



Briefing

Hon Karen Chhour, Minister for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence

Keeping People Safe Programme Update: Plan for 2026

Date 05 February 2026

Ref 2026/129494

Action sought

| | |
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| Note | Project Whetū will no longer be progressed, however there are still many critical issues with multi-agency responses to family violence that need resolving |
| Note | Implementation of core improvements to multi-agency responses will commence in four localities from February 2026 |
| Note | In addition to the immediate milestone changes as outlined in the briefing <i>Changes to Action Plan Milestones</i> (ref: 129171), 9(2)(f)(iv) |

Contact for telephone discussion

| Name | Position | Mobile | First |
|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Cam Sherley | Acting Chief Executive | 9(2)(a) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Natalie Thomsen | Principal Advisor | 9(2)(a) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Minister's office to complete

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Noted | <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Referred to... | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seen | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn | <input type="checkbox"/> Not seen by Minister |

Minister's comments

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with an update on the Keeping People Safe Programme following the decision not to progress Project Whetū – the data and technology platform to improve multi-agency responses to family violence.

Background

2. The second Te Aorerekura Action Plan identifies Keeping People Safe as a focus area with four priorities, related to improving multi-agency responses:
 - Strong governance, leadership, and ways of working.
 - Delivering joined up approaches for planning, resources and services.
 - Consistent approach to understanding and managing risk.
 - Improving information sharing.
3. The focus for 2025 was on laying strong foundations for more effective multi-agency responses to family violence. This included funding specialist outreach services in Rotorua and Auckland City and developing a high-risk protocol and information sharing protocol - both designed to increase the consistency, safety, and effectiveness of practice.
4. In December 2025, the business case for Project Whetū was paused, including potential Budget 26 funding.
5. While this data and technology platform would have resolved some issues (e.g. providing a mechanism for information sharing), there are still significant improvements to be made beyond technology that will increase safety for people impacted by family violence, such as building staff understanding of risk.
6. An update on the Keeping People Safe programme was provided to the IEB on 21 January 2026. The IEB agreed to support implementation in the initial localities, including strengthening the role of Regional Public Service Commissioners.
7. On behalf of the IEB, the Secretary for Social Development also agreed to lead the implementation of regional leadership for multi-agency responses, as part of her role as System Lead for the regions.

Plan for 2026

8. The focus for 2026 has shifted to rapid implementation of core improvements to multi-agency responses in four localities - **Tairāwhiti, Hawke's Bay, Rotorua and Auckland City** (see **appendix 1**: a slide deck summarising the work to be done over the coming year).

9. We plan to stand up a locally-led, regionally enabled, nationally supported model across these initial sites. Work with government agencies and communities will commence from February to October 2026 with time-limited funding provided from the Centre through to October 2027.
10. Key improvements to be delivered through the four initial localities include:
 - Trialling the locally-led and regionally-enabled model.
 - Implementing and facilitating training on the High-Risk Protocol.
 - Uplifting workforce capability across key areas such as children and young people.
 - Recruiting dedicated roles to support safe implementation of High-Risk Protocol.
 - Tracking and monitoring performance measures.
11. Successful implementation requires agencies to commit to making the necessary operational changes to improve multi-agency responses, with the Centre providing coordinated support and direction. This will likely require action at local, regional and national levels.
12. ^{9(2)(g)(i)}
- 13.

Evidencing Impact

14. A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to measure the impact of changes made to multi-agency response is in development. This will be tested with regions and localities during the implementation phase to determine what data and information is currently gathered and held. Reporting on key indicators will begin in 2026.
15. ^{9(2)(f)(iv)}

16. In the interim, we intend to track the following key implementation deliverables:
 - Workshops convened with localities.
 - High-risk protocol and information sharing protocol implementation and training.
 - Specialist roles recruited to support multi-agency response.
 - Governance, oversight, and escalation arrangements confirmed.
 - Agency roles and responsibilities clarified.
17. To increase our understanding of the cost and value generated from multi-agency responses, an outcomes evaluation of four sites was undertaken by Ihi Research. 9(2)(g)(i)

9(2)(f)(iv)

Next steps

18. Implementation of core improvements will commence from February 2026 across the four initial localities. We will report on progress through the quarterly Action Plan performance report with a more detailed update to be provided in the Q4 25/26 report.
19. 9(2)(f)(iv)
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Appendix 1: Keeping People Safe Programme – Plan for 2026 Slide Deck

Appendix 1

Keeping People Safe Programme: Plan for 2026

5 February 2026
IN CONFIDENCE



www.preventfsv.govt.nz

Evolving Keeping People Safe



A core building block of the Keeping People Safe programme was developing the technology and data infrastructure (Project Whetū) to support better multi-agency responses to family violence. In December 2025, the business case for this was withdrawn from Cabinet, including potential Budget 26 funding. While this is a change, there is still value in building on the progress already made related to process and practice.

Key Messages

The system is still failing to provide necessary support for families and whānau, and workers need clear guidance and resources – regardless of technology.

There are many critical issues that still need to be resolved without Project Whetū. For example, workers need consistent tools and support to make informed and consistent decisions about risks, so families everywhere receive the right support to keep them safe.

A substantial amount of good work has already been completed, with several locations already strengthening multi-agency responses.

In 2025, we laid the groundwork for the Keeping People Safe programme by understanding local needs, improving risk assessment and information sharing, and developing a target operating model. This means we are well placed to move forward, towards implementation with communities.

We are shifting from development to implementation of change process in initial sites.

We will be implementing improvements in four localities from late February 2026. Partnering with Regional Public Service Commissioners and communities to develop a co-ownership model for multi-agency responses that strengthens accountability and improves high-risk practice.

This shift aligns with the direction set in the target operating model, and we will start measuring progress towards impact from June 2026.

Approved by the IEB in August 2025, the model will continue to guide how we deliver and measure more effective multi-agency responses to family violence. This continues to underpin what we focus on in communities.

Shifting to implementation in initial sites



The Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention
Responding, healing, strengthening

Development and Testing

2025

Developed:

- Target Operating Model
- High-Risk Protocol
- Information Sharing Protocol
- High-level governance and leadership model

Delivered:

- 12 System Improvement Plans
- Specialist Outreach in Rotorua and Auckland City
- Trialled a discretionary fund for local responses (e.g. food vouchers)

Funding source: The Centre

Implementing Change Process in Initial Sites

Mar-Oct
2026

We will establish a **governance and leadership infrastructure** to provide accountability for performance and drive implementation and improvements

We will implement the change process in **four localities** (Hawke's Bay, Auckland City, Tairāwhiti, and Rotorua) **from March – October 2026**, which will include:

- Trialling regional hub and local spoke model
- Implementing the High-Risk protocol in 4 sites.
- Training on High-Risk Protocol and templates
- Uplifting capability across key areas such as children and young people
- Recruiting dedicated roles to support safe implementation of High-Risk Protocol
- Tracking and monitoring on performance measures

Funding source: The Centre

Scaling up

Oct 2026
onwards

9(2)(g)(i)