

STRENGTHENING *families*

W h a k a k a h a w h ā n a u

Do you know about this valuable service for struggling families?

1. **Strengthening Families** is a strategy which commenced (in 1997) within the Health, Education and Welfare sectors. It now applies across Government, to improve life outcomes for children, such as improved health, better educational attainment, reduced incidence of offending, abuse and neglect.
2. **The strategy** is to strengthen families whose children and/or young persons are at risk of poor outcomes as a consequence of their unhelpful social environment and/or problematic family circumstances. It is expected that such families will have two or more Government and/or community agencies working with them. Strengthening Families will help them by:
 - Improving services through Strengthening Families meetings - effective interagency collaborative case management meetings involving families, and helping agencies, and facilitated and monitored via Strengthening Families.
 - Coordinating policy, funding and purchasing across relevant Government sectors (Health, Welfare and Education particularly).
 - Strengthening families in their ability to resolve difficulties and problems, and maximizing the outcomes and opportunities for their children with a focus upon good parenting.
 - Promoting and enabling collaborative social service initiatives in response to specific needs and/or service gaps identified in local communities.
3. **The strategy arose out of:**
 - Concern about intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.
 - Local concern about gaps in services and poor intersectoral co-ordination.
 - Recognition by CEO's in Health, Education and Welfare that many of their concerns about outcomes were shared and held in common, both in terms of certain specific regions and communities, and also with regard to specific clients.
 - Research findings e.g. New Zealand research into links between teenagers' problems and family circumstances and experiences.
 - Impetus from Ministers' concerns.
4. **The strategy is intended to ensure that:**
 - Life outcomes of children in families at risk are identified and improved.
 - Social services to families at risk are well co-ordinated.
 - Parents are aware of and meet their responsibilities to their children.
5. **Anyone can activate the Strengthening Families process** with the support of a Government or community-based social service agency (e.g. Education, health, welfare, housing, etc) Locate your nearest Strengthening Families Coordinator at our www.strengtheningfamilies.govt.nz website