

Helpful comments  
and suggestions on  
an earlier draft  
were provided by

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# 1

# Introduction

From Welfare to Well-being and Strengthening Families are strategic initiatives by the Department of Social Welfare implemented over the period 1993-99. They are distinctive in a number of respects, both in terms of conceptual design, and their method of implementation. Particularly in the case of Strengthening Families, they have come to play a significant role in social policy in New Zealand.

This study was commissioned by the Department of Social Welfare in late 1998 to provide an enduring record of the Welfare to Well-being and Strengthening Families initiatives, so as to provide a resource for those with an interest in social policy, the implementation of strategic initiatives, and broader issues of public sector management.

The study was written up in December 1999 and reflects the progress of the two initiatives as of that date. The Department of Social Welfare was restructured before the study was completed. From 1 October 1999 a new Ministry of Social Policy was established, and a new Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. The terms used throughout the report refer to organisations and the positions held by various people at the time the study was conducted.

The specific objectives of the study were to describe the implementation of these initiatives, to record by means of personal interviews their perceived philosophy and achievements over 1993-99 and to record their strengths and weaknesses. A list of people interviewed is given in Annex 1.

While the Strengthening Families initiative is still in its early stages, and there is no hard information yet on its impact on social outcomes, it was nevertheless felt that a contemporary study into the process of implementing strategic initiatives of this kind would yield useful insights.

The method used in the preparation of this paper was the case study approach.<sup>1</sup> Personal interviews with a wide range of people involved with the two initiatives were conducted in October and November 1998 and in February and March 1999. These included the current and former Ministers of Social Welfare, current and former DSW staff across the department, staff of other central government agencies, and members of the voluntary sector and business and consultant communities. Visits were made to Christchurch and Masterton, where meetings were held with a variety of people involved in a selection of local community initiatives. A wide range of published and internal Department of Social Welfare material was reviewed, a meeting of the national interdepartmental Strengthening Families steering group was observed, and some of the sessions of the Youth Justice in Focus conference were attended in Wellington in October 1998. A small number of further interviews were conducted, and new material was reviewed, in November and December 1999 to update and complete the study.

This study is a descriptive case study, rather than an explanatory study. That is, it does not attempt to evaluate the success or otherwise of these initiatives, except through noting the contents of existing material and seeking and recording the views of those interviewed.

Nevertheless, the study was designed with some specific theoretical perspectives about social policy

and public sector management in mind, in order to define the scope of the study and guide data collection.<sup>2</sup>

First, some of the issues that are the focus of these initiatives - such as welfare dependence, and the need for interagency co-ordination in social service delivery – have been enduring points of tension in social policy and public sector management. It is therefore important in describing new initiatives in these areas to understand what preceded them. This enables more careful identification of how the new initiatives differ from what preceded them, and it makes possible some testing of the null hypothesis – by discovering that a new initiative may be little more than “old wine in new bottles.”

Secondly, one of the issues noted by many observers of New Zealand’s public sector management reforms since the mid-1980s is the risk that, in vigorously pursuing a contractual approach based on the detailed specification of outputs to be supplied by individual public sector agencies, cross-cutting issues and the broader public interest would receive insufficient attention.<sup>3</sup> Concern has also been expressed at the lack of focus in the New Zealand system on the outcomes of government spending, and the linkages between outputs and outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

With respect to the Department of Social Welfare itself, the Director-General Margaret Bazley stated that, on taking up her position in 1993 she found the need for a much closer fit between the strategies and operations of the different business units in DSW, and a closer alignment with the government’s strategic priorities.<sup>5</sup>

Thirdly, there is some United Kingdom material on interagency collaboration in social service delivery that informed the approach taken in the study. Tony Morrison, in a paper presented to the International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect in Auckland in September 1998, observed:

“Multi-disciplinary collaboration, then, whilst seen to be a very desirable objective, has in practice proved to be difficult to achieve, due to a combination of structural, philosophical, cultural, and financial blocks. Stevenson (1989) noted five major barriers to collaboration:<sup>6</sup>

- I. different organisational structures, systems, cultures, values;
- II. communication barriers: what seems essential for one professional to share, may seem a breach of confidentiality to another. Disagreements can also exist over the actual value of talking together at all;
- III. differences in status and perceived power;
- IV. conflicting professional and organisational priorities;
- V. the extent to which collaboration is perceived as mutually beneficial.”

In designing and conducting this study, therefore, the opportunity was taken to explore in some detail the perceptions of those interviewed on these potential barriers to intersectoral collaboration and co-ordination in social service delivery.

The main questions pursued in the course of the study were:

- what is understood by the terms “welfare to well-being” and “strengthening families”?
- how do these initiatives differ from pre-existing arrangements in their philosophy, design, implementation and effects?
- how were these initiatives implemented, and what has been their effect on existing arrangements?
- what are their strengths and weaknesses?
- will these new initiatives be enduring?
- what key conclusions can be drawn from the experience of these initiatives?

Section 2 outlines the Welfare to Well-being initiative; Section 3 describes the origins and implementation of Strengthening Families, and Section 4 sets down some concluding remarks.

# 2

## From Welfare to Well-being

From Welfare to Well-being had its origins in two key elements: first, the desire by a new Director General to inject some strategic vision and coherence into the activities of the Department of Social Welfare, and secondly, in doing so, to try to use the Department's resources and influence to head off what was seen as a serious threat to social cohesion in New Zealand - namely, the emergence of long-term benefit dependency.

When Margaret Bazley took up the position of Director General in July 1993, the Department was 18 months into a large-scale restructuring exercise. The restructuring had taken the form of breaking up the old Department into separate business units, so that each could focus more tightly on the delivery of services to its own particular client group.<sup>7</sup> There had followed a period when each business was focused on creating its own identity and increasing its operational efficiency. Relationships between the different parts of the department were not at all close, and at times were antagonistic.<sup>8</sup>

Bazley saw a need for a much closer fit between their strategies and operations, particularly in view of what she saw as a core of clients common to all of the businesses. She was also concerned to lift the sights of managers from efficient output delivery to effectiveness in terms of ultimate outcomes<sup>9</sup>, and in doing so, to more closely align the activities of the Department with the Government's overarching strategic priorities (as reflected in the Strategic Result Areas). One of the Strategic Result Areas was

to advance social cohesion, and this was seen as particularly relevant to the goals of the Department of Social Welfare.

The second key strand in the development of Welfare to Well-being was emerging analysis in the Department's Social Policy Agency of likely prospects for beneficiaries even under a favourable macroeconomic scenario of strong growth. The Social Policy Agency produced a long-term scenario in February 1994 and presented it to the Department's business unit general managers. The scenario painted a pessimistic picture of a divided and unhappy New Zealand society in 2010 if long-term welfare dependency, and projected demographic changes, economic trends and technological changes were not met now with government initiatives to tackle the welfare dependency problem.<sup>11</sup> With the economy projected to grow strongly over the four years from 1994, the opportunity was seen to attack the working-age dependency problem. The alternative was referred to in the Department as "the grim vision."

*“It was a disquieting experience indeed when...the penny suddenly dropped...that we could not simply carry on delivering our range of existing services and hope that the welfare dependency problem could be turned around.”*

As Bazley put it: “Until that time, most New Zealanders, including Department staff, thought that the economic situation would improve and that people would move into employment as followed the 1930s recession...The 10 year scenario indicated...it was unlikely that beneficiaries would get the jobs...that youth, women at home and early retired people would be more attractive to employers than beneficiaries...an economic upturn could completely bypass the beneficiary population and that population would just keep on increasing...Another alarming aspect was the disproportionate number of Maori and Pacific Island people represented in the beneficiary numbers.”<sup>12</sup> “It was a disquieting experience indeed when...the penny suddenly dropped...that we could not simply carry on delivering our range of existing services and hope that the welfare dependency problem could be turned around.”<sup>13</sup>

A key objective therefore was to mobilise the 6,000 staff across the whole of DSW, and in turn to mobilise broader community and business interests, to try to ensure that beneficiaries got the new jobs as they became available.

To achieve this goal, unite the different business units in the department, and align the Department’s priorities with the government’s strategic priorities, a three-pronged strategy was put in place:

**I** A brand was devised to encapsulate the strategy, focus effort, and act as an umbrella under which a diverse range of initiatives could proceed across the Department’s business units and within the broader community. The work was co-ordinated by Michael Player, the Department’s Corporate Communications Manager, who had come with Bazley from the Ministry of Transport, with input from Rose O’Neil, who had been the

Department of Social Welfare’s representative on the Crime Prevention Action Group. The brand that was developed was “From Welfare to Well-being”, with an accompanying logo of an outstretched hand intended to suggest the offer of a hand up, not a handout.

**2** An initiative was designed to mobilise the Department’s 6,000 staff to go out and publicise widely what the Department saw as the facts about welfare:<sup>14</sup> for example, that \$4.7 million is spent on benefits every working hour; that almost one in four of the working-age population is dependent on state support; and that children of beneficiaries are three times as likely to become beneficiaries themselves, compared with children of non-beneficiaries.<sup>15</sup> At the national level, the Minister of Social Welfare, Peter Gresham, addressed annual Welfare to Well-being breakfasts in the five main centres from 1994 onwards, attended by community and business leaders. Annual Welfare to Well-being publications were issued, which set out the Department’s objectives, publicised new initiatives around the country, and set down milestones against which the department’s performance could be judged.

In March 1997, DSW organised an international conference “Beyond Dependency,” to highlight the issues and stimulate informed debate. The Department provided information to Communicado to assist in the making of the “Time Bomb” television documentary in May 1997, which publicised the level of benefit expenditure and the plight of long-term beneficiaries.<sup>16</sup>

At the local level, Department of Social Welfare staff went out and spoke to hundreds of community and business groups around the country publicising the national statistics on welfare, and how much was being spent on welfare in their local communities.

The belief was that appreciation of the facts about how much taxpayer support was going into their communities would show that what was required was better use of existing resources, rather than more resources. Department staff also worked with local councils and community groups in setting up a variety of initiatives aimed at reducing benefit dependence and creating opportunities for beneficiary families.

**3** *An initiative was designed to involve mayors and other local community and business leaders in helping beneficiaries in their communities get the job opportunities.* Bazley wrote to every mayor in New Zealand seeking their help, as the leaders of their communities, to mobilise local efforts.<sup>17</sup> Department of Social Welfare managers around New Zealand were sent a package of material and told to follow up by getting in contact with the mayors and working alongside them. Bazley subsequently spoke to meetings of local government leaders. She also held meetings with representatives of community welfare organisations, gave presentations to business organisations, and worked closely with individual business leaders in an attempt to build a collaborative approach to reducing welfare dependency.

In the foreword to the 1st edition of *From Welfare to Well-being* in 1994, the Minister of Social Welfare, Hon. Peter Gresham, indicated that tremendous progress toward the government's two principal goals of social cohesion and strong economic growth can be made if the community will work in partnership with the government. "To do this the taxpayers and the general public must be able to clearly relate to the objectives and work of the Public Service. From Welfare to Well-being is an initiative designed to help foster this understanding and sense of partnership...the Department is...also putting its own reputation on the line by setting definite milestones for projects and actions."<sup>18</sup>

Gresham saw the annual Welfare to Well-being breakfasts and the annual publications as something like the national equivalent of a company's annual report. "It was the Department and Minister

reporting on our stewardship of social welfare, and the state of human capital in the country." Gresham said the Welfare to Well-being message was much better received in centres such as Hamilton, but that it proved very difficult to arouse much interest in Auckland.<sup>19</sup>

Bazley described Welfare to Well-being as being a recipe she has been using throughout her 40-year career as a public servant: namely, educating the public about the issues. "Without an informed public, the views of extremists dominate public debate. Issues such as welfare dependency are very difficult ones for the political process to deal with. An important part of my duty as a public servant is to get the facts out there, to help provide a more conducive environment for elected leaders to operate in."<sup>20</sup> Working with mayors, as leaders of their local communities, was an approach she used in the road toll campaign while chief executive of the Ministry of Transport. She was also impressed by the role of mayors in the Safer Community Councils initiative.

As a call to arms, From Welfare to Well-being received mixed reactions in different quarters. Within Department of Social Welfare, the Income Support Service picked up on it immediately, and it fed into the development of the Service's own vision statement. Helene Quilter, then Corporate Relations Manager for Income Support, recalled that it came to be seen as a truncated form of the businesses' vision statement of transforming dependence into independence.<sup>21</sup> The concept of staff getting out into the community to build co-operative approaches also fitted neatly with the approach Income Support was pursuing.

John Angus, on the other hand, recalled some Social Policy Agency analysts initially reacting negatively, seeing it as a slogan without content, although he said they generally came to recognise the value of the brand as a vehicle for mobilising and focusing efforts.<sup>22</sup> Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service social workers appear to have seen it as being about benefit dependence rather than social services. Despite the efforts of Bazley and senior Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service

management to show the importance of the link between benefit dependence and social services, it did not appear to have impacted significantly on the business until the subsequent evolution of the Strengthening Families initiative.

Reactions outside the Department were also mixed. The business community appears to have reacted positively to the term, seeing it as a timely initiative to stimulate debate about the problem of growing welfare expenditures, and the need to increase skill levels in New Zealand if a sustainable increase in economic growth and living standards was to be achieved. In Roger Kerr's view, Welfare to Well-being, and especially the Beyond Dependency Conference, was evidence that New Zealand was moving out of denial that there was a welfare problem.<sup>23</sup>

The voluntary sector, on the other hand, generally reacted negatively. Bonnie Robinson, for example, saw it as "social policy by bumper sticker", with an ideological underpinning the voluntary sector rejects. "The Department has never provided a sound definition of welfare dependency, as opposed to numbers on benefit. It is poverty and lack of opportunity that are the problem, not welfare dependency".<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, Graham Howell, of the Wellington Unemployed Workers Union, saw well-being as being about the elimination of poverty, and, given the emergence of the working poor in New Zealand, achieving well-being as being more than just "getting a job" (Howell 1997).

Dr Michael Belgrave, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University, also saw the Welfare to Well-being label as problematic. "Historically in New Zealand, well-being has for many included having access to welfare. I agree there is a need to reduce expenditure and benefit dependence, but there simply have not been many families in New Zealand where three generations have been on welfare. The real problem is the shift from a full employment economic policy, and there is a risk of throwing out

the baby with the bathwater. A worrying new feature of welfare in New Zealand however is the emergence of a large number of young unemployed. This has not occurred previously in New Zealand's history".<sup>25</sup>

David Robinson, a social policy consultant who had formerly been with the New Zealand Council of Social Services, saw the label "Welfare to Well-being" as being less the problem - he considered "well-being" as a worthy concept - than the manner in which the initiative was implemented. "There was consultation with the voluntary sector, but it was always too late, after the strategic direction had been set. Government needs to recognise the value of partnerships, where each side has an equal say. There was a feeling by some that the Department of Social Welfare went to mayors over the heads of local community groups. If the process had been right, the fear that 'Welfare to Well-being' would destroy the welfare system might have been avoided."<sup>26</sup>

Bazley, on the other hand, was concerned that the voluntary sector was reluctant to take positive action. "The impression is that many agencies have a vested interest in keeping clients dependent, and the continual mantra of 'more resources' is a big barrier to action."<sup>27</sup>

Wira Gardiner, public policy consultant, considered that Welfare to Well-being tapped into a deep-seated desire to work on the part of New Zealanders (albeit being severely constrained by the level of overall unemployment). He said that the fact that Welfare to Well-being started at the level of philosophy was a strength, resulting in the development of home-grown solutions to local problems. Gardiner viewed Bazley's personal energy and drive to be very important to the success of Welfare to Well-being.<sup>28</sup>

These disparate views of Welfare to Well-being came to a head around the March 1997 international Beyond Dependency Conference, organised by the Department of Social Welfare, and held in Auckland. The aim of the conference was to bring together new directions in thinking and realistic solutions being tried in many countries, and to open up a forum for sharing ideas.<sup>29</sup>

*“My support for this conference comes on the grounds that we commence strategic thinking immediately to break these cycles [of poverty]...I commend the Department of Social Welfare and, in particular, the Director-General, for initiating this opportunity. Hopefully it will spawn nationwide discussion”*

The Conference attracted heated criticism from community groups, which saw it as elitist, and a means of importing a pernicious, beneficiary-bashing, workfare approach from the United States. Christchurch City councillor Garry Moore slammed the \$1200 a head conference for excluding community workers by price.<sup>30</sup> Some beneficiary and community groups organised an alternative Beyond Poverty Conference at another venue in Auckland the same week. “Beyond Dependency may reduce the numbers of beneficiaries, but it will not move people beyond poverty...On the other hand Beyond Poverty discussed ways of dealing with both poverty and unemployment.”<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, Retired Youth Court Judge Michael Brown told the Beyond Dependency conference: “My support for this conference comes on the grounds that we commence strategic thinking immediately to break these cycles [of poverty]...I commend the Department of Social Welfare and, in particular, the Director-General, for initiating this opportunity. Hopefully it will spawn nationwide discussion” (Brown 1997).

After the Beyond Dependency Conference, Professor Lawrence Mead, Professor of Politics at New York University and a participant at the conference, wrote to Bazley giving his impressions of the conference. In the letter, Mead said: “...what I most admired is the ability of you and the Department to get out front on welfare. You are posing problems and possible solutions for the politicians as well as the public....It adds controversy to the passions normally stirred by welfare, as the response to the conference showed. Yet it’s necessary to do it. Even the most resolute political order is tempted to evade the welfare issue, because it exposes such profound differences. Faced with passionate dissent, elected leaders naturally hesitate to change things. Civil servants have to push them a bit to do so.”<sup>32</sup>

In Bazley’s words, “The resulting publicity about the conference led to continual comment in the news media totalling about nine months of solid publicity before and after the conference. This eventually led to all the major editorial writers coming out positively in support of the work that was being done in moving people from Welfare to Well-being” (Bazley 1998a, p.4).

*The National Business Review* (7 February 1997, p.) nominated Bazley for New Zealander of the Year “for her efforts to cut welfare dependency.”<sup>33</sup>

The Beyond Dependency Conference and related policy debates fed into national social policy development. The 1997 Budget saw a somewhat new theme emerge in government policy - that of social responsibility, including strengthening families to meet their responsibilities to children.

More significantly, however, the Social Policy Agency led an extended interdepartmental policy review under the heading of Benefit Reform, which culminated in a set of announcements in the 1998 Budget. The exercise involved reviews of the Domestic Purposes and Widows Benefits, and the Sickness and Invalids Benefits, while the Unemployment Benefit was also reviewed to provide input into the Government’s Employment Strategy.

The benefit reform changes, which Bazley described as “work-focused welfare”, hinged on the concept of income support entitlement being based on an assessment of work capacity, rather than of incapacity to work (Bazley 1998c). The objectives were to improve the labour market participation of beneficiaries, to reduce long-term benefit dependence, to reduce the number of children of sole parents (and other beneficiaries) being brought up in long-term benefit-dependent families, and to reduce costs over time.<sup>34</sup>

Specific measures in the benefit reform package included:

- new work testing obligations for Domestic Purposes Beneficiaries (DPB) and Widows beneficiaries;
- assistance to low-income working parents to meet the costs of out-of-school care;
- work testing of spouses of all working-age beneficiaries;
- alignment of the sickness benefit rate with that for the unemployment benefit, and incorporation of the sickness benefit into the new work-tested Community Wage scheme; and,
- the trialling of a new work capacity process for Invalids and Sickness beneficiaries to identify what level of work, if any, a person was capable of, and to determine what assistance would help them move into paid work.

In terms of the second leg of the Welfare to Well-being strategy - mobilising the Department's 6,000 staff and engaging the support of local communities - there was a variable response from business unit district offices around New Zealand. This was perhaps not surprising, given the nature of the exercise - a high-level strategy and directive, without any specification of detail. As Helene Quilter recalled it, the Director-General wanted action, rather than effort to go into putting additional words around the concept.<sup>35</sup> District offices around the country were left to creatively fill the gap between the vision and what could be done on the ground.

The reaction from local governments reflected in part the existing situation in different parts of the country. For example, Mayor Bob Francis said Welfare to Well-being had limited impact in Masterton because the community already had a Safer Community Council and a Healthy Community Council. "Welfare to Well-being dovetailed into these, but the concept of local community initiatives and central government/local

partnerships to address local unemployment and other problems was already up and running in Masterton."<sup>36</sup>

At the district level, it was Income Support which took the lead within Department of Social Welfare in initiating action. One area where Income Support staff really picked up the ball and ran with it was in Christchurch. Sydenham District Office manager Chris O'Connor recalled receiving a copy of Bazley's letters to the mayors of Christchurch and Banks Peninsula and going to meet the mayors separately. The discussion was about "how can we best work together." The focus was on the needs of young unemployed in the community who had never worked, and the poor elderly who were not aware of the services available to them. O'Connor put together a small team of her staff who were enthusiastic about the concept. Working with local community representatives and organisations, the team initiated a number of projects, some of which were subsequently taken up elsewhere. A full list of the projects is contained in Annex 3 and includes:

- "Keeping Independent Now" - an information service aimed at superannuitants, which was developed in conjunction with Age Concern, the Nurse Maude Association, and the Police. The service reportedly received positive feedback from retired people, and the concept was subsequently picked up by some other Income Support offices around the country.
- "Smart Start" - a seminar for students in 6th and 7th forms in Canterbury which explained the supports available to students but carried the underlying message that welfare dependency is a trap. The seminar was developed in conjunction with the Inland Revenue Department, the Youth Employment Service, and principals of secondary schools. It is now run by Actionworks as an ongoing programme in Christchurch.

- Work Peninsula Employment Initiative - a charitable trust working with local employers and job seekers. The trust was set up by the Mayor of Banks Peninsula, the Police, the Banks Peninsula Business Association, local employers, the Employment Service, and Income Support.

Noeline Allan, the Mayor of Banks Peninsula, recalled receiving Bazley's initial letter seeking co-operation in tackling welfare dependency, which at the time seemed like just another letter out of Wellington. "There is enormous weariness amongst local government about central/local government partnership. There is a constant stream of mixed signals coming out of Wellington, and frequent instances of central government devolving responsibilities without funding them. As mayor I am constantly brokering the failure of the current centralised delivery systems, especially in more isolated rural areas."<sup>37</sup> Allan said, however, that once she started working with Chris O'Connor she realised this was different. They formed a core committee involving wider community interests, wrote a project document, established Work Peninsula with funding from Community Trust, and set up an office in Lyttelton with two full-time staff.<sup>38</sup>

The focus of Work Peninsula was to get unemployed youth in Lyttelton, who had become a problem for the Police and the community, into jobs. The strategy was to use a combination of detailed local knowledge about the individual young people themselves, personalised intervention, and the ability to co-ordinate with and seek the co-operation of local employers, to get the youths off the street and into work.<sup>39</sup> Work Peninsula also worked to identify the emerging staffing needs of the expanding fishing industry in Lyttelton, and played a role in the establishment of a local training facility for fishermen and deckhands. Work Peninsula reports it has placed 445 people into jobs over the period August 1995-July 1998 (Work Peninsula Business Plan 1998/99). According to Allan, the local youth problem in Lyttelton is a thing of the past.<sup>40</sup>

Local initiatives of the kind described above were implemented all around New Zealand. A snapshot of these taken from the regular monthly report on Welfare to Well-being in June 1998 (reprinted in full as Annex 4) shows:

- An out-of-school care project in Waitakere, set up by Waitakere City Council, Barnardos, CFA, CYPFS and Income Support.
- A series of half-day seminars called "Looking Ahead" held in Auckland South, to promote self-esteem, skill assessment and action planning, and organised by Enterprising Manakau and Income Support Mangere.
- In Taranaki, Go For Gold secondary school programme held at Te Kuiti High School for 4th formers to dissuade benefit as a career choice.
- In Waitara a three-day Career Management Programme fully sponsored and run by Methanex for ten Income Support and NZES clients.
- A course developed by Income Support and Manawatu Polytech targeted at Income Support customers, focusing on generic processing and call centre related skills.
- In Timaru a "Wanna Be" programme targeting final year primary students thinking about their future and looking at job options.

Probably the most significant single initiative taken within Income Support under the Welfare to Well-being umbrella, however, was Support Link, a programme introduced by Gabrielle Saxon in the Taupo District Office in 1994. Support Link involved a customer dealing with the same staff member each time they visited their local office. Under the new system, staff also became more active in looking at ways they could help clients, rather than just passively paying them a benefit.<sup>41</sup> Support Link proved to be the genesis of customised service,

which became the key strategic concept underpinning Income Support's national delivery strategy, and which drove a re-engineering of the business from 1996-98.<sup>42</sup>

Efforts to mobilise the support of national business leaders focused on the annual Welfare to Well-being breakfast meetings.<sup>43</sup> Successive Ministers of Social Welfare delivered the message that the government needed the help of business if New Zealand was to reverse the trend towards increasing welfare dependency. The Prime Minister, who launched the initial Welfare to Well-being breakfast in 1994, made the same point. In 1997, he noted that although 250,000<sup>44</sup> extra jobs had been created since 1992, the total number of beneficiaries had increased by 25,000. "We all know you won't get wealthy on welfare, but instead of arguing about how to give a bigger handout - the soft choice - we must instead offer a real choice by offering a hand up and expect them to take it. I want every New Zealander and especially every business person, to join us today in moving down the path to realising the vision of a society that is not only economically, but also socially progressive."<sup>45</sup>

Bazley also worked directly with individual business leaders in an attempt to craft a joint government/business approach to tackling benefit dependency. In late 1996, the Department of Social Welfare staff developed an informal proposal for the establishment of an "Invest in New Zealand Trust", to be funded by business, which would finance collective community efforts involving programmes aimed at children from benefit dependent households. The Department initially proposed funding of \$16 million a year.<sup>46</sup> After some discussion with individual business leaders, the concept lapsed.

The Welfare to Well-being strategy had not, thus far, achieved the hoped for success in generating tangible support and involvement of business at the national level.<sup>47</sup> Such successes as there were generally occurred at the local level - for example, the involvement of employers in Work Peninsula, and

the support of companies like Comalco and Methanex New Zealand Ltd for initiatives in their local communities.

An important strand of the Welfare to Well-being strategy, however, had always been concern about the impact of welfare dependency on the children of beneficiary families. As noted earlier, one of the key facts the Department publicised under the Welfare to Well-being umbrella was that the children of beneficiaries were three times as likely to be on a benefit as those of non-beneficiaries. Bazley had used data on the degree of overlap between the client groups of Income Support, the Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service and the Community Funding Agency to galvanise the different business units within the Department of Social Welfare to recognise the need to work co-operatively and collaboratively.

As this focus on a core of Department of Social Welfare clients was developed further, it coalesced with other emerging work on the problems of young people and families experiencing multiple disadvantage, and the potential problems of so-called "cycles of disadvantage". This strand, with its focus on a small group of most at-risk families, was to emerge as a significant initiative under the broader Welfare to Well-being umbrella. It came to be known as Strengthening Families.

# 3 Strengthening Families

Strengthening Families is at heart a strategic initiative to deliver core services in the welfare, health and education sectors more effectively to that group of families experiencing the most serious disadvantage. Its central aim is to improve outcomes for children, and it is based on two assumptions: that families are important in shaping children's outcomes, and that cross-sector co-ordination in service delivery is likely to achieve better outcomes than uncoordinated sector-specific approaches.<sup>48</sup> Strengthening Families is a process or a way of working, not a programme or provider.

There are also elements of Strengthening Families that focus on strengthening the obligations on families to meet their caring responsibilities, but the essence of Strengthening Families is interagency collaboration and co-ordination in policy design, funding and local service delivery, based on an early intervention model.

The Strengthening Families initiative grew out of an increasing recognition that a large part of the spending in welfare, health and education was going into the same geographic areas, and within them to the same seriously disadvantaged families. The Department of Social Welfare's "red spot areas" were in the same locations as the Ministry of Education's decile 1-3 schools, which were the same localities where there was the greatest concerns about health

status.<sup>49</sup> Services were fragmented between the sectors, however, and there started to be stories of individual families receiving assistance from a large number of providers and agencies in an uncoordinated manner.

There was in fact a widespread perception amongst those involved in the delivery of social services that there had been a breakdown in the habits and practice of interagency collaboration since the mid-1980s. Many with long experience in the sector considered that co-ordination between agencies over individual cases had been a much more general feature than was the case by the mid-1990s.<sup>50</sup> All agreed that there had certainly always been variation around the country in the degree of co-ordination and collaboration - with a lot

depending on local personalities and practices, and smaller, rural areas probably in general seeing staff in different agencies working more closely together. But by the mid-1990s, interagency collaboration was quite widely seen to have broken down in many areas.<sup>51</sup>

A number of reasons were advanced for this by those interviewed:

- The state sector reforms (principally the State Sector Act 1988 and the Public Finance Act 1989), had a major effect. A number of different elements were seen here by different people. Most referred to what they saw as the “silo mentality”, in which state agencies became inwardly focused on their “core business.” Issues perceived to be at the periphery, or on the boundaries with other sectors, may not have been as easy to specify in an output description, and tended to be left out of the new more tightly focused accountability arrangements. Some also commented that there was no-one at the centre considering whether the aggregate outputs across the various social sectors made sense overall. Others saw an increase in the competitive element between agencies - including competition between schools, and between voluntary agencies for government funding - which lead to a breakdown in co-operation. Others referred also, or instead, to the disruption caused by widespread restructuring across the state sector, which similarly caused an inward focus and a loss of experienced people, disrupting personal working relationships between staff in different agencies.<sup>52</sup> It was common for many field staff to lack understanding of the role and mission of other service delivery agencies.

Mike Doolan (Chief Social Worker, CYPFS), for example, involved in child welfare in

New Zealand since 1961, said that the prime function of social workers in the decades prior to the 1990s was co-ordination and case conferencing. “Interagency collaboration was an inherent part of social workers’ jobs.”<sup>53</sup> The reforms in the education and health sectors impacted on the personnel social workers case-conferenced with. In the education sector, the reforms saw the demise of the education boards and disappearance of their attendance officers (though some schools were given the legal right to appoint their own attendance officers and a number promptly did so). The visiting teachers role was disestablished, and most became part of the Specialist Education Service but with different functions. In the health sector the public health nurses became less available, and there was a cut-back in home visiting services.

- There was widespread agreement that funding pressures contributed to a reduction in interagency collaboration and co-ordination.<sup>54</sup> As the country’s fiscal predicament in the early 1990s saw cuts in spending, management came under increasing pressure to achieve savings, and staff came under more day-to-day operational pressures. The temptation became greater to try to shift responsibilities to other agencies, and to withdraw from time consuming collaboration or to seek payment for attendance at case conferences.
- A number of those interviewed referred to the Privacy Act 1993 as having had an inhibiting impact on the willingness of staff to share information across agencies. Nearly all agreed the Act should not have had this effect but that ignorance of the legislation or a desire to hide behind its alleged constraints did cause problems for interagency collaboration.

- Mike Doolan considered that the Children, Young Persons & Their Families Act 1989 also had an unintended negative impact on interagency collaboration. “Early on, the Family Group Conference was mistakenly seen by social work professionals as a replacement for case conferencing. It is, however, closer in nature to a court process than to interagency case conferencing. There was a significant period of professional confusion during which the level of case conferencing fell away, before it was realised that the FGC in fact meant no change to the need for a full, collaborative case assessment prior to an FGC.”<sup>55</sup>

Karen Poutasi, Director-General of the Ministry of Health, argued strongly however, that the state sector reforms were necessary to strengthen accountability for the spending of public funds. She also considered that, under the old state sector management system, it would have been harder to drive through a strategic initiative like Strengthening Families. “It would not have been as possible to be as clear about the desired outputs and outcomes or to have known which levers to pull to get things done.”<sup>56</sup>

At the same time that concerns were mounting about service co-ordination, serious interest was emerging at the policy level in the literature on families experiencing disadvantage across a range of dimensions (and sectors), and intergenerational transmission of disadvantage within families. The 1993 Budget had included new funding within Vote Social Welfare for a pilot of Family Service Centres, which were based on an early intervention, intersectoral delivery model of social services to preschool and primary school children and their families. An increasing number of Parents as First Teachers programmes also received funding from Vote Education in the early 1990s.

The policy community in Wellington also became increasingly aware of the information coming out of the Christchurch Health and Development Study, a longitudinal survey of a birth cohort of 1,265 children. In their influential 1994 article, Fergusson and colleagues outlined the life histories of a small group of adolescents (3% of the sample) who were identified as displaying multiple problem behaviours at age 15. Through tracing back their life histories, statistical biographies were built up that showed many were the offspring of seriously disadvantaged and dysfunctional home environments. “Up until that time, New Zealand researchers had tended to look for a single factor as a cause (for example, sole parenthood). It was time to start focusing on family dysfunction.”<sup>57</sup>

The major findings of the Christchurch study were that multiple problem children came from home environments characterised by a history of longstanding and often unremitting problems and difficulties, including:

- social and material disadvantage;
- parental criminality and substance abuse;
- impaired parenting and lowered standards of child care; and,
- family instability, change and marital conflict.

“What, however, was of interest was the strength of this association...of the children whose family and childhood circumstances placed them in the most advantaged 50% of the cohort, only one child (0.2%) was observed to develop multiple problem behaviours as a teenager. In contrast, over a fifth of the children whose families were members of the most disadvantaged 5% of the sample developed multiple problem behaviours as teenagers.”<sup>58</sup>

Fergusson’s research and conclusions had a real impact on the policy community in Wellington.<sup>59</sup>

It was picked up by the Social Policy Agency, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (in particular the Crime Prevention Unit), the Treasury and others. The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research was commissioned by the Social Policy Agency, on behalf of a group of government agencies, to write a report on cycles of disadvantage. Drawing in part on Fergusson's research, it identified three groups within the population:

- an advantaged no-risk group (about half the population);
- a group of at-risk disadvantaged families (about 45% of the population); and,
- a small group (about 5% of the population) of families experiencing multiple and persistent problems which compromise family functioning and increase the chance that children in the family will have poor long term outcomes (NZIER 1994).

Policy has subsequently tended to focus on the high-risk group, although at times the rhetoric has appeared confused, with references to at-risk families at times referring to the 5% group, and at others to include also the 45% group. The consensus amongst officials is that the high-risk group is approximately 25,000 families showing multiple disadvantage indicators.<sup>60</sup> The strategy has been to restore family functioning in these families to the point where they are able to effectively access and utilise core government health and education services. The diagram in Annex 5 illustrates, in the form of an inverted pyramid, the concept of a small group of families suffering multiple disadvantage.

Having established the linkages between the areas where disproportionate amounts of welfare, health and education spending was concentrated, "the three chief executives decided that they should be able to work together to collaborate to gain better value from the spending of dollars in the same

communities" (Bazley 1998b). Initially comprised of Bazley, Maris O'Rourke (Secretary for Education), and David Smyth (Acting Director- General of Health), the group initiated a joint work programme on improving the interface between the departments. "The chief executives were very quick to identify that the way to progress this exercise was by always asking *how can we work together to get a better service for the people that the three of us work with, rather than the traditional approach of why do we need to work together*" (Bazley 1998b).

Initially, 26 interface issues were identified across the three sectors, and 26 projects were established to work on how the interface between the three departments could be improved. Joint policy work was also initiated on families at risk, following on from the work on cycles of disadvantage, and there was more sharing of information on initiatives in specific regions.

One of the issues identified early on as a potential obstacle to intersectoral collaboration was information privacy and different approaches to it across the sectors. A joint exercise was initiated to investigate the issue, and the outcome was a resource guide issued to front-line staff to guide them when working within their own sectors and at the interface between the health, education and welfare sectors.<sup>61</sup>

At about the time as these developments were occurring in Wellington, an intersectoral service co-ordination initiative was launched in Waitakere that was to have far-reaching implications. One impetus for the initiative was a high degree of local dissatisfaction with the performance of the main central government social service departments in meeting the needs of young people in the area.<sup>62</sup> The high rate of youth suicide, in particular, was seen as a major problem. A community meeting in 1995 had discussed these concerns, and identified a collaborative model as the most promising best way to proceed.<sup>63</sup>

A second impetus was work in Wellington on intersectoral co-ordination of social service delivery. One outcome of this was a set of guidelines

developed by an inter-departmental working group (the Making Links Working Party), describing how effective service co-ordination can be developed in each community between specialist mental health services, and services provided by the education and social welfare sectors (Ministry of Health 1997).

After discussions between officials in Waitakere and Wellington, and a meeting in Waitakere hosted by the Council, an 18-month project was convened, involving central government agencies and representatives from the local voluntary sector. The objective was to establish a best practice model for co-ordinating the work of the frontline staff of Health, Education, and Welfare departments and the agencies that they funded in the city.<sup>64</sup>

In early 1997, two reports were provided to the three chief executives, one on what had developed as the Waitakere Best Practice Model, and the other on a needs and gaps analysis.

The Best Practice Model was a formal protocol governing collaborative case management in situations where more than one agency was providing services to the same youth. The model provided that one agency would be formally designated the lead agency, take responsibility for ensuring the best outcomes for the client, and keep the other agencies informed. The Effective Practice Model recommended that the proposed model be trialled on a modest basis in Waitakere to test its effectiveness. This gradual approach was rejected by the three chief executives, who moved to immediate implementation of the model in Waitakere, and use of it as a basis for progressive implementation of a similar model throughout New Zealand.

In the meantime, the Coalition Agreement had raised the significance of Strengthening Families in terms of the Government's priorities.<sup>65</sup> A committee of Ministers, convened by Wyatt Creech, was established to consider initiatives for families at risk. This culminated in announcements in the 1997 Budget of a number of initiatives in the area of Strengthening Families. Three streams of work were identified in the Budget.<sup>66</sup>

- Stream 1 was a local collaboration stream, aimed at improving outcomes for families at risk through effective local interagency collaboration in service delivery and resource allocation.
- Stream 2 was co-ordination at the national level of policy, funding and purchasing across health, welfare and education. It involved a targeted review of nationally purchased health, education and welfare services to families at risk, building on work undertaken the previous year.
- Stream 3 was improving the ability of families to resolve difficulties and problems, with a focus on family responsibilities and good parenting.

The 1997 Budget also provided additional funding of \$30 million for the Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service, to help the business deal with child abuse and young offenders, and additional funding of \$35 million for residential and caregiver services. In addition a contribution was announced to an Early Start trial in Christchurch aimed at parents and carers of at-risk children from newborn to age 10 years.

Following the 1997 Budget, the chief executives of Health, Education and Welfare sought and obtained ministerial approval to pick up the work that had been developed in Waitakere and implement it throughout the rest of the country by July 1999.<sup>67</sup> In implementing it they were to involve the mayors and local communities in each area, and to broaden the scope to include the other central government departments involved in the social sector (Police, Justice, Housing New Zealand, Internal Affairs, and the New Zealand Employment Service).

John Angus described the Strengthening Families initiative as being aimed at interweaving policy and operational initiatives. "What is learned through local collaboration feeds into operational policy decisions and policy advice."<sup>68</sup>

For example, a gaps and overlaps analysis was carried out at both the local and national levels. At the local level, a process of consultation and discussion was undertaken with community groups and service providers in up to six regions to identify funding gaps and overlaps. At the same time a project was also implemented at national level in which an analysis of service gaps and overlaps was conducted.

The finding at national level was that there were similar services being provided to high-priority families across at least the three sectors studied initially - namely, health, education and welfare. These were parenting services and parent support services. Bazley said that it was found “some communities, and very often they were not welfare communities, had all three programmes running and often some of the most impoverished welfare-dependent communities didn’t have any.”<sup>69</sup>

One of the conclusions about how this had come about was that the incentives on departments in the traditional budget process encouraged competition for funds, rather than collaboration (Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health 1997). For example, the annual budget new policy rounds saw departments bidding for a sectoral share in a single fixed pot of money earmarked for new initiatives. One of the consequences of the Strengthening Families approach had been to encourage collaboration at the national level in policy design and the analysis of sectoral priorities. Joint budget bids across the three main sectors had become a feature since the 1997 Budget. All those interviewed working in national policy in health, education and welfare agreed that working relationships and practices had become far closer than had been the case before Strengthening Families. As Judy Glackin, the Ministry of Health manager responsible for Strengthening Families said, “I have never been involved in such co-operative work across agencies in the public sector.”<sup>70</sup>

The local level gaps and overlaps exercise, not surprisingly, came up with more gaps than overlaps.

But a consistent message from the exercise was the lack of early intervention services and of services based on home visits. Because of the consistency of the findings across the six districts involved, officials advised against extending the local gaps exercise across the country.

Policy work at the national level had similarly identified a significant gap in home-based early intervention services to families in need of support. In response, the Government announced in the 1998 Budget funding for a new Family Start programme. Family Start is similar to the Early Start project in Christchurch, but was also developed after a survey of the international literature. It aims to identify children in high-risk families at the birth of the child. Of this group, those families subsequently found to have the greatest need are provided with intensive home-based support over an extended period (potentially until the child goes to school). Participation in the programme is voluntary, with families being referred for possible participation by health professionals. A family worker provides intensive support to the family, including advice about the types of services available to the family, and assistance in accessing them.<sup>71</sup>

Family Start was initially delivered in three areas - Rotorua, Whangarei, and West Auckland. In addition, the Early Start project in Christchurch was extended to include more families. Funding of about \$5 million a year, shared across health, education and welfare, was provided in the 1998 Budget from reprioritising existing expenditures across the three sectors. The pilots were to run over five years. Implementation of the Family Start programme is being managed collaboratively across health, education and welfare. Family Start has been jointly funded by the Health Funding Authority, the Early Childhood Development Unit, and Child Youth and Family, with each agency being the lead agency in one of the three geographical areas. “The service is delivered by the most appropriate group in each area. In West Auckland, for example, Te Whanau O Waipareira Trust and Pacifica Health Fono deliver the care.”<sup>72</sup>

Family Start received a big boost in funding in the 1999 Budget. The Government announced that, as a result of the success of Early Start, and positive indications from the first three Family Start programmes, an additional \$41 million would be invested over three years. “An additional 13 cities will soon have the... Government’s flagship early intervention programme, Family Start... operating, which will make a huge difference to the lives of around 2,700 families.”<sup>73</sup>

An evaluation strategy for Family Start has also been agreed. A process evaluation will be conducted at the initial three sites, and an impact evaluation at one of them. (The methodology to be used for the impact evaluation is subject to a feasibility study.)

In addition, Early Start (and a similar Family Link programme in Dunedin) are being evaluated through randomised controlled trials funded by the Health Research Council.

Intersectoral co-ordination at the national level has also involved policy work on the development of outcome indicators for Strengthening Families, to enable assessment of progress toward achieving the objectives of Strengthening Families. The measurement framework comprises components of health, education and welfare outcomes for children and young people. A subset of priority measures was identified, including:

- under-five mortality rate;
- abuse and neglect re-notification rate (0-6, and 7-16 years);
- three-year-olds in early childhood education;
- birth rate for young women aged 13-17 years; and
- school leavers with a formal qualification.

Criteria for the selection of these priority indicators were that they reflect critical life outcomes for children in families at risk, that they are based on

strong evidence, and that they meet practical criteria for being timely, measurable and able to be monitored. They were identified from a broader set of outcome measures, risk behaviour indicators, and output measures, which are generally total population measures because of the difficulty of separating outcomes for children in families at risk.

Officials noted that the link between the interventions proposed under Strengthening Families and some of the outcome measures may not be immediately obvious, as outcomes are the result of complex interrelationships between the individual, family, and the social, cultural and economic environment. The diagram “Intergenerational Cycle of Disadvantage” in Annex 6 depicts the range of risk factors and poor outcomes that can impact on children from before their birth through their development stages, including adolescence, when a new cycle of disadvantage may commence (DSW and others 1997).

Achievement of the targets will be monitored over a 14-year period from 1997 to 2010, with a co-ordinated report on progress to be presented to Ministers by the end of each calendar year. A report was subsequently prepared, *Report on Outcome Measures and Targets* (DSW and others 1998). The report stated that at this early stage of the Strengthening Families strategy it is not possible to draw close links between the strategy and the outcome measures, and care should be taken in doing so. The report advised that the list of outcome measures had been expanded slightly and that work was underway in the Department of Social Welfare to refine the welfare-related measures. The report also noted there were a number of concerns about the appropriateness of setting outcome targets, including for Maori measures and targets.

The third stream of work identified in the 1997 Budget - improving the ability of families to resolve problems - did not evince much enthusiasm from those interviewed and was seen as arising out of a New Zealand First initiative to strengthen the reciprocal obligations on beneficiary families.<sup>74</sup> It was subsequently broadened by the Government into an

exercise aimed at raising awareness of all New Zealanders of their social and family obligations, and to stimulate debate about the balance of responsibility between the state and families/individuals. The Government also wanted to test public reaction to potential new policy approaches, mostly affecting beneficiaries.<sup>75</sup> A proposed Code of Social Responsibility was released for public discussion in February 1998.<sup>76</sup> During the period February - September, while submissions were being received and analysed, an interdepartmental working group of officials advised Ministers on the merit and feasibility of a Code. The conclusion reached was: "A Code, as a coherent set of obligations akin to those in the public discussion document and given formal status as law or [operational staff] guidelines, was too blunt an instrument and too risky a venture for the Crown."<sup>77</sup> The Government announced in October 1998 that "a legislated Code is neither required nor desirable" but that it would "follow an educative and incentive-based approach to achieving positive social change."<sup>78</sup> The Government also announced that, as a result of the weight of opinion reflected in the submissions, ten new policy initiatives were being investigated further.

The implementation of local co-ordination (stream 1) involved:

- the three chief executives visiting mayors around New Zealand seeking their co-operation in establishing a collaborative case management protocol in their areas<sup>79</sup>;
- setting up a national Strengthening Families Co-ordinating Committee chaired by Bazley, which monitors progress around the country in implementing the protocols;
- the appointment of six senior staff across the three sectors (including four from the Department of Social Welfare) to drive the project;

- a high degree of effort throughout New Zealand by the field staff of central government agencies, local community representatives and the voluntary sector to get the Strengthening Families protocols up and running in their areas.

At the local level, a Strengthening Families Local Management Group is created, to get the networks of service providers and community groups in place and develop a case management protocol that all can accept. In practice, each area is not starting from scratch but is working on adapting existing generic models to their local needs and circumstances. The two main generic models are the Waitakere protocols and the shorter version developed in Canterbury that covers the same elements and which is attached as Annex 7.

The Strengthening Families Management Groups are also responsible for ensuring training of staff and community workers in their area in the implementation of the protocol, and considerable effort is going into this. The Management Groups will also have an ongoing role in monitoring Strengthening Families in their areas, in identifying gaps and overlaps in local services, and in working with funding agencies to more effectively target expenditures. Richard Wood, a senior manager from the Department of Social Welfare involved in the implementation of local coordination nationwide, says they also want to see the Management Groups involving local business groups and the voluntary sector in coming up with preventative measures.

By December 1998, there were 56 separate Management Groups responsible for implementation of Strengthening Families operating across the country (some of which span local authorities, and were considered likely to split into smaller groups contiguous with local authority boundaries).<sup>80</sup> A collaborative case management protocol had been completed in all but a handful of localities, and 12 areas had launched the practical application of the

protocol across their respective districts.<sup>81</sup> Of these 12, most had been up and running for only a few months, although the Waitakere protocol had been operational for some 18 months.

By November 1999, there were 70 Local Management Groups in operation, with about 50 of these well-established and utilising local interagency protocols. Interestingly, over 20 of the total are rural groups in districts where there are few resident government agencies. This is a new trend over the last 12 months. The community sector has been instrumental in the establishment and development of these groups (MoSP 1999b).

There is considerable variability in the way in which Strengthening Families has been implemented around the country. This was not seen as a bad thing but rather as the inevitable result of the combination of a centrally directed initiative and a desire for some flexibility to tailor the initiative to specific local circumstances, and to generate a sense of local ownership. Local factors - such as the history of co-operation or antagonism, and individual leadership by local managers - have also impacted on implementation.<sup>82</sup>

Dawson, writing about child sexual abuse services, puts the central/local dilemma thus: "There is a danger in New Zealand of services which retain a local flavour becoming isolated. There is equally a difficulty in creating a national structure which has meaning for the varied situations across the country. The challenge is how to obtain a structure which has both local and national relevance."<sup>83</sup>

Barry Shea, one of the Department of Social Welfare senior managers responsible for driving the implementation of Strengthening Families nationally, considers the effectiveness of Strengthening Families in each area is very dependent on the Local Management Group. This is partly a function of the broad nature of the roles of the Management Group, and the fact that some of the roles are very strategic and require the participation of senior level staff. "Problems have often occurred where junior staff have fronted, and

for those sectors where representatives cannot commit resources because of the decentralised nature of institutional arrangements, for example in education."<sup>84</sup>

One key element of variability in fact concerns the implementation of Strengthening Families across the three main sectors. The institutional structures and accountability arrangements are quite different across social welfare, health and education. This is a challenge for the implementation of a cross-cutting strategic initiative such as Strengthening Families.

While in the social welfare sector there had been - until the 1999 restructuring of the Department - a line management relationship down to the local service delivery and funding level, this has not been the case in health and education as at late 1999. In the education sector, the Secretary for Education has responsibility for policy advice and for funding service delivery, but no operational responsibilities. Service delivery was undertaken by a large number of autonomous Crown entities under their own Boards. In the health sector, service delivery is similarly undertaken by autonomous Crown entities, but in addition there was a funding agency, independent of the Ministry of Health, responsible for purchasing health services. A further complication in the health sector is that, during the initial stages of Strengthening Families the sector was undergoing restructuring, with the four Regional Health Authorities being merged into the Transitional Health Authority and then reformed into the Health Funding Authority. This considerably complicated the task of co-ordinating the sector's participation in Strengthening Families.

Dr Karen Poutasi, Director General of Health, considered the implementation of Strengthening Families in the health sector highly successful. "Health professionals have always recognised that some determinants of health outcomes lie outside health policy, in broader socioeconomic factors. Furthermore, the Government's top health priorities - child health, mental health, Maori health - are all areas where the Strengthening Families approach is critical to success."<sup>85</sup> Driving this recognition

throughout the sector has required some energy, but there has been commitment at all levels. Initially, informal understandings were reached with the Transitional Health Authority and then formalised through incorporation of a Strengthening Families component in the funding agreement negotiated with the Health Funding Authority.<sup>86</sup> In 1999, the Health Funding Authority decided to make a contribution of \$100,000 towards funding Strengthening Families co-ordinators.<sup>87</sup>

In the education sector, Howard Fancy, Secretary for Education, says that, as with health, all the evidence in education points to the importance of broader social factors. “The high correlation, between the decile status of the school community and educational performance, highlighted the need to bring a strong educational focus to the broader health and welfare agendas. Assisting students at risk of failure is a very important part of overall education strategy.”<sup>88</sup>

Fancy said that schools had taken on more and more social work, and were often frustrated by an inability to get through to the main social service delivery agencies. What is needed is a culture shift, and he saw some early evidence of this occurring.<sup>89</sup> He also saw schools instead of the family as a potential point of intervention and had heard encouraging anecdotes of the potential of full service schools.<sup>90</sup> He warned, however, against over-enthusiasm, given the long timeframes involved, and the need to change deep-seated working habits and to build up trust between agencies, and between central government and local communities.<sup>91</sup>

In a pilot of a Social Workers in Schools programme in the North Shore, evaluation found “significant evidence that school social workers have contributed to the early identification and intervention of crises and the reduction of potential long-term social problems.”<sup>92</sup>

Individual clients, parents, and teachers and principals all reported improved outcomes, while social service agencies indicated a reduction in duplication, fewer inappropriate referrals, and

enhancement of their own service provision from the availability of timely background information.

“Experience from the pilot project makes a strong case for the provision of social work services within New Zealand schools.”<sup>93</sup>

Ashley Blair, Principal of Cannons Creek School near Porirua, says the Social Workers in Schools programme has exceeded his wildest dreams. “If it’s something that’s getting in the way of the kids learning, the social worker can look into it. It’s going to leave the teachers to do the teaching, whereas in the past teachers and principals became de facto social workers” (Norrie 1999).

The Government decided in 1999 to expand the Social Workers in Schools Programme. An extra \$10.4 million over three years will enable social workers to cover more than 35,000 pupils, focusing on about 175 primary schools. They will identify children at risk and develop plans to help them. Primary schools will be eligible to bid for a social worker, provided they meet the criteria of the contestable fund.<sup>94</sup>

At the local level, the key central government entities involved in Strengthening Families in December 1999 were Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service site office staff and area managers, staff of the public hospitals in the locality (chiefly from the child health, mental health and public health areas), Specialist Education Services, Ministry of Education regional office staff and some school principals.

While staff of Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service were directed to give priority attention to Strengthening Families in their area, and it was built into performance agreements, this approach was generally not available in the other sectors. In health and education, it required a mix of leadership and persuasion to induce the rest of the sector to embrace and resource Strengthening Families. For example, the clear signals given by the Government and the chief executives of health and education were important in getting operational staff to see the initiative as a priority.

There have nevertheless been difficulties encountered. A number of those interviewed noted it had been frustrating for everyone at all levels while staff got to grips with understanding the different institutional and accountability arrangements in the different sectors.

For example, at the local level there were early stories of dissatisfaction at the level of attendance of staff from the health sector, with perceptions of relatively junior staff who were not in a position to commit their organisations attending Strengthening Families meetings. It took some time for the other sectors to realise that a hospital is a multimillion dollar operation, that a number of different parts of the organisation were involved with Strengthening Families, and that it was not realistic to expect senior management involvement, given the relatively small level of funding involved.

In the education sector, somewhat different problems were noted by some of those interviewed. One was that the size of some of the areas covered by regional offices (e.g. half of the South Island) made it difficult for them to participate fully in local network creation and protocol development. Other concerns expressed were about the demands on principal's time, the lack of defined leadership or co-ordinating mechanisms at the local level, and the competitive element in the education sector.

Howard Fancy, however, considered that these comments reflect some misunderstanding about the objectives of education sector participation. The main sector participants are the Ministry, Specialist Education Services, the Early Childhood Development Unit and representatives of local principals. The aim of involving principals is to ensure the main social service providers appreciate the views and perspective of principals, so they can better tailor their interventions to more effectively support schools. Principals also gain valuable information on how schools can access services when they have a pupil who needs assistance. But these objectives are not designed to increase the workload of principals but to provide more co-ordinated and effective support that assists a child to

attend school and learn. Generally he did not expect very frequent participation by principals in leading local co-ordination activities.<sup>95</sup>

A somewhat different problem noted was that of different geographic boundaries between the service providers in the different sectors, which could create co-ordination problems.<sup>96</sup>

One particular element of variability is over the existence and role of a local Strengthening Families co-ordinator. This is an issue of much debate amongst those involved, and one on which most of those interviewed held views.

Most districts do not have a local co-ordinator and rely on interagency collaboration. In areas where interagency collaboration was already well established prior to Strengthening Families, there may be less need for one. For example, in Masterton Mayor Bob Francis saw Strengthening Families working extremely smoothly in the absence of a co-ordinator.<sup>97</sup>

In Waitakere and Canterbury, co-ordinators were appointed early on, although initially with quite different roles. Sean Wheeler, the Strengthening Families co-ordinator in Canterbury, played a very active role in individual case management from the outset. In the initial stages he often called a case meeting when asked to do so by a caseworker, and then played the role of facilitator at the meeting. "Modelling excellence in the role of case facilitator is the most important contribution of a co-ordinator to Strengthening Families."<sup>98</sup>

In Waitakere, on the other hand, Ray Clarke's initial focus was on generating publicity and enthusiasm for Effective Practice and on disseminating useful information to practitioners through publication of a monthly newsletter. The Local Management Group did not want him to facilitate case meetings, the view being that Strengthening Families was not about providing a new service. However, the initial experience was that not many Strengthening Families meetings were occurring, in part because people were uncomfortable in the role of facilitator. In 1999, Clarke's role evolved to include a greater

focus on training in methods of facilitation. He also facilitated approximately 25 Strengthening Families case meetings. Toward the end of 1999, nine independent facilitators were trained, and a protocol agreed to for their activities. It is planned to add to this pool in 2000.<sup>99</sup>

Those who favoured the appointment of local co-ordinators did so for the following reasons:

- They can play a neutral role in calling case meetings and in facilitating a good outcome to which all concerned are committed. In their absence there can be suspicion a Strengthening Families meeting has been called because of a desire by one agency to off-load responsibility for a client onto another agency. Neutrality can also be important in avoiding any suspicion that the decision at the end of the meeting over who will be the lead agency is not similarly influenced by interagency politics, but by the best interests of the client.
- They can play a valuable role in keeping records and reporting progress, in order to keep stakeholders informed and reassured. Monitoring can play a useful role in enabling implementation to be compared with expectations. For example, Sean Wheeler's report on Strengthening Families activities in Canterbury, covering the period July to September 1998, provided early information regarded as valuable in Wellington.<sup>100</sup>
- Given the amount of time involved in organising a Strengthening Families meeting (Wheeler said it took him an average of six to seven hours), the presence of a co-ordinator can help overcome possible resistance due to workload pressures.

Some considered there are risks, however, in appointing a Strengthening Families co-ordinator, because their presence may inhibit the collaborative

approach being built into the fabric of the work of social service agencies. Jenni Norton, Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service regional manager in Canterbury and a member of the Canterbury Strengthening Families Steering Group, said it was because of this risk that she thought it was desirable not to appoint a co-ordinator at the outset. "It was important that all concerned were involved in working up the protocol and laying the groundwork first. Strengthening Families needs to be owned by everyone, and not seen as the responsibility of one person. For similar reasons it may be important not to retain the co-ordinator role for too long."<sup>101</sup>

Sean Wheeler's aim was to identify potential case facilitators in all the mainstream service agencies, who could take over this aspect of his role.<sup>102</sup> As at December 1999, there were 28 trained facilitators in Canterbury from a range of government social service agencies, including some from the non-government sector. Wheeler's aim was to keep the facilitators pool at about this level, although he saw an important need to add at least two or three more Maori facilitators - at the time of the interview, there was only one.

An increasing number of local groups were considering the appointment of a local co-ordinator. As at November 1999, fewer than 20 groups had a co-ordinator. However, those that did were leading the statistics for the number of cases being handled through the Strengthening Families process. It was also felt that communities and frontline workers were more to be familiar with Strengthening Families if their area had a co-ordinator. Co-ordinators have been employed by the local management group on short-term contracts or secondments, with funding being contributed by the Health Funding Authority, the Ministry of Education, the Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service, often Work & Income New Zealand, and sometimes Housing New Zealand, the Police and Te Puni Kokiri. (Ray Clarke thought that the position of Strengthening Families co-ordinator in Waitakere should be retained for another three years<sup>103</sup>)

## *“In some areas they have been welcomed in, in others they have been asked ‘what is Strengthening Families to do with you?’”*

A further operational challenge for Strengthening Families would be expanding it beyond the initial three core departments, to take in other agencies involved in social service delivery and the wider law and order sector. As Bazley described it, even at chief executive level there was reluctance to put at risk a collaborative model that was working well.<sup>104</sup> And at the local level the degree of receptiveness to involving the new agencies appears to have varied considerably, perhaps reflecting in part that the initial three-agency model was still bedding down. In one district, the three core agencies reportedly made a decision to limit Strengthening Families in their area to just themselves at the initial stage.<sup>105</sup> Ann Clark, General Manager of the Community Probation Service in the Corrections Department, said that her staff, who were instructed around the country to get involved in their local Strengthening Families processes, initially received varying reactions. “In some areas they have been welcomed in, in others they have been asked ‘what is Strengthening Families to do with you?’” Clark said there was one high-profile case where the Department of Corrections was unable to get the co-operation of other local social service agencies and it took involvement at chief executive level to get the necessary assistance.<sup>106</sup>

A further aspect on which there is a range of views has been the extent to which Strengthening Families would result in an increase in workload in the short term. The decision was taken that Strengthening Families would be implemented without additional funding. As Bazley saw it, case conferencing is integral to social service delivery and must be allocated sufficient resources within existing budgets.<sup>107</sup> John Angus noted: “It is interesting to speculate on whether additional resourcing for Strengthening Families would hinder or help in achieving [Strengthening Families] objectives. Additional assistance, for example, could have turned Strengthening Families into just another central government programme, rather than what it aspires

to be - a sea change in the way central government’s local agents operate in providing support to families at risk...”<sup>108</sup>

It seemed clear that considerable additional effort would be required up-front to get the local networks established, a formal protocol in place, and the staff training conducted. There was considerable variability in this, however. In those areas where a collaborative approach was already functioning, the additional work at this stage was less than in areas where interagency collaboration had been more rundown.

Beyond this, many considered that the actual operation of Strengthening Families at the local level would be more resource intensive up-front, reflecting the greater effort put into the problem cases at an earlier stage than hitherto. While this would pay dividends in future, this was seen to be at the cost of some initial investment.

Others, however, considered there to be so much inefficiency in the current unco-ordinated arrangements that Strengthening Families would not even require additional resources up-front. For example, while it may take six hours to set up a Strengthening Families meeting, it might have taken even longer to try unsuccessfully to arrange an interagency meeting in the absence of the Strengthening Families protocol. In addition, the improved relationships developed through Strengthening Families had a spin-off in improved co-ordination and collaboration in other areas of business. One example given of this was by Marilyn Roberts, supervisor in the Masterton office of the Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service, who said she was receiving more informal contacts from people outside the department to discuss whether a notification of child abuse is warranted. She thought this resulted in some reduction in unwarranted notifications and a consequent saving in investigation efforts.<sup>109</sup>

A survey of 100 randomly selected case-workers in Christchurch in 1999 found that 72% thought Strengthening Families had increased their workload. However, 77% thought the increase in workload was worthwhile, with 18% unsure and only 2% indicating it was not worthwhile.<sup>110</sup>

At the Strengthening Families national steering committee meeting in October 1998, Bazley indicated the government's overall strategy was to have Strengthening Families in place and functioning throughout New Zealand by the end of 1998. The aim was to use the Strengthening Families platform to provide seamless services to specific target groups in priority geographic areas - Northland, Porirua/Hutt Valley, and East Cape. Bazley was concerned, however, that progress in implementing Strengthening Families had been slowest in some of these priority areas, and wondered whether it was time for a further visit by the chief executives. The local education and community sectors were seen as reluctant, in part because Strengthening Families was seen as just another initiative when there was already so much going on in those areas, and in part because of misunderstanding that Strengthening Families was another programme rather than a way of working.

The end-December 1998 target of national coverage of Strengthening Families was met. More intensive work was launched during 1999 in the three priority areas. Four key aspects of social services in these regions concentrated on:

- promoting participation in early childhood education services;
- promoting better use of primary health and dental care;
- making information available which promotes immunisation; and,
- promoting successful participation in schools.

Local managers have been deciding on how wide a group of children they will initially focus on. Target groups are children under age 10 who have been indefinitely suspended from school, children with parents in prison, children of teenage parents, and children of long term beneficiaries. Local presentations by the three chief executives, which continued throughout 1999, provided information on the numbers of people in the local area in each of the target groups.<sup>111</sup>

There were two further developments of significance during 1999. The first involved an increase in the establishment of local management groups in rural areas where there are few resident government agencies. By November 1999, there were over 20 such groups.<sup>112</sup> The community sector was instrumental in setting these groups up. They focus as much on community needs and issues as on individual and family needs.<sup>113</sup> A related development has been efforts for different government agencies in some areas to synchronise the visits of their staff so that all are there on the same day.

The second development is an initiative to strengthen the effectiveness of Strengthening Families for Maori. Concerns have emerged that there has been very limited Maori input into the design of Strengthening Families. Some Maori groups are involved in service delivery - for example, in delivering Family Start in some locations - but this has been largely within the confines of national policy. The Maori Health Commission expressed concerns about the need to take into account the wider family and community dynamics when intervening in Maori families. Recently, Whakatipu Whanau Maori, an interdepartmental group of Maori officials from a range of central government agencies, was formed to look at ways in which Strengthening Families could better respond to strengthening Maori families. Rachel Robson, a group member, said one of their likely areas of focus would be to explore possible alternative delivery models for Maori.<sup>114</sup>

# 4 Concluding Comments

One of the difficulties in a study of strategic initiatives such as Welfare to Well-being and Strengthening Families is that of clearly identifying the boundaries of the subject. Particularly with respect to Welfare to Well-being, it is often not possible to distinguish between the role played by the umbrella strategy and all the activities that took place under the umbrella. For example, one of the most strategically significant initiatives to occur in welfare over the last five years was development and national implementation of customised service by Income Support. This occurred early on during the Welfare to Well-being initiative, and may have been influenced by it. However, it also occurred under a specific strategic initiative launched by Income Support itself - transforming dependence into independence - and reflected a very widespread commitment to experimentation in service delivery within Income Support.

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A further illustration of the difficulty of establishing the boundaries of these initiatives has been the more fundamental issue of whether Strengthening Families comes under the umbrella of Welfare to Well-being, or vice versa. It seems clear from the record that Strengthening Families emerged from the Welfare to Well-being initiative. However, in what might be

seen as an indication of the success of Strengthening Families, Roger Sowry subsequently considered Strengthening Families to be the overarching strategic umbrella for social policy, pulling together welfare, education, health and the other social sectors and subsuming Welfare to Well-being within it.<sup>115</sup>

A further complication is the recent nature of the initiatives' establishment. Some of those interviewed questioned whether it was too soon to record the events, particularly with respect to Strengthening Families.

One key issue on which those interviewed were questioned was: "Is Strengthening Families new, or just a repackaging of something that has been around for a long time?" The general view of those interviewed, on reflection, was that, while in some respects Strengthening Families was a variation on an old theme, there were important new elements to Strengthening Families. More specifically:

- While there are many similarities between Strengthening Families and the older versions of case conferencing, there are significant differences that have made Strengthening Families a valuable new initiative, even in those areas where interagency case conferencing had not broken down. For example, pre-Strengthening Families case conferencing tended to be ad hoc, and dependent on the individual personal relationships involved. This meant it did not always include the full range of service providers. Comments were also made that it was not always done professionally, in that information might not be handled as confidentially as it should have been. Nor was the family concerned involved centrally in the process, so that case conferencing tended to be a conversation between professionals about a family or individual, rather than a process with the family as an integral part. (Families in a sense now have some scope for choosing which agencies they want or don't want to interact most closely with). Because case conferencing was largely carried out on an informal basis, there was little recourse available when co-operation

could not be obtained from an individual caseworker in another agency. The formalisation of case conferencing through Strengthening Families and the priority given to it by chief executives, is widely seen as having brought about an improvement in the practice of case conferencing in all these respects.

- Robyn Bigelow, Chief Executive and Co-ordinator of the Waitakere Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre, and Community Representative on the Waitakere Effective Practice Management Group, said: "I am sure many are saying 'What is Effective Practice other than a new name for good practice?' I have been struggling to define this for myself and recently, as I participated in my third Effective Practice case, I experienced the difference. The difference is that it's based on a partnership model where each sector accepts mutual responsibility for the well-being of an individual child. Historically, services would say this is a 'Child Protection' problem or this is a 'School' problem and there would be resistance to pick up responsibility...Whilst this major cultural shift is going to take some years to fully take effect, it is an important and significant step."<sup>116</sup>
- Some from community groups indicate Strengthening Families has made it easier to get an inter-agency meeting together in their area.<sup>117</sup>
- Even in areas where collaboration and co-operation were very much already a central part of social service delivery, such as in Masterton, Strengthening Families is considered to be making a significant difference. As Mayor Bob Francis said, "In our region, we are now seeing a greater degree of co-operation, and willingness to

work with other agencies and the community, than ever before.”<sup>118</sup>

- Strengthening Families has created the potential for a collaborative approach to operational planning at the local level.
- Experience with Strengthening Families cases is suggesting that in some instances the outcome is agreement by different agencies to provide critically important resources that might not otherwise have been approved.<sup>119</sup>
- Strengthening Families has seen the emergence of a collaborative approach to policy development, programme development, funding and purchasing, illustrated best by the interagency collaboration in the 1997, 1998 and 1999 Budgets.

Most of those interviewed considered Strengthening Families to be sustainable, although many saw some risks that need to be managed. There are several factors creating optimism that Strengthening Families will be an enduring feature of the social services landscape:

- The collaborative approach to case work is seen as being very much in accordance with the way front-line social service professionals see their roles, both in terms of theoretical foundations, and their professional practice training. As one participant at a Strengthening Families interagency workshop put it: “It sounds like someone is actually listening to field workers. Please keep it a secret or the Government will cancel it!”<sup>120</sup>
- At the other end of the spectrum, Karen Poutasi saw it as being enduring because it

is so simple. “The good thing about Strengthening Families is that it is not some miraculous new approach, but basic common sense. And it is being achieved without structural change, which is important because structural changes often mean the necessary process changes don’t occur. Because the ball is not too far out in front, real cultural change is being achieved.”<sup>121</sup>

- The commitment to collaboration and co-ordination has been formalised into written protocols. This should help reduce the risk of the arrangement reverting to an ad hoc approach dependent purely on individual personalities. At the same time, commitments to involve the families concerned in the process, and to obtain their prior consent, are given added credibility by the contemporary importance attached to this, and by institutional safeguards such as the Privacy Act.<sup>122</sup>
- The focus on joint outcomes - better life chances for children at risk - which acts as an impetus to cross-sector collaboration because of the widespread recognition that many desirable sector-specific social outcomes depend on what goes on in other sectors. John Angus (1999c) has noted: “It is not surprising that as the focus has shifted over the past three or four years from outputs to outcomes, government agencies have found greater mutuality of interest and greater merit in collaborative approaches.”
- The extent of the effort that has been put into local training of field workers in Strengthening Families should help build a base of understanding and enthusiasm.
- The involvement of local community groups may generate an ongoing demand for a

collaborative approach. Wira Gardiner observed: “Once the genie has been let out of the bottle, it is very hard to get it back in.” Gardiner saw Strengthening Families as something of a window of opportunity for Iwi to play a greater role in social service delivery.<sup>123</sup> There is some evidence of greater community interest and involvement during 1999, possibly due to the popularity of Family Start and Social Workers in Schools.

- Strengthening Families has been given strong endorsement by chief executives and the Government. This top level endorsement of the importance should help overcome any isolated resistance, and see the new approach built into the way social service agencies deliver their services. As Poutasi said, “Staff have been given permission to work outside their boxes.”<sup>124</sup> Many of those interviewed saw the imprimatur of the three chief executives as being particularly important, as well as their willingness to intervene on occasions when necessary to enforce or encourage co-operation.<sup>125</sup>
- Strengthening Families was explicitly incorporated in the Government’s *Statement of Strategic Priorities 1999-2002*, issued in December 1998.<sup>126</sup> The statement contains an objective of “extending economic and social opportunities by: strengthening families, especially through intervening and targeting services to break cycles of disadvantage...” Derek Gill, Branch Manager, State Services Commission, saw this, from a whole of government point of view, as classic Mintzberg-type emergent strategy. “Strengthening Families has not come from a top-down process, but from an initiative by departments.”<sup>127</sup>
- The August 1998 reorganisation of ministerial responsibilities emphasised a

cross-portfolio team approach. Roger Sowry, the Minister of Social Services, Work and Income, was appointed to lead a Social Responsibility and Strengthening Families Team, which also included the Ministers of Health and Education, and Ministers and Associate Ministers from a range of social service departments. Within the larger team there was a small task force led by Tau Henare to focus on disparities for Maori. Peter Gresham recalls the frustrations of getting the initial Strengthening Families collaboration underway in 1995, with the Cabinet Committee process very slow and key Ministers unable to find time in their diaries to meet. He considered the new portfolio approach should greatly assist ministerial co-ordination and leadership.<sup>128</sup>

John Angus (1999a) commented that how the Strengthening Families local collaboration initiative develops seems likely to be “tied into wider issues of decentralisation and devolution; of purchasing and delivery models which move away from the ‘one size fits all’ approach to government services of the 1960s and 1970s towards something which better fits the complexities of contemporary New Zealand society.”

There are, however, a number of risks seen, that could see the collaborative approach, both across central government agencies and between central and local communities, gradually fall away again into a silo mentality. More generally, there is a range of risks that the initiatives under the Strengthening Families umbrella may fail to deliver better outcomes:

- There was a perceived gap between rhetoric and the reality on the ground, referred to both by central agencies and some community groups. Related to this is the risk of a possible loss of focus, as some

involved report there are as many different views of what constitutes Strengthening Families as there are people working on it.

- Maintaining the focus of efforts on the areas where there is most value to be added will require continual filling in of the strategy as implementation proceeds. The welcome lack of “paralysis by analysis” in the early days of Strengthening Families may need more conscious filling in of the analytical gaps as implementation proceeds. Some mentioned more in-depth analysis of family issues in New Zealand as an example of the kind of intellectual deepening needed to support the further development of policy in this area.
- The lack of any hard evidence to date that Strengthening Families is actually impacting on the ultimate social outcomes of concern. Many pointed to the early anecdotes of improved co-ordination, and particular individual cases where the outcome has been good.<sup>129</sup> Fegusson reported an initial limited evaluation of Early Start which he considers provides some cause for optimism.<sup>130</sup> However, it is possible that with the passage of time and the opportunity for careful evaluation, the new approaches will be found to be less effective than alternative approaches. One concern seen by some is the ability to successfully target the at-risk families. Dr Janice Wright, a policy consultant, drew attention to the importance and difficulty of designing an accurate screening instrument for targeting the 5% of families most at-risk (Wright 1998). Simon Murdoch, Chief Executive of the Prime Minister’s Department until October 1998, said “Will it work? It’s far too soon to say. What is being attempted is to change some very deep-seated social behaviours, and this will inevitably be very

difficult, as experience in the crime prevention area has shown. It will take ten years of water dripping on a stone before we actually know whether it is making any difference, but we have to try. The key to better outcomes will be management practices and particular outputs and programmes, not high-level rhetoric.”

- There remains a need for developing and incorporating approaches which are seen by Maori as appropriate and responsive to their needs.
- Juliet Schorr, an American academic frequently quoted in the field of strengthening families, has commented with respect to international efforts in this area: “By far the greatest amount of energy and attention of reformers and administrators today is going into interagency collaboration and service integration efforts. Because service integration requires a lot of activity and little new money, and because fragmentation is such a big problem in existing services, many have adopted service integration as a new secular religion. Unfortunately, communities so dazzled by the process of piecing services together tend to neglect the content of that which is being integrated. Collaboration solves many problems, but it will not improve outcomes if the services that are put together are of mediocre quality...”. Few suggested this was the situation in New Zealand, however, and a number made the point that the challenge was still very much to optimise within each sector, as well as across sectors. However, many were concerned that the New Zealand public sector management system is weak in ensuring longer-term effectiveness of outputs in generating the desired outcomes. For example, the State Services Commission (1998) argued there are systemic problems

in terms of weak accountability for outcomes, weak “intervention logic” justifying the choice of outputs in advance, and weak evaluation afterwards of the success or otherwise of the outputs in achieving their desired objectives. In this broader context there is a risk that the impact of Strengthening Families may not be properly evaluated over time.

- A different type of risk for Strengthening Families was noted by Colin James (1998): “...driven again by notions that the State can improve society...we have a ‘strengthening families’ programme built on the belief that if only the State tries hard enough it can ‘break the cycle of disadvantage’...and here we have back, in another guise, the expanding state of the heroic 1960s, the state as builder of the perfectible society.” James considered the state sector reforms of the 1980s to have only partly equipped the state for this role, although he considered the August 1998 announcement of ministerial teams and super-portfolios a useful addition. He also noted, “if Strengthening Families is achievable and does work, it may well cut outlays at the very time the demographic crunch arrives.”
- David Robinson, social policy consultant, argued that, even if the most at-risk families could be identified, there is a need also to build supportive communities. “The Department of Social Welfare is too focused on individual and family well-being, and needs to broaden the scope of Strengthening Families into strengthening communities.”<sup>131</sup>
- Strengthening Families depends on the personal leadership of a small number of people in central Government. The personal leadership of the three chief executives, particularly of Bazley, was seen as having

been crucial to date. There are still inherent pressures that work against collaboration and which could over time reassert themselves as key personnel change. Expansion beyond the three initial departments has multiplied the risk of patch protection, or failure to appreciate the views and position of other agencies.

- Some saw a need to address the difficulty of maintaining momentum at the local level once the initial burst of enthusiasm and effort has gone into setting up the co-ordinating group, establishing the protocol and training staff.
- John Angus (1999b) noted that a critical success factor for Strengthening Families has been maintaining a focus on the common outcome of better life chances for children. “There must be some question that the level of co-operation can be sustained if the Local Management Group becomes responsible for collaboration across a much wider set of outcomes.”
- Also identified were the tensions between a direction from Wellington that Strengthening Families is to be established and the need for local ownership of the idea. This is a risk, particularly given the views of some in the community sector that they were marginalised in the local consultation process and that the process was always essentially centrally run rather than being based on a partnership model.
- Related to this are potential machinery-of-government implications. Local Management Groups are starting to take on a role that bears on rationing and resource allocation decisions. For example, while national criteria were set for allocation of the new Social Workers in Schools, it is

understood that Local Management Groups in some cases varied the criteria to suit local circumstances. This may well be desirable, but this sort of role potentially raises issues of the accountability of Local Management Groups. Those involved reported increasing use of “informal Strengthening Families cases.” This may be seen as evidence of more routine interagency collaboration pre-empting the need for a formal Strengthening Families case conference. There may be a risk, however, that some of the informal cases are run to avoid the involvement of the family, the need for a neutral facilitator, or the need to complete the necessary paperwork.

- The lack of institutional structures at the local level for Strengthening Families, in comparison say to the Crime Prevention initiative, where there is a network of Safer Community Councils which receive funding from central government (both for local co-ordination, and for projects/programmes).
- The variable interest of mayors and local councils around the country must be taken into consideration, as well as the legacy of suspicion of central government initiatives among local government and community groups.

Roger Sowry, Minister of Social Welfare, was quite clear, however, both on the value of Strengthening Families, and its significance: “These three large social service agencies together command over 50% of the total tax take, or \$25.3 billion, and yet until Strengthening Families began [they] had not worked together in a co-ordinated way on such a grand scale, either at a national or local level.”<sup>132</sup> Sowry saw Strengthening Families as enduring because it works well. Furthermore, “Family Start is the most significant development in welfare in New Zealand since Plunket.”<sup>133</sup>

The conclusions of those in the three lead agencies actively involved in Strengthening Families were presented to a public service senior management conference in October 1997.<sup>134</sup> In a part of the presentation, on lessons learned at the centre from working intersectorally, the following conclusions were identified:

### What Have We Had To Do/What Have We Learned?

- Put time and energy into relationships:
  - fortnightly meetings of CEOs
  - weekly meetings of policy managers
  - local co-ordination support team
- Demonstrate benefits early (e.g. case management) approach, joint policy proposals to Ministers
- Focus on shared goals and outcomes
- The importance of good process
  - shared ownership of some resources (e.g. policy project co-ordinator)
  - interdepartmental work teams
  - good project planning and co-ordination
- Act on policy and operational fronts at the same time
- Work cross-culturally, respecting and recognising difference
  - in structures, in particular accountability structures
  - in use of language (e.g. special needs)
  - in other cultural aspects (e.g. attitudes to targeting)
- Manage relationships effectively, including those with local government and non-government organisations
- Change perspectives from “interdepartmental” to “intersectoral”

- Need to focus on common purposes:
  - in desired outcomes
  - in client groups
  - in other shared stakeholders
  - in managing relationships with other government agencies (e.g., in policy processes)

### Lessons Learned by Focusing on Outcomes

- Common outcome goals are the common purpose:
  - provide the glue to hold a variety of agencies together
  - can only be achieved collaboratively
- Focusing on outcomes increases difficulties in measurement:
  - identifying families at risk depends on objective factors such as socioeconomic status, and subjective factors such as family functioning
  - aggregating case by case information is difficult - especially if many providers
  - most current measures are whole of population
- Long timeframe for results - some measures are about high school achievement, many interventions are focused on preschoolers.

Strategic initiatives such as Welfare to Well-being and Strengthening Families aim to change deep-seated social behaviours. This is an extremely ambitious goal. The programmes are operating in an area of public policy where there is little in the way of hard understanding of the causes of the social outcomes of interest. Outcomes are the result of the complex inter-play of individual, family and broader social and economic factors. Only time will tell what the impact of these initiatives will be, and even then the assessment is likely to be somewhat equivocal.

From a public sector management perspective, however, the manner in which these initiatives have been implemented to date is of interest, particularly the Strengthening Families initiative. It has been led by chief executives. It has involved horizontal co-ordination at policy, funding and operational levels between central government agencies in Wellington and throughout New Zealand. It has also featured co-operation and collaboration between central government, local government and the voluntary sector. It has addressed specific points of tension identified in New Zealand's public sector management framework. The clear view of most of those interviewed is that Strengthening Families represents an important new direction in social policy and is not merely "old wine in new bottles." While there are risks around the sustainability of Strengthening Families, most of those interviewed considered it was likely to remain a strategically important component of social policy in New Zealand in the medium term.

# Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> A case study is defined by Robert Yin as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used." See Yin (1984).
- <sup>2</sup> Yin has described the importance of developing the initial study questions carefully, and of using theory to limit the scope of a descriptive study and to determine priorities for data collection. See Yin (1993), pp. 21-27.
- <sup>3</sup> See for instance Holmes and Shand (1995), p. 566.
- <sup>4</sup> See State Services Commission (1998), and Schick (1996). In the language of New Zealand's public sector management reforms, outputs are the goods and services supplied by departments; outcomes are the intended desirable effects from the production of outputs. Because of the generally uncertain impact of outputs on outcomes, departments are held accountable for how well they deliver the outputs chosen by Ministers, while Ministers are seen as being accountable for the outcomes.
- <sup>5</sup> See Petrie (1998), p. 34.
- <sup>6</sup> See Morrison (1998). Morrison notes that collaboration is seldom even well-defined. He quotes Challis et al, who describe collaboration as having three elements: the organisational machinery (structures, policies etc); the process of working together both formally and informally, and the outputs in terms of services and benefits to [clients]. (pp. 129-130).
- <sup>7</sup> Formally, the restructuring involved the creation of three separate business units: the NZ Income Support Service (later known as Income Support), the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service (CYPFS) and the NZ Community Funding Agency (CFA). In addition the Social Policy Agency (SPA) provided policy advice across the range of the department's activities, and TRITEC provided information technology services to the rest of the Department.
- <sup>8</sup> There was, for example, a marked difference in the social worker culture of CYPFS, and the business-like culture introduced in IS after-1992. At the district office level there was generally little interaction between the two business units in the first few years after the 1992 restructuring. There were also tensions between CFA and CYPFS, for example over whether CFA was funding the community services required by CYPFS customers. In *Social Services Strategy 1995-2005 (DSW 1995)*, management of the interface between CFA and CYPFS was identified as one of the main inadequacies of the social services system (see pp.25-26). The amalgamation of CFA and CYPFS in 1998 was designed to ensure closer co-ordination and collaboration between the two functions.
- <sup>9</sup> Michael Player, DSW Corporate Communications Manager, commented that a by-product of the focus on outputs in the social welfare policy arena had been "that images of services and outcomes can become somewhat leaden and lacking in the inspiration capable of converting understanding into enthusiasm and action" (Player 1994).
- <sup>10</sup> In fact Income Support management, following the rapid improvement achieved in operating efficiency over the 1992-93 period, had themselves shifted their focus. In July 1994, Income Support formulated a new vision for itself, "transforming social dependence into social contribution" through active income support (see Petrie 1998, p.33).
- <sup>11</sup> PowerPoint presentation given by Rob Brown, SPA, 7 February 1994.
- <sup>12</sup> "The Story of Re-engineering Welfare in New Zealand", speech notes prepared by Margaret Bazley, May 1998.
- <sup>13</sup> From Bazley's welcoming address to the Beyond Dependency Conference 1997, Proceedings of the Conference, p. 2.

- <sup>14</sup> In Bazley's words: "Basically what you try and do is get everyone singing from the same hymn sheet – which we actually have. We have 6,000 staff and the thing that I find quite interesting is that, wherever you go, people can tell you what business we're in and what we're aiming to do. I think that's quite amazing and yet its been achieved with very little effort," (Smith and Norman 1998)
- <sup>15</sup> Source: *From Welfare to Well-being*, 2nd edition, 1995, p.4. Pages 4-5 of the 2nd edition, containing a more complete list of the "welfare facts" the department sought to publicise, are reproduced in Annex 2.
- <sup>16</sup> "Time Bomb" screened on TV1 in May 1997. While the department reportedly indicated the programme was not its idea, and it had merely provided information to those making it, Communicado reportedly saw the project as being related to the Welfare to Well-being initiative. See *National Business Review* article "New Zealand: Timebomb sees DSW denying its cooperating", 22 March 1996.
- <sup>17</sup> In the second (1995) edition of *From Welfare to Well-being* it was reported that "contact has been established with 68 of the 73 mayors and many have agreed to personally take on a leadership role or to pledge council support." (p. 6).
- <sup>18</sup> *From Welfare to Well-being* (DSW 1994).
- <sup>19</sup> Personal interview, 25 November 1998.
- <sup>20</sup> Personal interview, 27 October 1998.
- <sup>21</sup> Personal interview, 11 November 1998. Quilter recalls a visitor to the Income Support call centre in Lower Hutt some years later asking a phone operator "What is Income Support's mission?" The reply was: "To transform welfare to well-being".
- <sup>22</sup> Personal interview, 16 October 1998.
- <sup>23</sup> Personal interview 17 November 1998. Kerr saw fundamental limits on what government bureaucracies can do to reduce welfare dependency, however. The need for accountability and consistency of treatment mean there are limits on the use of discretion, and on the ability to treat cases on their individual merits with a combination of carrots and sticks. He considered the voluntary sector having greater flexibility in these areas, and said it should play a bigger role.  
An in-depth exploration of the role of the State and civil society in welfare provision by Dr David Green, published by the Business Roundtable, argued that State welfare has impaired the character of recipients, and diminished opportunities for individuals to be of service to each other. Green argued that Government should scale back welfare provision and create the space for a renewal of civil society. See Green (1996) and James (1998).
- <sup>24</sup> Personal interview, 23 October 1998.
- <sup>25</sup> Personal interview, 29 October 1998.
- <sup>26</sup> Personal interview, 19 November 1998.
- <sup>27</sup> Personal interview, 27 October 1998.
- <sup>28</sup> Telephone interview, 10 March 1999.
- <sup>29</sup> From Margaret Bazley's "Welcome address to conference participants", page 2 of the *Beyond Dependency Conference Proceedings*.
- <sup>30</sup> *Christchurch Press*, 9 December 1996.
- <sup>31</sup> Graham Howell, quoted in *The Evening Standard*, 21/3/97. Howell was quoted in the article as advocating the introduction of a universal basic income.
- <sup>32</sup> Letter from Professor Lawrence Mead to Margaret Bazley, 25 March 1997.
- <sup>33</sup> Graeme Hunt commented: "Mrs Bazley is neither politically correct nor one to hide her responsibilities in a cloud of public service waffle, she was under pressure to cut welfare dependency...Her response was a mixture of smart management practices and old-fashioned coercion. Her most recent task has been to make the public aware of so-called intergenerational welfare dependency. She did this by noting that it was sad New Zealand had children whose only fantasy was to dream of life on a benefit."

- <sup>34</sup> Department of Social Welfare Annual Report for the year ending 1998c, p. 24.
- <sup>35</sup> Personal interview, 11 November 1998.
- <sup>36</sup> Personal interview, 16 November 1998.
- <sup>37</sup> Personal interview, 30 October 1998.
- <sup>38</sup> The full list of sponsors as at December 1999 included Westpac Community Trust, the Tindall Foundation, Stark Bros (Lyttelton), Lotteries Commission, Community Employment Group, and Work and Income New Zealand.
- <sup>39</sup> For example, Allan said that the Work Peninsula youth worker, Russell Phillips, was known to and respected by the youths. He focused his attention initially on the leaders, talking to them and encouraging them to think about getting jobs. He then called on local employers, asking for first chance at filling vacancies when they came up. Once the youths were offered jobs, he kept in contact, helping to iron out any issues that arose with their employers. After the leaders starting working, the other youths turned up individually in Russell's office and asked him to help them get jobs. Personal interview, 30 October 1998.
- <sup>40</sup> Noeline Allan said that, between the Lyttelton Safer Community Council and Work Peninsula, the local community is doing what central government delivery agencies should be doing but aren't. Personal interview, 30 October 1998.
- <sup>41</sup> See "New Service Helps Mum Break Benefit Dependency", *National Business Review* 15 August 1996, about the impact of Support Link on a long-term sole parent beneficiary in Tokoroa.
- <sup>42</sup> See Petrie (1998), pp. 38-49 for a description of and further references on the introduction of customised service in Income Support.
- <sup>43</sup> As with the Beyond Dependency Conference, these were also seen by some as elitist. "Beneficiary groups lashed out at Social Welfare after they were left off the invitation list for what they called a back-slapping breakfast meeting in Auckland yesterday." *The Press*, 14 August 1996.
- <sup>44</sup> Between 1991 and 1996 the number of those on the Unemployment Benefit fell 12%, but the numbers on the Domestic Purposes Benefit rose 11%, the numbers on Sickness Benefit rose 68%, and the numbers on the Invalids Benefit rose 44%.
- <sup>45</sup> "Bolger echoes Blair's call for hard-edged compassion", *The Dominion*, 15 October 1997. The Prime Minister had earlier in 1997 outlined in a series of speeches his emerging thinking on the need for greater community responsibility and values, in terms of a concept of social capital. (See Bolger 1998 pp. 258-269.) At one point (p. 265) he asks: "If we had an extra \$100 to spend to assist disadvantaged groups, would we prefer to give it the Department of Social Welfare, or to Father Des Britten at the Wellington City Mission?"
- <sup>46</sup> Personal interview with Michael Player, 11 November 1998. Player said the figure of \$16 million was arrived at through considering what level of business sponsorship had been provided for the 1995 America's Cup challenge, in combination with the minimum investment needed to get disadvantaged children regularly participating in organised sport and leisure activities.
- <sup>47</sup> The potential contribution of the business community has been the subject of public debate in New Zealand in recent years. For example, Roger Kerr, argued that "the business of business is business...If business remains focused on profitability, and if public policy enforces the rule of law and promotes a competitive environment, the general benefit business confers on the community is maximised." (Kerr 1996). A variant of this was taken by Von Tunzelman, who argued that a more active social role by business could enhance the capacity for companies to manage the factors in the social and political environment (such as the possibility of additional government regulation of their activities) that might impact on company profitability (Von Tunzelman 1997). At the other end of the spectrum, proponents of socially responsible business, such as Dick Hubbard, argued that business should pursue the "triple bottom line" - financial performance, social responsibility to all stakeholders, and environmental responsibility (NZBSR pamphlet, n.d.).
- <sup>48</sup> This description of the essence of Strengthening Families is based in part on input from John Angus, personal communication, 21 January 1999.

- <sup>49</sup> "A "red spot area" is an area of the highest concentration of Department of Social Welfare spending; a decile 1-3 school is a school in the lowest three deciles ranked by socioeconomic status of the local community as measured by census data. In the health sector, the "NZDEP" index showed areas of concentration of risk of poor health outcomes.
- <sup>50</sup> Bazley, who had worked as a public health nurse in Freemans Bay in the early 1970s, said she assumed when she came into the Department of Social Welfare in 1993 that case co-ordination was still working as she remembered it, but was horrified to find this was not the case. Personal interview, 27 October 1998.
- <sup>51</sup> That this view is not universally held however can be seen from a 1997 survey of 29 government officials, NGO personnel and individual practitioners in Christchurch. Karen Dawson (1997) found that 13 of the respondents indicated they regarded the organisation of services in the area of child sexual abuse had improved in the last ten years, with specific examples given of the development of protocols and strategic planning having improved service organisation, particularly in the statutory agencies. Improved clarity of roles was also recognised as significant in facilitating relationships between agencies. Dawson also found, however, that "there is a strongly expressed wish by practitioners for greater formalised co-ordination of services" (p. 78).
- <sup>52</sup> Jenni Norton, Area Manager of Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service in Canterbury, in fact noted the disruption to working relationships within a single department following the Department of Social Welfare restructuring in 1992. "The only reason I was able to get co-operation from staff in Income Support was because, as a former senior manager in Department of Social Welfare, I knew the individuals concerned, and they remembered me." Personal interview, 29 October 1998.
- <sup>53</sup> Personal interview, 12 November 1998.
- <sup>54</sup> Funding pressures - and public sector reform - were similarly seen as putting severe strains on inter-agency collaboration in child protection in the UK: "However, the pace of organisational change across public welfare, combined with severe budgetary cutbacks have increased the strains on collaboration to a very precarious point" (Morrison 1998).
- <sup>55</sup> Personal interview, 12 November 1998.
- <sup>56</sup> Personal interview, 18 November 1998.
- <sup>57</sup> Personal interview with David Fergusson, 30 October 1998.
- <sup>58</sup> Fergusson et al 1994, p.1135. They went on to conclude: "Given this history and its duration, it is perhaps not surprising to find that short term attempts at behavioural intervention are of limited success...In general the findings of this study tend to support the conclusion that, if solutions to the problems of increasing antisocial behaviours among young people exist, these solutions are likely to lie with macrosocial changes and processes of social reconstruction which attempt to minimise the number of seriously disadvantaged, dysfunctional and disorganised families within the country."
- <sup>59</sup> Fergusson says that in the early 1990s there was a lot of pressure on health researchers to market their research to policy-makers, so he gave a number of presentations in Wellington to government officials at that time. (He had earlier worked as a researcher for the Department of Social Welfare for ten years.) Personal interview, 30 October 1998.
- <sup>60</sup> Alan Nixon, personal communication, 3 February 1999.
- <sup>61</sup> See Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Department of Social Welfare, 1996.
- <sup>62</sup> The initiative seems to be claimed by different people as a Waitakere initiative, and as arising out of an initiative taken by the Departments of Social Welfare, Health and Education. Some of those interviewed said it was a mixture of both influences.
- <sup>63</sup> Telephone interview with Ray Clarke, 3 December 1999. Clarke said there has for some time been a strong sense of frustration at the way central government services are delivered in Waitakere. Waitakere is treated as an offshoot of Auckland city, and receives insufficient resources and attention.

- <sup>64</sup> The Council provided work space and facilitated community consultation, while the Department of Social Welfare provided a part-time analyst. "We don't see ourselves putting local money into social service delivery (although Christchurch City Council with its greater resources, is something of a beacon). But by bringing people together, and working alongside government agencies and the community, we can show our young people that we actually care about them." Comments made by Penny Hulse, Waitakere City Councillor, at the Youth Justice in Focus Conference, Wellington, 28 October 1998.
- <sup>65</sup> The Coalition Agreement contained a number of elements directly relevant to Strengthening Families, although the term Strengthening Families was not used directly. Provisions in the Agreement included:
- the fundamental principle that health and social services should be focused on those who through misfortune or bad luck become overrepresented in the statistics of dependency, educational failure, ill-health, child mortality and law breaking; and the need to encourage the maintenance of values in society that support family units;
  - increased resources to be devoted to early childhood education, child health, mental health services, and Maori health, piloting of a community-based family health team approach, and a review of all child health programmes aimed at building on those that best deliver;
  - establishment of a family service in the Department of Social Welfare with the intention of focusing on children 0-8 years and co-ordinate health, education, welfare, police, justice etc under this heading.
- <sup>66</sup> Originally there had been a fourth strand to the Strengthening Families work at officials level, a review of family law, but proposals for further work in this area were apparently deferred because of the priority given to other policy work on Strengthening Families and in the justice sector.
- <sup>67</sup> The new government was also concerned about gaps and overlaps in service delivery. "Mr Peters wanted to bring in outside consultants to re-allocate the money. After much discussion they decided to pick up the work done by the Chief Executives of Health, Education and Welfare and build on that, rather than introduce a new initiative. It was decided to continue with the name Strengthening Families" (Bazley 1998b).
- <sup>68</sup> Personal interview, 20 October 1998. Similarly, Poutasi said Strengthening Families has demonstrated it is a mechanism that enables a fast inter-action and feedback from policy design to service delivery and back to policy design. Personal interview, 18 November 1999.
- <sup>69</sup> Bazley 1998b.
- <sup>70</sup> Personal interview, 17 November 1998.
- <sup>71</sup> Ross Judge, Middle Manager, Social Policy Branch, the Treasury, noted that Family Start counsellors did not hold any budget for the support services they may recommend, and there may be a risk of services not being available when needed. There had been some thought in the Treasury of making the counsellors budget holders. Personal interview, 23 October 1998.
- <sup>72</sup> Family Start Media Release, 8 May 1999.
- <sup>73</sup> Family Start Media Releases, 8 May and 20 May 1999.
- <sup>74</sup> For example, in the Treasurer's 1997 Budget Speech Mr Peters said, "If we receive taxpayer support to enable us to look after our children, then we are expected to look after them properly and ensure, for example, that they attend school."
- <sup>75</sup> See Angus and Brown (1999).
- <sup>76</sup> See DSW (1998). Most of the issues raised in the public discussion document were primarily concerned with parenting responsibilities.
- <sup>77</sup> Angus and Brown (1999), paragraph 34.
- <sup>78</sup> Media release by Hon Roger Sowry, 29 October 1998, headed "Government Looking at Issues from Code Responses."

- <sup>79</sup> The three chief executives also have a 45-minute monthly meeting with their senior policy managers to monitor progress and initiate further action on an exceptions basis.
- <sup>80</sup> Richard Wood, personal communication.
- <sup>81</sup> Richard Wood, personal communication. Launching the protocols in larger urban areas often means a progressive implementation across the area, rather than a one-time "big bang".
- <sup>82</sup> Bazley said it was easy to tell from the nature of the interactions at initial Strengthening Families meetings in an area, whether interagency collaboration was in a healthy state. "In some areas we found ourselves introducing local managers of government service agencies to each other, even in smaller towns and cities." Personal interview, 27 October 1998.
- <sup>83</sup> Dawson (1997), p.63.
- <sup>84</sup> Comments made by Shea at National Strengthening Families Steering Group meeting, 22 October 1998. Shea subsequently set down the nature of the roles of the local management group to help guide the activities of new groups, and to help in moving local groups to a point where they are autonomous and self-managing - see Strengthening Families Newsletter of February 1999, attached as Annex 8.
- <sup>85</sup> Personal interview, 18 November 1998.
- <sup>86</sup> The Strengthening Families component is a key priority area in the Funding Agreement, notwithstanding the fact the agreement covers the purchase of over \$6 billion in health services. Poutasi saw this as appropriate, given the importance of Strengthening Families to achieving the Government's strategic goals in health, and says there have not been concerns about the inclusion of such a relatively small item, in funding terms, in the funding agreement. Personal interview, 18 November 1998.
- <sup>87</sup> "Local Collaboration Initiative - Progress Report", 22 October 1998.
- <sup>88</sup> Personal interview, 25 November 1998.
- <sup>89</sup> Fancy cites the case of three schools refusing to take on a suspended pupil. As a result of a collaborative approach involving the offer of a support programme for the student by a Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service social worker, one of the schools then agreed to enrol the student. Personal interview, 25 November 1998.
- <sup>90</sup> Fancy said he had been informed by a case worker that she was able to carry a 30% higher case load as a result of being located on a school's premises, and that the school was an easier environment for young people to disclose to a social worker.
- <sup>91</sup> From a somewhat different perspective, Stuart Middleton, Auckland College of Education, commented that schools can do three things well (and better than other institutions) that will bring about reduced crime in society: they can teach the core competencies of reading, writing and so on, they can emphasise and reinforce values and they can develop a positive self-image amongst pupils. Middleton sees problems, however, if schools are diverted from their core business into well meaning social activities. He also considers schools are currently confused about which values to teach, and argues social values in New Zealand need to be made more explicit. Workshop address by Middleton at the Youth Justice in Focus Conference, Wellington, 29 October 1998.
- <sup>92</sup> See Belgrave and Brown (1996), pp. 6-7.
- <sup>93</sup> Belgrave and Brown (1996), p. 7.
- <sup>94</sup> Strengthening Families Newsletter No.8, [www.strengtheningfamilies.govt.nz](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.govt.nz)
- <sup>95</sup> Personal interview, 26 November 1999.
- <sup>96</sup> For example in Masterton Marti Hartley, a Children Young Persons & Their Families Service social worker, described a recent Strengthening Families case she had been involved in in which a child had been taken into care by the Masterton office of Children Young Persons & Their Families Service. The child had previously been receiving services from health professionals in a neighbouring area. While the health professionals attended the Strengthening Families meeting, they were reluctant to agree to any ongoing role for what was now seen as an out-of-area client, nor had they tried to involve their local health sector counterparts. Personal interview, 27 November 1998.

- <sup>97</sup> Personal interview, 16 November 1998.
- <sup>98</sup> Wheeler said, however, that he would be removing himself from the role of organising the meetings as individual caseworkers gain experience with the system. He saw his main contribution as organising meetings where the case is very difficult or contentious, so that the way in which it is organised can affect the outcome (for example, because there is interagency tension involved). Personal interview 30 October 1998.
- <sup>99</sup> Telephone interview, Ray Clarke 3 December 1999.
- <sup>100</sup> For example, there were some, including social workers, who expected the most common outcome from an Strengthening Families meeting would be that Children, Young Persons & Their Families Service would end up being the lead agency. Of 38 individual Strengthening Families cases in Canterbury in the period July-September, however, Children Young Persons & Their Families Service called the meeting on 23 occasions, and was appointed the lead agency on 12 occasions. Interestingly, a non-government organisation was appointed lead agency in 11 instances (although the Strengthening Families co-ordinator considered this likely to be a higher level of community group leadership than in steady-state). Strengthening Families Project Manager/co-ordinator's Report, September 1998.
- <sup>101</sup> Personal interview, 29 October 1998.
- <sup>102</sup> Personal interview, 30 October 1998.
- <sup>103</sup> Letter of 20 November 1999 from Ray Clarke to Alan Nixon, Chief Policy Advisor, Ministry of Social Policy.
- <sup>104</sup> ".the Chief Executives of Health, Education and Welfare were very alarmed at the prospect of what had become a highly successful collaborative model being destroyed by the addition of seven more people"(Bazley 1998b). In the same address Bazley stated that, immediately following the Coalition Agreement announcement of \$70 million additional funding for Strengthening Families, seven other chief executives had wanted to become part of the initiative "until such time as it became clear that the \$70 million was not available."
- <sup>105</sup> Oral report at the National Strengthening Families co-ordinating meeting, 22 October 1998.
- <sup>106</sup> Personal interview, 17 November 1998.
- <sup>107</sup> Personal interview, 27 October 1998.
- <sup>108</sup> Personal communication, 21 January 1998. Another angle on this question comes from Sandra Manderson, head of the Crime Prevention Unit from 1993-97. Manderson considered that, while the central government funding for Safer Community Councils was very important, the key factor in the success of such initiatives was the degree of commitment across departments, at a senior level, to interagency collaboration. Personal interview, 19 February 1999.
- <sup>109</sup> Personal interview, 27 November 1998.
- <sup>110</sup> Sean Wheeler, telephone interview, 6 December 1999.
- <sup>111</sup> For instance, in Christchurch target group information provided showed 13 children aged under 10 indefinitely suspended from school, 89 children with one parent on benefit and the other in prison, 47 teenage parents under 18 receiving benefits, and 804 DPB recipients of over 10 years duration. Source: presentation slides provided by Bazley.
- <sup>112</sup> The source of information in this paragraph is MoSP 1999b.
- <sup>113</sup> There are in addition five steering groups which oversee clusters of management groups in Northland, North Shore, Auckland, South Auckland and Manawatu.
- <sup>114</sup> Telephone interview, 6 December 1999. Robson is Manager of Te Kete Hauora, the Maori policy group in the Ministry of Health. Written input was also received from Hera Douglas, Te Kete Hauora policy analyst. Other agencies represented on Whakatipu Whanau Maori are Te Puni Kokiri, the Ministry of Education, the Ministries of Women's Affairs and Youth Affairs, and the Ministry of Social Policy.
- <sup>115</sup> Personal interview, 26 November 1998.
- <sup>116</sup> *Waitakere City Effective Practice Strengthening Families Newsletter*, Guest Editorial, September 1998.

- <sup>117</sup> For example Hildegard Grant, Clinical Supervisor of the Early Start Project in Christchurch, said it was much more difficult to get other agencies to come to an Early Start-initiated interagency meeting before the Strengthening Families protocol was in place. Personal interview, 30 October 1998.
- <sup>118</sup> Personal interview, 16 November 1998.
- <sup>119</sup> For example, paying for the telephone to be reconnected, which can be both of huge benefit to the family and have a large pay-off for all the agencies working with the family. In the absence of the additional information obtained through an interagency case meeting, a request from the family for additional support might not be successful.
- <sup>120</sup> Strengthening Families workshop evaluation sheet made available by Richard Wood.
- <sup>121</sup> Personal interview, 18 November 1998.
- <sup>122</sup> Morrison argued that "partnerships with families cannot be considered separately from partnership practice between and within agencies....deficits in collaboration undermine the experience of partnership for families." See Morrison (1996), p. 135.
- <sup>123</sup> Telephone interview, 10 March 1999.
- <sup>124</sup> Personal interview, 18 November 1998.
- <sup>125</sup> Morrison included ownership at a senior level in a list of ten key building blocks for "healthy," rather than "safe" interagency collaboration in child sexual abuse. The ten building blocks are shared recognition and definition of the need for collaboration; a mandate from government; formal and informal structures at both national and regional levels; shared philosophy of intervention; clear agency and interagency procedures; multiagency and intraagency training; actual provision of post-abuse services; quality supervision of front line staff; clear standards and quality assurance processes; and attention to the comprehensive needs of front line staff. See Morrison (1996), pp. 137-138.
- <sup>126</sup> Commenting more on the welfare to well-being strategy, Bazley has observed: ..the strategy, carefully aligned with the Government's thinking, should proof the Department against future changes in political direction: "I found in Transport that if you get your core values right, they will survive changes in political leadership" (Smith and Norman 1998).
- <sup>127</sup> Personal interview, 17 November 1998. See Minzberg 1994: "But a strategy can also be emergent...strategies can develop without the conscious intention of senior management, often through a process of learning." (p. 111).
- <sup>128</sup> Personal interview, 25 November 1998.
- <sup>129</sup> For example, the case of a young Dunedin boy has been publicised, whose prospects improved considerably following interagency collaboration over his case. See Henderson (1998).
- <sup>130</sup> In a paper delivered to the Youth Justice in Focus Conference in Wellington in October 1998, Fergusson reported the results of an initial study of Early Start, which he said focused more on assessing the feasibility and practicality of the programme rather than assessing programme outcomes. Fergusson did report however that there were promising results in some areas (for example, better child health care and safety practices, reduction in maternal depression), but no material change in other areas (for example, maternal alcohol and drug use, and level of material deprivation/poverty). Fergusson indicated that the programme appeared sufficiently promising that it was proposed to expand it and introduce a randomised trial over five years.
- <sup>131</sup> Personal interview, 19 November 1998.
- <sup>132</sup> Strengthening Families Fact Sheet, p. 16.
- <sup>133</sup> Personal interview, 26 November 1998.
- <sup>134</sup> See Department of Social Welfare and the Ministries of Education and Health, 1997.

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# Annexes

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- Annex 1: List of Those Interviewed
- Annex 2: From Welfare to Well-being, 2nd edition, 1995, pages 4-6, containing a list of the “welfare facts” the department sought to publicise.
- Annex 3: 1994-96 Community Projects by the Welfare to Well-Being Team in Christchurch.
- Annex 4: Formal monthly report on Welfare to Well-being for June 1998, Department of Social Welfare.
- Annex 5: Strengthening Families: An Introduction
- Annex 6: Inter-generational Cycle of Disadvantage
- Annex 7: Strengthening Families: Agreed Canterbury Protocols for Shared Responsibility
- Annex 8: Strengthening Families: Local Management Groups

# List of Those Interviewed

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The organisation and position titles are listed as at the date of the first interview. For most, this was either October/November 1998 or February/March 1999.

## Ministers and former Ministers

Roger Sowry: Minister of Social Services, Work and Income (1996 – 1999)

Peter Gresham: Minister of Social Welfare [(1993 – 1996)

## Mayors

Noeline Allan: Mayor of Banks Peninsula

Bob Francis: Mayor of Masterton

## Department of Social Welfare

Margaret Bazley: Director-General

Jackie Brown: General Manager, Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service

Mike Doolan: Chief Social Worker, Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service

Jenni Norton: Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service Manager, Canterbury

Mary Schluter: Training Officer, Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service, Canterbury

Carolyn Burrell: Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service Manager, Masterton

Anna Purgar: Community Funding Agency Outreach Worker, Masterton

Marti Hartley: Social Worker, Masterton

Marlene Gaskin: Social Worker, Masterton

Marilyn Roberts: Supervisor, Masterton

Mike Naughton: Social Worker, Masterton

Ron Karaitiana: Social Worker, Masterton

Les Kennedy: Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service Manager, Napier

Michael Player: Manager, Corporate Communications

Lorelle Baxter: Executive Officer, Corporate Communications

Richard Wood: Strengthening Families Manager, Corporate Office

Alan Nixon: Manager, Strategic Policy, Social Policy Agency

John Angus: Manager, Social Services Policy, Social Policy Agency

Rob Brown: Strategic Policy Officer, Social Policy Agency

Richard Bolton: Analyst, Social Policy Agency

## Ministry of Education

Howard Fancy: Secretary for Education

Kathy Smith: Group Manager

San Fitzgibbon: Senior Policy Analyst

## Ministry of Health

Dr Karen Poutasi: Director-General of Health  
Judy Glackin: Strengthening Families Manager  
Rachel Robson: Manager, Te Kete Hauora

## Strengthening Families Local Co-ordinators

Ray Clarke: Strengthening Families Local Co-ordinator, Waitakere  
Sean Wheeler: Strengthening Families Local Co-ordinator, Canterbury

## Former Department of Social Welfare

Chris O'Connor: former District Office Manager, Income Support, Christchurch

## Work and Income New Zealand

Helene Quilter: Corporate Relations Manager  
Judy Manihere: Manager, Masterton

## Prime Minister's Department

David Imray: Advisor  
Bruce Gadd: Advisor, Crime Prevention Unit  
Sally Munro: Advisor

## Former Prime Minister's Department

Simon Murdoch: formerly Chief Executive  
Sandra Manderson: formerly Director, Crime Prevention Unit

## Treasury

Ross Judge: Middle Manager, Social Policy Branch

## State Services Commission

Derek Gill: Branch Manager, Strategic Development Branch  
Francine Porteous: Senior Advisor

## Department of Corrections

Ann Clark: General Manager, Community Probation Service

## Business Community

Peter Shirtcliffe: Chairman, Telecom New Zealand  
Sir Ron Trotter  
Roger Kerr: Chief Executive, The New Zealand Business Roundtable

## Voluntary Sector

Bonnie Robinson: Executive Officer, New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services  
Hildegard Grant: Project Manager, Early Start Project, Christchurch

## Other

Wira Gardiner: public policy consultant, Gardiner and Parata  
David Robinson: social policy consultant, formerly with New Zealand Council of Social Services  
David Fergusson: Professor, Christchurch School of Medicine; Co-ordinator of the Christchurch Child Development Study  
Michael Belgrave: Senior Lecturer, Massey University, Social Policy and Social Work

# Welfare to Well-being and Strengthening Families: A timeline to this report

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1993

Policy-level literature notes and documents concerns about families experiencing disadvantage across a range of sectors, and about intergenerational transmission of disadvantage within families.

The 1993 Budget includes new funding for a pilot of Family Service Centres, based on intersectoral delivery of services and early intervention.

In July, Margaret Bazley is appointed Director-General of the Department of Social Welfare. She announces her intent to inject strategic vision and coherence into the sector.

1994

In February, the Social Policy Agency of DSW says that government initiatives to tackle the welfare dependency problem are urgently needed.

Christchurch School of Medicine researchers publish a study on multiple-problem adolescents, calling attention to the major role of seriously disadvantaged family environments in these young people's problems.

The Department of Social Welfare takes the first steps towards a strategy to mobilise its entire 6000 staff members and the wider community in eliminating welfare dependency.

Prime Minister Jim Bolger calls the first business community Welfare to Well-being breakfast meeting.

The pilot Support Link programme in Taupo begins. This was the genesis of the customised services practice, which became a key strategy concept for Income Support.

Department of Social Welfare publishes the first issue of *From Welfare to Well-being*, an annual report on progress towards this vision.

1995

In January, the Director-General of Social Welfare approaches mayors, informing them of the widening scope of the Welfare to Well-being strategy, and of the crucial need for community help and support.

Funding for Maori needs nearly trebles the amount available in the previous year.

Continuing efforts are made to inform the public and enlist their co-operation.

The Compass Programme (assisting sole parents into work and education) is established nationally.

Concerns for older persons are examined.

**1996**

The Social Workers in Schools programme is being developed.

In Waitakere City, an 18-month project is convened, involving local voluntary sector and central government agencies. This becomes the best-practice model for co-ordinating frontline staff of Health, Education and Welfare departments and the agencies they fund.

Draft standards for Pacific Island Cultural Social Services are prepared.

Progress is made with Iwi Social Services, with six approved in September.

The Director-General of DSW continues talks with mayors about programmes for children and young persons.

**1997**

The chief executives of Health, Education and Welfare expand and consolidate cross-sector work; and they establish a joint working programme to improve community contact.. In October, they jointly present Strengthening Families to public service senior managers.

In March, the Department of Social Welfare hosts a multi-sector conference, *Beyond Dependency*.

The 1997 Budget emphasises social responsibility and encourages interagency collaboration. It includes the Strengthening Families initiative and includes additional funding for the Children Young Persons and Their Families Service (CYPFS).

In May, Communicado's TV programme 'Time Bomb' publicises the issue of long-term beneficiaries.

**1998**

The 1998 Budget supports Family Start and continues to encourage interagency collaboration. In August, ministerial portfolios are reorganised

International Congress on Child Abuse supports interagency collaboration and points out that it can be difficult to achieve.

The Community Funding Agency (CFA) and the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Agency are amalgamated. In October, Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) is established.

New legislation for youth income support is passed.

By December, 56 separate Management Groups responsible for Strengthening Families are operating across the country.

The Family Start pilot project is launched, and the Breaking the Cycle programme is continued. The Department of Social Welfare co-sponsors a symposium on Family Violence.

The present study is commissioned and first interviews are conducted..

**1999**

The 1999 Budget boosts Strengthening Families funding; and focuses on better services for Maori.

The Health Funding Authority provides some funding for Strengthening Families co-ordinators. Protocols for co-ordinators are developed, and first groups of independent local facilitators are trained.

The Social Workers in Schools programme is begun and then expanded.

In October, the Ministry of Social Policy and the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services are established.

By November, 70 local Strengthening Families Management Groups are established, and 20 rural groups are in operation.

In December, the present report is completed and submitted to the Ministry of Social Policy.