

A Summary of the Literature on initiatives to build integrated Family Violence Service Systems



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The Research at a Glance

There is considerable evidence that localised, inter- or multi-agency approaches to family violence service delivery are very effective in securing good outcomes for women's and children's safety and in holding men accountable for their use of violence, at micro or local levels of operation. There is, however, insufficient evidence about the extent to which macro-driven initiatives (that is, the Victorian State Government's strategy of developing a whole of government approach to building an integrated family violence system) will necessarily lead to increased safety for women and children who have experienced family violence and / or accountability of men who use violence. A review of the literature suggests that better outcomes depend on strong, complementary micro and macro level strategies and that these are very difficult to achieve. A potential framework for exploring Victoria's integrated family violence system, at all levels of operation and across all sectors, is considered. It is based on Praxis International's Eight Audit Trail process.

Research Objectives – To undertake a review of national and international literature to determine:

- The extent to which there is evidence that a whole of government approach to developing integrated service delivery models leads to better outcomes for women's and children's safety and increased accountability for men who use violence
- What the opportunities and challenges of building a state-wide integrated family violence system entail
- What criteria have been used to assess whole of government policy development, how they relate to building an integrated service delivery system, such as for family violence intervention, and the implications for policy, planning and practice.

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Reasons for Research

In the area of family violence, one of the most significant examples of a 'joined up' or integrated approach to policy making has been the state-wide Victorian Family Violence Reform Initiative. In the 2005 Report of the Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence, integration was seen as requiring:

'...agencies to decide on and articulate common goals and agree on ways to pursue those goals. Integration of services is more than co-ordinated service delivery – it is a whole new service. Co-location of agencies, agreed protocols and codes of practice, joint service delivery, agencies reconstituting or realigning their core business to confront the challenges posed by a broadened conception of the problem: these are the key indicators of an integrated response.' DVIRC cited in (Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence 2005)

With this key document, along with several other key policy documents, research and the leadership of several key senior officials, the Victorian Government committed to a new

approach to family violence. The Government's purpose in reforming the delivery of family violence services was to create an integrated response to family violence and to expand support, safety and accountability options that are informed by a gendered and socially just understanding of violence.

A whole-of-government approach was adopted within the Victorian Government, whereby the different levels and agencies of government were brought together in new horizontal and vertical structures, as well as establishing new structures to bring together government and non-government agencies together at state and regional levels. A central feature of the new approach has been to develop an integrated system that involves better coordination of the three main entry points into it: family violence services; legal and statutory bodies; and mainstream services. These key structures involve:

- The Family Violence Ministers Group
- The Family Violence Interdepartmental Committee
- The Statewide Advisory Committee to Reduce Family Violence
- The Family Violence Round Table
- Establishment of Family Violence Coordination Unit in DPCD with oversight for whole of government coordination
- Integrated Family Violence Committees at regional and sub-regional levels, with links to the Regional Indigenous Family Violence Action Group
- Regional Family Violence Coordination Positions with responsibility for developing cross-sector, cross-agency partnerships (Marcus 2008).

Many of the impacts of new integrated forms of public management, however, are not fully tested, including the question of whether a whole of government approach adds value to what had previously been delivered through more traditional means (Hague and Mallos 1998; Browne 2004; Considine 2005). For this reason, a review of Australian and international literature on public policy and issues of governance is critical with a view to also exploring the following questions, as they relate to the Victorian family violence reform initiatives:

- What criteria need to be developed in order to examine how the integrated family violence system works?
- How can inter-agency collaboration be investigated at a range of levels (horizontally and vertically, and at macro and micro levels of action)?
- To what extent does an integrated family violence intervention system necessarily support the safety of women and children and engender a system response that is more consistent and powerful than the man's abuse and control of the woman?
- How is the emergence of whole of government 'integrated policy' realised in the family violence intervention system and does it make for better outcomes for women's and children's safety and in holding men accountable and responsible?

Sources

This component of the broader SAFER research draws largely upon:

- An extensive Australian and international literature review in which two broad areas of literature were identified as the foci of the search. First, there is literature dealing specifically with domestic and family violence but focussing on 'multi-agency', 'inter-agency', 'coordinated community responses', or 'integrated' responses or services. Secondly, there is more general literature dealing with 'whole of government', 'joined-up' government, 'horizontal management', 'network government', 'participatory government', the latter terms of which extended the search into literature examining the roles and interlinkages in service provision across the government and community (or voluntary) sectors. The review entailed searching relevant electronic databases, websites and The University of Melbourne library catalogue. It included sourcing relevant citations and monitoring relevant journal publications. Electronic databases searched included: Academic Search Preview (EBSCO), APAFT: Australian Public Affairs (Informit), Expanded Academic, JSTOR, IBSS: International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, Australian Criminology Database CINCH, Family and Society Plus Text

(Informit), Sociological Abstracts, Social Science Abstracts, PsychINFO, Worldwide Political Science Abstracts and APAIS. Websites searched included: the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse', Australian Government websites, and the Institute of Public Administration websites. The following journals were searched: *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (from 2007), *Violence Against Women* (from 2005), *Child Abuse Review* 2008, *Violence Against Women: An Australian Feminist Journal* (from 2000), *Australian Journal of Public Administration* (from 2000).

To a lesser extent, it also draws upon:

- Qualitative data relating to the role that research played in the State Government's development of the reforms. This information was gathered during semi-structured interviews with senior officials in Victoria Police and the three government departments with responsibility for the development of the reforms (Departments of Planning and Community Development, Human Services, and Justice). These interviews were conducted in late 2008 to early 2009 and are the subject of an accompanying SAFER research summary detailing findings on the development of the family violence reforms.

Understanding Integrated Systems

- Over the past decade or more, there has been a rapid growth in commitment to models of inter- or multi-agency collaboration and partnership across policy and practice arenas (Hague and Mallos 1998; Balloch and Tylor 2001; Edwards 2001; Mulrone 2003; Management Advisory Committee 2004; Hunt 2005; Stanley and Humphreys 2006; State Services Authority 2007a; State Services Authority 2007b).
- In the broadest context, this work is about horizontal and vertical integration: integration within Government; integration between the public and community sectors; integration across local and regional agencies; and integration between central agencies, on the one hand, and regional and local agencies, on the other (Edwards 2001).
- There are different understandings of integrated governance and thus different levels at which integration occurs: service delivery integration; programmatic integration; integration relating to partnership agreements; whole-of-government integration. (Gardiner 2000; Szirom, Lasater et al. 2001).
- Within the community sector (or voluntary sector, as it is known in the UK and Canada), collaborative work involving coordination and partnership is frequently called inter- or multi-agency work or as developing 'coordinated community responses'. This is not necessarily the same as the terms used to describe integration within Government. Called variously 'joined-up government', 'whole-of-government', 'horizontal management', and 'network government', these modes of government have been developed to improve governments' responses to intractable, complex and 'wicked' problems that cannot be addressed through a single departmental response, but which require collaboration across government departments, between levels of government, and – increasingly - between the government and non-government community sectors (Edwards 2001; Browne 2004). Specialist family violence services, such as refuges, have long recognised the need for inter-agency collaboration given that no single agency can offer all the services required by, for example, women and children (James-Hanman 2001).
- Best practice exemplars of integrated or collaborative family violence services consider what 'integration' or 'coordinated community responses' means in relation to their specific contexts i.e. considers the social, cultural and geographic diversity and size of their locale.
 - Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), Duluth, USA (Shepard and Pence 1999; Pence and McDonnell 2001)

- Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project (HAIP), New Zealand (Balzar 1999; Gregg 2007)
 - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), Cardiff, Wales (Robinson 2003; Robinson 2006).
 - ACT Interagency Family Violence Intervention Program, Australia (Keys Young 2000)
- In acting on the decision to 'join up' to address cross-cutting policy issues, governments need to consider a number of challenges including: new ways of working across organisations, new types of organisations, new accountabilities (possibly entailing "*fuzzy accountability*" relating to multiple and flexible (as opposed to weakened) accountability, (Wilkins 2002), and new ways of delivering and resourcing services (State Services Authority 2007b). All of this represents a significant effort in public management reform in relation to family violence in Victoria. It also represents significant shifts and accountabilities for non-government, community service organisations.

Identified Difficulties in Family Violence Integration

Collaborative family violence intervention work and / or a whole of government approach highlight several difficulties. These include:

- Networking costs agencies in time and salaries. Work needs to progress beyond 'talking shop' and networking between professionals to focus on strategies and services to support better outcomes (Hague 1999)
- Negotiating confidentiality and data-sharing procedures across agencies (Stanley and Humphreys 2006)
- Developing linkages and relationships between workers in perpetrator programs, the justice responses (police, courts etc.), children's, families' and women's domestic violence, which also needs to combat the separation of services for adults and children (Pence and Shepard 1999; Stanley and Humphreys 2006)
- Ensuring sufficient resources are available, especially for working with children, outreach, follow-up and long-term services for women and children (Hague 1999)
- Cost-shifting from government to community sector agencies and consequent competition for funding and grants in the latter (Hague 1999)
- With new resourcing of community sector organisations by government, come new obligations on the former to account for how funds are spent. Accounting for funding does not necessarily relate to accounting for quality of services to women, children and men.
- Running the risk that a whole of government approach becomes a mere 'tool of management' (where the process becomes the outcome) as opposed to a transformed mode of governance delivering better outcomes (Szirom, Lasater et al. 2001; Humphage 2005).
- Developing a shared vision and common understanding of family violence (James-Hanman 2001).
- Negotiating power relationships, particularly at the local and regional levels, where the funder is a partner in program and service delivery development.
- Preventing the creation of 'integration silos', for example, as a consequence of establishing new partnership arrangements (Szirom, Lasater et al. 2001).

Development of Criteria for Exploring Family Violence Integration

Praxis International's Eight Audit Trails has considerable potential as a conceptual scheme for exploring family violence integration (Pence, Mitchell et al. 2007). The audit trails have previously been used to explore whether a coordinated family violence system has the capacity to provide increased safety for women and children and stronger accountability for men. In reality, and in spite of best intentions, it is all too easy for the opposite to happen (as documented in the Western Australian Safety and Accountability Audit of the Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project).

The benefit of adopting the broad framework of the Eight Audit Trails is that it provides a method for “*seeing what is going on*” (Pence, Mitchell et al. 2007:8) by people located within diverse institutional systems. They provide a process through which multiple agencies (government and non-government) can conceptualise their progress across a number of different parameters, which are instrumental in creating the structure for good multi-agency work. It is predicated on a participatory and dynamic approach, so that criteria can be adapted to enable an exploration at different levels of integration (that is, vertically and horizontally), across and within different sectors of the integrated family violence system, while also encompassing the roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees.

The figure below illustrates the eight elements of the Audit Trails that can be used to explore family violence integration.

Figure 1: Eight Audit Trails



Source: Praxis International, *The Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit Tool Kit*.

Further criteria, drawing on the literature review and interviews with senior government officials involved in the Victorian family violence reforms, are listed under each of the eight main criteria (elements of the ‘audit trail’) below. The criteria, and how they might be used by participants at all levels and in all spheres of an integrated family violence system, are under development.

1. Mission (overall and specific processes depending on context)

- Shared recognition of need, philosophy and commitment to integration that leads to safety and accountability
- Leadership, authority and mandate for integration
- Increased public awareness and understanding of family violence as experienced in diverse cultural and social groups

2. Concepts and theories

- Shared vision and common understanding of family violence
- Gendered understanding of family violence, power and control
- Understanding of family violence as experienced in diverse cultural and social groups
- Joint indicators

3. Rules and regulations

- Laws, court rulings, legislative mandates, requirements of regulating bodies

- Protocol and policy frameworks that regulate and guide agencies' responses, including family violence standards, codes of practice, practice guidelines

4. Administrative practices

- Job descriptions
- 'Paperwork' e.g. report writing formats, screening and case documentation forms that are required to be filled in for the purposes of providing a service to a client and for the purposes of reporting and accountability
- Memoranda of understanding
- Outcomes accountability
- Flexibility of service delivery
- Feedback loops, joint information and data sharing inter- and intra-agency
- Joint intake and referral mechanisms

5. Resources

- Participants do their jobs without compromising the safety of women and children or the accountability of perpetrators e.g. adequate supervision, staff care, case loads, support services, time for reform planning and policy development
- Material, infrastructure and technology
- Financial – how budgetary decisions are made and whether budgets are pooled or constrained by departmental silos
- Producing service directories

6. Linkages

- Mechanisms for horizontal, vertical, inter- and intra-agency integration
- Relationships and trust (internal and external, horizontal and vertical)
- Mechanisms for identifying and rectifying gaps in integrated family violence system and unnecessary (as opposed to necessary) service and program duplication

7. Accountability

- Based on outcomes relating to the safety of women and children and holding men who are perpetrators accountable
- Monitoring family violence referrals
- Alignment and consistency of all agencies' responses
- The role and responsiveness within the overall family violence system e.g. from ministerial level through to service delivery worker; of specific sectors (e.g. the role and responsiveness of the justice system) within and across the sectors that make up the overall integrated family violence system

8. Education and training

- Formal and informal
- Specific skills development
- Exposure to concepts and theories
- Inter-agency coordination of training services
- Development of good practice guidelines
- Preventative and educational work

Publications and Knowledge Exchange

Article under preparation for publication.

A combined reflective forum and focus group to which chairs and coordinators of the regional (or sub-regional) integrated family violence committees will be invited is scheduled for May 2009. The forum will provide an opportunity to participants to reflect on the enablers and barriers to building an integrated family violence system at regional and local levels, and the relationship between integration, improved pathways and improved outcomes (safety for women and children; holding men accountable and responsible for their use of violence) in relation to insights derived from the perspective of senior government policy makers at the

State Government level. The findings from the forum will provide the basis for further in-depth discussions in the SAFER team's case-site regions.

Implications for Policy and Planning

There are a number of further questions to be considered which have policy and planning implications for developing strong, complementary micro and macro level strategies upon which to build an integrated family violence system.

- How can 'integration' as a philosophical response be more clearly related to a 'whole of government' approach as praxis? What does this mean for further development of vertical and horizontal, macro-level and micro-level relationships within an integrated system working across government and non-government agencies in a statewide system? How can the state and regional bodies ensure that there is an even spread of family violence services in all localities?
- What are the challenges of building an integrated family violence intervention system, which must work across culturally, linguistically and geographically diverse communities, across Victoria? To what extent has the Victorian 'experiment' considered what 'integration' means in different places (for example, the Eastern Metropolitan Region alone has a linguistically and culturally diverse population of 950,000, and extends 100 kms east to west across diverse (sub)urban, interface, rural landscapes). Do regions need to be further sub-divided (as some have done) in order for locally-driven initiatives to be better supported and grow stronger relationships within their respective localities?
- How can the current integrated family violence intervention system avoid becoming merely a 'tool of management' and to what extent does this characterise the current system in Victoria? For example, to what extent does 'integration' become 'consolidation' of services rather than opening up options and access to interlinked services for perpetrators and victims / survivors?

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