



Vulnerable Children Newsletter

Issue One - November 2009

Message from the Minister

I am pleased to launch the first issue of the Vulnerable Children Newsletter.

The reduction of child abuse and particularly the protection of our most vulnerable children is a key priority for me and for the Government.

As we all know, the prevention of child abuse and neglect is a complex problem, and to make difference in this area we must all work together with a shared vision. The Vulnerable Children newsletter, produced by Child, Youth and Family, will keep you updated on what is being done and the progress that has been made for vulnerable children.

Recently, I met with a small group of community experts to discuss this issue and consider what actions could be taken to achieve our goal of reducing child abuse and protecting of our most vulnerable children.

I know that there are many professionals and experts that I have not been able to meet, who will have great ideas that could help. These ideas are important to me and I would love to hear them.

To assist in gathering your comments I have asked Child, Youth and Family to set up an ideas bank where everyone can send their feedback. These ideas will be collated and presented to me so I can draw on the wisdom and expertise of all of you when considering what additional initiatives or actions could be taken to reach our ultimate goal - a country where all children are safe from harm.

Information about where to send your comments is included in this newsletter.

I am calling on every New Zealander to play a role in protecting our vulnerable children and I look forward to hearing your ideas and thoughts on how we could better protect them.

Hon Paula Bennett

Minister for Social Development and Employment

**protecting
vulnerable
children**





An overview of the Vulnerable Children Programme

Vulnerable Children is a programme focussed on protecting New Zealand's most vulnerable children, those under the age of two years. These children and babies are at greatest risk, as they depend completely on the adults who care for them.

A programme of action has begun which will continue to evolve as we learn what works best and how we can effectively reduce the number of children harmed and abused in the future.

The programme of action includes:

- 1 Never, Ever Shake a Baby campaign
- 2 Auckland District Health Board 'Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome' programme
- 3 Multi agency care plans
- 4 First Response to family violence call-outs
- 5 Child, Youth and Family social workers in hospitals.

The 'Never, Ever Shake a Baby' campaign

Every year around 60 babies under two are admitted to hospital, more than a third of these babies have been shaken. Often people don't realise how little it takes to damage a baby's brain and the devastating results of the injuries sustained.

On 6 December 2009 we begin a multi-media campaign aimed at educating parents and caregivers about why you must never shake a baby. This will include television, radio and print advertising in all communities around New Zealand.

Our aim is to reach all new parents, in particular young, first-time mums and dads with messages about the dangers of shaking a baby, and where to get help.

For more information, check out the campaign website www.powertoprotect.net.nz.

Auckland District Health Board 'Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome' programme

We are also supporting the Auckland District Health Board's 'preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome programme' which is being led by Dr Patrick Kelly. Lead maternity carers will have conversations with every new parent about how to look after a crying baby and why you must never shake them. These face to face discussions are backed up with information pamphlets and DVD resources.

Overseas studies have shown this programme to reduce Shaken Baby Syndrome by 40 percent.

This programme expects to reach 4,000 new parents over the next two years, as well as raising awareness widely through pre-natal programmes and well-child care in the Auckland District Health Board region.

**protecting
vulnerable
children**





First Response to family violence call-outs

The Police notify Child, Youth and Family every time they attend a family violence call-out when children are in the home. This results in around 51,000 family violence notifications from the Police each year and equates to 46 percent of all notifications to Child, Youth and Family.

While many of these notifications do not require ongoing Child, Youth and Family involvement, they do provide an opportunity to give support to the family and ensure the children are safe and well cared for.

First response is being run as a pilot programme, beginning in central Auckland on 25 November. This is a Child, Youth and Family led initiative in collaboration with Police and a community organisation, SHINE.

A SHINE social worker will visit the family within a week of the family violence call-out providing immediate support; assisting the family to keep everyone safe and linking them with services in the community. If there are any concerns for the child's safety SHINE will make a referral to Child, Youth and Family.

Child, Youth and Family social workers in hospitals

Child, Youth and Family are introducing social workers into six hospitals around the country. The social workers will be available to support hospital staff caring for children who have been abused. They will attend multi-agency safety plan meetings and provide a link between the hospital and Child, Youth and Family sites, while working alongside health professionals and the police.

The social workers will be joining Counties Manukau, Waikato, and Wellington, Hutt, Canterbury and Dunedin hospitals from December this year.

Multi agency solutions

While multi agency consultation already happens in most areas, a formalisation of the process will prevent vulnerable children from "falling through the cracks" between agencies in the future.

Child, Youth and Family will come together with Police and health professionals to ensure that there is a clear, safe plan established for all children admitted to hospital as a result of abuse. This will ensure that children have a safe home to go to when they leave hospital, and an agreed process for ongoing monitoring of their safety and wellbeing.

**protecting
vulnerable
children**





Data Collection

Currently Government agencies collect data for different purposes, this makes sharing information complicated.

In order to work more closely together to protect children at risk, we need to have more consistent data between our agencies. This would enable a benchmark to assess where we are starting from and measure how we are doing.

Officials will work together to develop an agreed protocol for the collection of information.

Ideas Bank

This newsletter officially launches the vulnerable children ideas bank. We are keen to hear any ideas and thoughts about how we can work together to protect New Zealand's most vulnerable children. Let us know what you think.

Send your ideas to: vulnerablechildren@cyf.govt.nz

In the meantime we will be sending out regular newsletters. There will also be regular updates and information on the CYF website to keep you informed of our progress and latest developments: www.cyf.govt.nz

“I am calling on every New Zealander to play a role in protecting our vulnerable children and I look forward to hearing your ideas and thoughts on how we could better protect them.”

Hon Paula Bennett

