

Briefing Paper: Outcomes of the Western Integration Family Violence Committee Forum late 2019

This briefing paper is to inform you of the progress of system wide family violence reforms in the western metropolitan region. The Western Integrated Family Violence Committee conducted a reflection activity late 2019 with over 40 cross sector representatives in the western metropolitan region focused on generating service identified strengths and challenges for the implementation of family violence reforms.

Five primary areas of reform were identified as having the most significant system wide impact:

1. MARAM and Information Sharing Schemes
2. Perpetrator Interventions
3. Improving health sector responses to family violence
4. Housing needs for family violence
5. Workforce Development

We wish to note that the Orange Door was identified as a primary area but not considered in detail as the western metropolitan region does not yet have the Orange Door.

Across the five primary areas, the following strengths were identified:

- The investment in trials and pilots testing innovative responses to family violence and evaluation processes to contribute towards developing a robust evidence base;
- The articulation of an evidence base for family violence in newly developed practice guides, minimum standards and frameworks;
- The significant investment in improving the quality and nature of support available to clients through additional case management and access to different forms of brokerage such as Flexible Support Packages, and the Private Rental Access Program;
- The introduction/strengthening of dedicated specialist family violence programs or roles within organizations to support capacity building across workforces;
- Creating a “connected system” through regional activities, such as those driven by the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, and coordinated work through the development of regional partnerships;
- Improved police responses and a strong intent from local Victoria Police representatives to work collaboratively with organisations within the region;
- Organisations are reviewing policy, procedures and practice to embed the reforms and to enable collaborative practice across the system; and
- The potential of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and the Child Information Sharing Scheme (The Information Sharing Schemes).

Across the five primary areas, the following challenges were identified:

- Sustaining the momentum of the reforms through continued investment and commitment to ongoing funding.
- The reforms emphasising the importance of identifying and acting on family violence but there are insufficient resources to enable the system to respond to demand. There are high expectations on service responses as a result of the community awareness of the reforms and services that are experiencing high demand are needing to ‘hold’ clients in need of specialised support.
- Challenges with the recruitment and retention of qualified staff due to workforce shortages, short term contracts and differential pay across sectors.
- Challenges in supporting staff wellbeing for specialist and non-specialist workforces responding to increased demand and new responsibilities to respond to family violence;

- Lack of dedicated resourcing for organisations to undertake the change management processes required to support the implementation of reforms;
- A lack of clarity for the role of Family Violence Regional Integration Committees within the statewide family violence governance structure.
- Communication regarding information on the rollout and sequencing of reforms is unclear and is not cognisant of the interdependencies between reforms;
- Services are at different stages of understanding and implementing reforms, contributing to inconsistencies between organisations;
- Challenges with attitudes to family violence not being 'core business' for non-specialist family violence services and creating necessary cultural change;
- Limited or no access to vital training in a timely manner, including issues with backfilling staff to prioritise training;
- A lack of service responses for adolescents who use violence;
- A lack of resources for working with perpetrators;
- Establishing and maintaining relationships between referral services. There are poor accountability mechanisms if organisations refuse to collaborate under required frameworks such as the Information Sharing Schemes.

About the Western Integrated Family Violence Committee

The Western Integrated Family Violence Committee is one of 13 Family Violence Regional Integration Committees (FVRICs) across the state that provides:

- regional leadership on formulating and achieving local goals and objectives to improve family violence responses at a system level;
- enables collaborative practice across the service system and supports non-specialist services to orientate to their roles and responsibilities in responding to family violence; and
- aligns local area workforce priorities with statewide workforce reform initiatives to support capacity and capability building across the service system.

Recommendation 193 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence acknowledged FVRICs as a vital part of the governance structure of the family violence reforms. A key role of FVRICs is to identify systemic barriers to successful reform implementation and undertake targeted work to embed the reforms at a local level.

The WIFVC is made up of 65 specialist and non-specialist service providers and other stakeholders that respond to family violence in the western metropolitan region. The WIFVC is supported by an Independent Chair and Principal Strategic Advisor auspiced by Women's Health West. The WIFVC meet bimonthly to address regional strategic priorities and is overseen by an elected Governance Group.

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