



Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers
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AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (ANZASW)

Submission on the Inquiry into Funding of
Specialist Sexual Violence Social Services

To the:

Social Services Select Committee

Submissions due Thursday 10th October 2013



ANZASW: DX Box WX 33 484 Christchurch; 03 349 0190;

admin@anzasw.org.nz;

www.anzasw.org.nz

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2. INTRODUCTION

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, or ANZASW, is the professional body for social workers in New Zealand. It is imperative that we provide a voice for our members on the inquiry into funding of specialist sexual violence social services and its direct effect on the social work profession.

In order to be in a position to write this submission on behalf of our membership ANZASW conducted a survey. This was emailed to 2,880 members via Survey Monkey and we received 142 replies. The questions in the survey were related to the current challenges social workers face when accessing or referring to sexual violence social services, what can be done to improve client outcome and what can be done to ensure culturally appropriate services are available.

3. AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) is the professional body for a national collective of more than 3,500 social workers, who have day-to-day involvement with the most vulnerable people in our society. Our work is guided by a Code of Ethics that is aligned with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). Our members work to help and support clients within the sexual violence sector and are well placed to comment on the implications of the inquiry into funding of specialist sexual violence social services.

Social work is founded on principles of human rights and social justice. We are guided by the Treaty of Waitangi and respect the equality, worth and dignity of all people. In accordance with the March 2012 IFSW Global Agenda¹ “we commit ourselves to supporting influencing and enabling structures and systems that positively address the root cause of oppression and inequality. We commit ourselves wholeheartedly and urgently to work together, with people who use services and with others who share our objectives and aspirations, to create a more socially-just and fair world”. We believe the overarching principles of social work are respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings, doing no harm, respect for diversity and upholding human rights and social justice.

¹ International Federation of Social Workers, International Association of Schools of Social Work and International Council on Social Welfare (2012). ‘The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development Commitment to Action’. Available at isw.sagepub.com (accessed 13 June 2012)

Our mission is to enable people to develop their full potential; our skill-set is problem solving and facilitation of positive change in individuals, organisations, whānau and communities. We recognise the environment contains opportunities for people to be both agents of change and victims of factors beyond their control. As a profession, we strive to alleviate poverty, foster social inclusion and liberate those who are vulnerable or oppressed. Social work is evidence-based and draws on theories of human development, behaviour and social systems.

Social workers respond to crises and emergencies along with the personal or social problems that arise from experience of barriers, inequities and injustices within our society. Our interventions involve problem solving, development of coping strategies, one-on-one counselling and therapy, family and group work, agency administration, community organisation and helping people to access services, resources and support systems within their community. We work across government and non-government settings including community organisations, iwi agencies, private practice, youth justice, child protection, mental health, addictions and disability. We are involved in research, training, education, professional development, competency assessment, data gathering, risk assessment, structural analysis, interagency protocols and the improvement of social policy.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INQUIRY

The terms of reference for the inquiry are to review:

- the state of specialist services and determine whether they reflect an integrated approach to service delivery, full coverage, and best practice
- specialist services, including those for Māori and other diverse ethnic communities, and assess whether they are accessible, culturally appropriate, and sustainable.

While we as an association recognise the need for specialist sexual violence social services for perpetrators our submission on this inquiry into funding is victim focussed. The information below is written from a social work perspective when the client is a victim of sexual violence only. As a result of this the recommendations to the select committee are also to improve the services and client outcomes for victims in particular. We do however have a brief summary of the state of sexual violence social services for perpetrators below.

The positive aspects of current sexual violence social services for perpetrators are that specialist services for harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) provided by STOP, Wellstop and SAFE are achieving international standard outcomes, with only 2% re-offending rate for youth and 5% for adults. This is an achievement that is supported by government. An important part of the success of NZ services is the family centred approach that incorporates social work and a systems focus into intervention. This differentiates NZ from overseas programmes.

In direct relation to current culturally appropriate sexual violence social services for perpetrators it is encouraging to see that the HSB specialist services all employ Maori staff and match Maori staff to Maori clients in most cases. SAFE has a dedicated Pasifika service. Work force development in the sexual violence area for Maori is an ongoing challenge. It is extremely difficult to recruit professionally trained Maori staff outside of the Northern region.

The issue with accessing current specialist services for HSB is their lack of availability. Specialist services for HSB are funded by CYF (under CYF status), Corrections (under court orders) and Ministry of Health (Intellectual disabled clients who are recipients under the Intellectual Disability (Compulsory Care and Rehabilitation) Act 2003) but generally only for clients referred by these government agencies. Funding for non-mandated adult sex offenders who are not convicted of sexual offences was withdrawn by CYF in June 13. Interim funding for this secondary child abuse prevention service finishes in June 14.

In cases where victims do not want to initiate prosecution they wait to be assured that the perpetrator will be able to access a quality community based programme. There are currently not enough of these available. These need to be promoted and accessible to help both victim and perpetrator in these cases.

There are few funded places for clients children and youth referred by community professionals and children who have engaged in concerning sexualised behaviour is a growth area and funded services are not keeping pace with demand (STOP experienced a 90% increase in referrals in F13 across the South Island and this is also reflected in growth in the North Island.

5. OVERVIEW

Social work practice in the sexual violence field is about providing assistance, understanding and encouragement to sensitive, stressed and vulnerable clients. Social workers are focused on improving client's wellbeing whilst affecting long term change. Our members have a significant professional interest in the potential or intended effects funding of sexual violence social services will have on their abilities to help clients. This enquiry comes not a moment too soon, as services are at present severely underfunded causing issues of availability, access and confidence for clients and social workers.

The Report of the Taskforce for Action on Sexual Violence (2009) stated that:

“Sexual violence has significant physical and mental health impacts on victims, including physical injury, sexually transmitted infections, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. The high economic and social costs associated with sexual violence result from victims suffering from long-term mental health problems and inability to function well in society. High numbers of female prisoners, mental health patients and people with drug and alcohol problems report a history of sexual violation.

Without investment, the sector will continue to face the same challenges of being unable to: plan long term, develop new services that meet current and emerging community needs and retain specialist staff. The development of sustainable funding is a priority to make real improvements across the priority areas. Effective funding models should recognise and provide for services that are culturally distinct. One size does not fit all.”

Specialist sexual violence services have been underfunded for decades, and the sector has been weakened considerably in recent years by funding cuts. Most frontline services struggle daily with capacity and resourcing issues. Meanwhile there are increasing demands for services and many gaps

in service provision. It is important that this inquiry ensures that social workers have the resources available to consistently provide effective and appropriate referral and support services.

Considering the need for funding and the needs of clients our members have provided feedback from their unique social work point of view. The summary of their challenges, suggestions for improvements, as well as overall recommendations surrounding sexual violence social services are below for your consideration.

6. CURRENT CHALLENGES ACCESSING AND REFERRING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE SOCIAL SERVICES

Location and availability

The overall view of our members is that there are inconsistencies in location and availability of sexual violence social services throughout New Zealand. Simply put there are not enough services to meet the needs of clients. This is discouraging to clients in their time of need. In particular there is a distinct lack of ACC accredited services available for victims of sexual violence, which limits referral options for social workers and makes it near impossible to match clients to services. This can have a negative effect on clients and in some cases increases fear and reluctance to use the services available.

There is a particular need for services in rural areas, with clients currently using their own resources to travel to the closest service available. This is a big issue as the distance can be too long and the travel cost too high, especially when multiple visits are required. Additionally if the client wants the social worker to travel with them it is almost impossible. There are two schedules and costs to consider (client and social worker) as well as the busy and restricted sexual violence social service appointment calendar. There is currently no consistent system where the client can be visited by the service.

As clients are at a significant and vulnerable time in their lives, the availability of referrals and appointments are currently unacceptable. The high demand for funded services and the inconsistency of services available result in waiting lists that are far too long. Contributing to this is the fact that a lot of funded and ACC accredited services only offer part time hours. Added to that the travelling time that some clients have, it is a lengthy process just to organise an initial appointment. Clients that need immediate help are severely disadvantaged, and it is understandable that clients lose motivation while in the waiting stage.

Even more concerning is the fact that the costs of not providing adequate sexual violence social services continues to lead to anger frustration and unresolved issues that manifest themselves in relationship difficulties, addiction issues, employment, offending and even sexual abusive behaviours being replayed on others.

Lack of specific gender/cultural services and specialists

The next most concern for our members is the dire need for funded sexual violence social services appropriate for gender, age and culture or ethnic group. Current services can be monoculture in approach and the alternatives that are provided are rarely funded and therefore too expensive for most clients. Along with more specialist services is the obvious need for more specialist practitioners and specialist training. The gaps particularly identified by ANZASW members are the distinct lack of specialist services for men, children, Maori and Pacific Islanders.

There are no consistent referral processes that are gender, age or culturally specific and appropriate. Without these specialist services being available a client's recovery is compromised. This creates an environment where clients (especially those that require or request specialist treatment) must receive treatment from the service that is available or not receive treatment at all. This leads to a very unstructured and uneasy environment for the client and their family. Options should be available to clients in order to ensure they receive the correct and most effective treatment that meets their specific needs.

Awareness

Our members found that the lack of awareness and advertisement of current services makes it difficult for social workers when making referrals. The process can be unclear and it is difficult to be 100% confident in referrals when the information is so limited. Limited information of funding, paperwork and referrals also make it difficult to determine the availability of services and appointments. There should be a network and a directory of services and key contacts nationwide that is easily accessible and user-friendly for both clients and practitioners.

Criteria

Our members feel the time it takes to fill out and submit the paperwork to get clients on the waiting list (which is currently too long) is a hindrance to client recovery. This unacceptably lengthy process can cause anxiety for clients and family at an already stressful time. The criteria for funding are too restrictive and the paperwork that goes along with this is excessive, delaying the referral process yet again. Access to services should not be determined by criteria, funding or income bracket. The process should be swift and efficient especially when dealing with the emotionally and often time sensitive issue of sexual violence.

7. IMPROVING CLIENT OUTCOME

Increase Funding

To make any improvements to client outcome in the sexual violence sector funding needs to be significantly increased. Every client is an individual and the services available should allow clients to feel they can access services that best meet their needs. Research into the allocation of funds would also be necessary to ensure that the money is being applied effectively. Specific areas for allocation of funding that our members feel would improve client outcome are detailed below.

Location and Availability

As mentioned earlier in this submission our members feel that there is a severe lack of services available to meet the needs of New Zealand communities. Therefore funding needs to be applied to increase service availability (particularly in rural areas) and decrease wait lists and paperwork. If it is

not realistic to have sexual violence social services located in all communities throughout the country then there needs to be services that will travel to clients where necessary. Improving our current services by increasing their hours would help to free up some much needed appointment time.

In addition to having more services in general, more funded services are essential along with support networks and contact centres. A 24 hour support line or website that has a national directory of contacts and options would assist existing or potential clients. This would provide a range of services would improve client outcomes and increase ANZASW member confidence in the referral process. Removing restrictions and making long-term treatment plans a reality. Clients could then be encouraged to be in control and make informed decisions about the services and organisations they want to use.

Awareness and Education

If the much needed funding is provided to increase the availability of services, then there needs to be a corresponding increase in awareness. A directory of sexual violence social services and specialists would assist clients and social workers through the referral process, as well as provide a guide for funding allocation. Once this network is up and running the door will be open for collaboration and communication between practitioners to ensure clients are receiving the best service possible. Increasing levels of confidence and understanding between services, practitioners and clients.

Allocating funding for prevention of sexual violence should also be a priority. It is an opportune time to start a nationwide campaign creating awareness and providing education on sexual violence in our communities. We should take this opportunity to educate New Zealand communities about sexual violence with a focus on prevention. Including men, children and various ethnicities were included on brochures, posters and advertisement would educate these groups on the services available as well as encourage them to seek help.

Specialist Services and specialists

Funding should be used to attract and retain trained staff, especially in relation to gender, age, culture and ethnicity. We need to educate professionals about specialist training and encourage them to up skill and become ACC accredited. There is a need to set up services particularly for gender and age (culture is outlined in next section) where specialists and consultants can be contacted and accessed. Requirements in each area (depending on demand) surrounding the specialist services available and CPD or training surrounding cultural issues for all practitioners would boost these specialist services.

8. IMPROVING CULTURALLY SPECIFIC SERVICES

Cultural Services

There needs to be accessible, culturally appropriate services located in all or most regions throughout the country. Many ethnic groups suffer in silence fearing they won't be heard or understood. This needs to change. Certain cultures and ethnicities have views and beliefs surrounding sexual violence that need to be fully understood before services can be accessed or help

can be asked for. For instance some cultures shame victims of sexual violence into silence by associating this with personal failure or family dishonour.

Cultural understanding should no longer be a barrier between client and practitioner, and our ANZASW members suggestions for improvement of culturally appropriate services follow.

Location and Availability

Funding is needed in order to increase availability of sexual violence social services that meet the cultural needs of clients. This could be in the form of organisations set up specifically for Maori and other ethnic groups or a cultural advisor in each region. If there were to be organisations or cultural advisors in the main cities or regions only, there needs to be systems in place to have them travel to clients if necessary. In order to improve client outcome and better assist the client and their family through a stressful time culturally appropriate sexual violence social services should be available when requested.

Training

There is a need to promote qualifications and training to encourage Maori and all diverse ethnicities in New Zealand to participate and gain the qualifications necessary to be a practitioner in the sexual violence sector. In time this would provide more culturally appropriate practitioners which would in turn increase the availability of specialist cultural services. There should also be a support system developed to encourage Maori and Pacific Island practitioners to apply for ACC accreditation.

All employees of sexual violence social services should feel comfortable dealing with clients of any ethnicity or should know where to go or who to refer to if they cannot help. Training needs to be provided and funded to ensure this nationwide.

Advisory/Consultation

Culturally appropriate models and networks could be developed in our communities through feedback and consultation. It could be in the form of networking with relevant communities and professional leaders or by involving iwi, pacific island leaders and migrant services as consultants. A collective approach to improve outcomes and treatment options for clients might be the best option for some communities. Making the community a part of decision making and allowing the feedback received to be a contributing factor for funding could result in more effective culturally appropriate services.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

ANZASW recommend that:

- Government funding to specialist sexual violence services should be increased so they can better meet the needs of clients and improve client outcomes. This would provide more information and options to social workers when making referrals and shorten the waiting lists.
- Funding should enable all communities across the country, including rural communities, to have easy access to specialist sexual violence services to ensure that location and income are no longer barriers for clients or conditions for services.

- More services should be provided which are appropriate to the specific needs of Maori, children, youth, male victim/survivors, different Pasifika ethnic communities, other diverse ethnic communities, migrant and refugee groups. This should include specific funding for specialist training and requirements for cultural training nationwide.
- Funding should be provided to create and develop a network of services and practitioners. Not only would this provide information for more informed referrals and decision making but it would also help to determine the areas/specialities that need more attention and funding.
- Specific funding should be allocated to a nationwide campaign focussing on prevention, education and awareness. This would provide communities with much needed resources and information regarding sexual violence.