed by the volume of work coming through the system.
- 5.19 Absence of community partners or irregular attendance at SAM tables affects the ability of those involved to respond in the best ways available in a community. Absence from governance meetings makes it difficult to create trust and understanding between Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners.
- 5.20 The Ministry of Social Development provided funding to support the involvement of tangata whenua and community partners at SAM tables (see paragraph 4.25). This funding addressed the capacity issue to some extent but not entirely.

Mental health, counselling for addictions, and social work support resources are of particular concern throughout the system

- 5.21 People we spoke to in Te Puna Aonui agencies and in the community often commented on a lack of capacity in mental health, counselling for addictions, and social work. Waiting times for those seeking these services can be months.
- 5.22 We could not get a clear picture of the extent of this issue. However, it was clear to us that organisations working to address family violence and sexual violence feel these capacity constraints unevenly. Agencies and community partners are competing for scarce resources. As a result, some parts of the system are less well served than others.
- 5.23 For example, we heard how community organisations can struggle to attract those qualified to offer mental health and addiction support because Te Puna Aonui agencies could afford to pay more. We also heard that some Te Puna Aonui agencies have lost staff to other Te Puna Aonui agencies that are able to pay more for specialist skills.
- 5.24 As a result, what kind of support is available, when it is available, and who it is available to are inconsistent. Those wanting to access support through community organisations or through particular parts of the system can struggle to get support when they need it.

Collective action to address capacity constraints is needed

- 5.25 Those working to respond to family violence and sexual violence are clearly committed to their work. However, the capacity of the family violence and sexual violence response system is fragile. Meeting demand for responses too often depends on the goodwill and dedication of staff at Te Puna Aonui agencies and community partners who go the extra mile to deliver.
- 5.26 Competition between Te Puna Aonui agencies and with community partners for staff in crucial areas such as mental health, counselling for addictions, and social work affects the ability of all parts of the system to respond appropriately and promptly.
- 5.27 Addressing these capacity constraints will not be straightforward. We recognise that some of the remedies will be long term and involve work on issues other than family violence and sexual violence. As ACC noted, capacity issues in the mental health sector are an issue not only within New Zealand but globally.
- 5.28 We also recognise that some important changes are already under way. For example, in Budget 2019, the Government invested \$1.9 billion in mental health and well-being initiatives throughout the government. *Kia Manawanui Aotearoa*, a 10-year cross-government strategy to transform mental well-being for New Zealanders, was released in 2021.
- 5.29 We were also told that Manatū Hauora Ministry of Health set up a cross-agency group to address capacity issues in the mental health and addiction workforce.
- 5.30 Te Puna Aonui agencies need to work better with each other and with community partners to understand the most pressing constraints and how they can work together to address them.
- 5.31 Te Puna Aonui agencies also need to work with tangata whenua and community partners to prioritise this work when the next *Te Aorerekura* action plan is discussed. Without adequate resources, it is difficult to see how they will achieve their outcomes.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that Te Puna Aonui agencies work together and with local initiatives and community partners to identify, prioritise, and manage the capacity constraints that currently affect the ability of the family violence and sexual violence system to respond effectively. Te Puna Aonui agencies, tangata whenua, and community partners could consider including this work in the next action plan for *Te Aorerekura*.

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