

Rock the Cradle: End Child Abuse

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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I would also like to thank Malcolm Evans for letting me use his wonderful cartoon illustrating accountability when a child dies. And to all those who spoke to me, may your quests to reduce child abuse and neglect succeed.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends. Mum and Dad, thank you for letting me take over the dining room table with interview transcripts and books, for doing the final proof read and for topping up my coffee cup. Friends, thank you for all the motivational messages of support. My favourite was first quoted by Nelson Mandela, "It always seems impossible until it is done."

Abstract

This journalism article and exegesis seeks solutions to reduce child abuse. Early intervention and addressing the underlying causes behind child abuse and neglect (poverty, social isolation, being a young parent, drug and alcohol abuse, living in restricted circumstances i.e. on the benefit) has been proven to work when services are implemented correctly. Examples of successful early intervention strategies are the home visiting programmes, Early Start and Family Help Trust; however they are only available to a limited number of families in Christchurch. The countrywide home visiting programme, Family Start, is criticised for not producing enough positive outcomes and this has resulted in five Family Start sites closed down and their contracts retendered. These programmes are based off American models which strong research shows do not only reduce child abuse and neglect, but also improves a range of desired results such as increasing education and employment and reducing crime. Later this year the Government will release a 10 year action plan for vulnerable children. Child well-being advocates sincerely hope that early intervention and addressing the underlying causes will feature heavily and produce the much needed policy changes to reduce child abuse and neglect.

Third Party Copyright Material

I asked permission to use Malcolm Evan's cartoon (2002) illustrating accountability when a child dies, and he sent me the following response in an email (this is a screen shot directly from my inbox).



Use of cartoons

Malcolm Evans <malcolm@evanscartoons.com>
Reply-To: Malcolm Evans <malcolm@evanscartoons.com>
To: Rose Rees-Owen <rose.rees.owen@gmail.com>

Hello Rose,

Yes I'd be most happy for to use the cartoon in the manner you describe.

Regards

Malcolm Evans.

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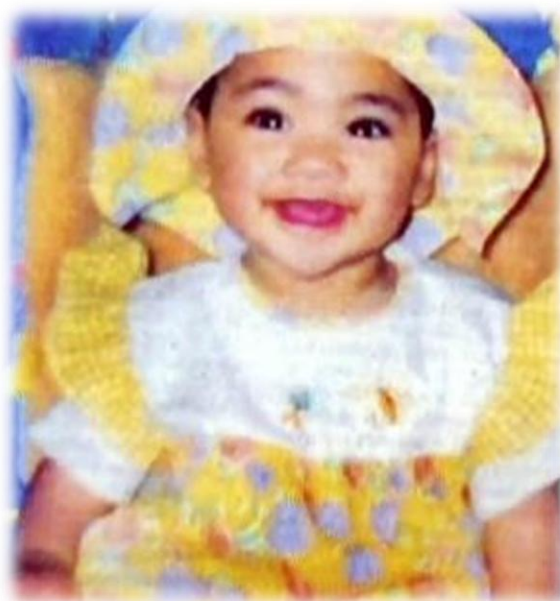
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Rock the Cradle: End Child Abuse Now.

New Zealand. Pure green paradise, a great place to bring up kids. These are images of Aotearoa we hold dear. New Zealand ranks near the top on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) “better life index”, basking in the fourth place spot out of 34 countries; and both Auckland and Wellington feature in the top 10 of the most liveable cities list in 2011.

But the same OECD condemns New Zealand for child well-being. New Zealand ranks 29 out of 34 countries, with the fifth worst record of child abuse in the OECD. According to Anthea Simcock from Child Matters, an organisation dedicated to training and educating people to recognise child abuse, one child in New Zealand dies every five weeks as a consequence of severe abuse and neglect.

It’s not something most of us want to dwell on and our failure to face up to it may be a large part of the problem. Jim Anglem, from the University of Canterbury Kaumatua of Te Awatea Violence Research Centre, puts it this way, “The serenity of the nikau palms standing tall, silhouetted against a softly tinged sky, is in stark contrast to the violence in New Zealand’s society and seems too dissonant to contemplate.”



F.1: Nia Glassie. 25.4.2004 - 3.8.2007



F.2: Chris and Cru Kahui. 20.3.2006 – 18.6.2006

Here are three faces of those that died pointlessly because of violence and abuse. The images of the purple checked blanket with Chris and Cru Kahui sleeping softly, soundly, safely, and Nia Glassie's big radiant smile and her equally sunny hat and dress are images that have become synonymous with child abuse and neglect.

Three month old Chris and Cru Kahui died of non-accidental head injuries in Starship Hospital on June 18, 2006. No one except the family members present knew what happened the night that Cru stopped breathing. The family was dubbed "the silent 12;" they didn't speak to police until two weeks after the twin's death. The twin's father Chris Kahui, then 21, was acquitted of murder in 2008 and instead blamed the mother Macsyna King for the murder, which she denied. Chris Kahui said he performed CPR on Cru once he saw the three month old's lips turn blue, however it wasn't until the next day that the twins were taken to hospital. When they were admitted, both had fractured skulls and baby Chris had a fractured leg.

Three year old Nia Glassie also died because of non-accidental head injuries in Starship Hospital on August 3, 2007. She had suffered ongoing and horrific abuse at the hands of those who were meant to protect her. Her mother's then 19 year old partner, Wiremu Curtis, and his brother Michael used Glassie as a test dummy for their wrestling moves and a hard blow to her head was her last. It was 36 hours after the tortured toddler collapsed into a coma that her mother, Lisa Kuka, then 35, sought medical attention.

Recently joining the ranks of high profile tragedies is "M", a nine year old West Auckland girl who may have escaped with her life, but for whom the emotional and physical scars

will take a lifetime to heal. “M” made headlines in December 2010 when the police found her locked in a wardrobe, bruised, battered and dehydrated. She was dragged across the floor by her hair; beaten with a vacuum cleaner pipe and a broomstick; had a toenail torn off, with salt and hot water poured into the wound; and kicked in the groin with steel capped work boots.

A United Nations study on violence against children proclaims that, “No violence against children is justifiable; all violence is preventable.” None of these children needed to end up on the front pages of national newspapers had the right services been in place and had those services intervened early enough.

Social workers Marie Connolly and Mike Doolan say in their book, “Lives Cut Short”, there is no child protection system that can prevent all child abuse deaths, just as no mental health system can prevent all suicides, but “because each child is precious we are compelled to ask collectively, ‘how might this tragedy been prevented?’”

This year, we may be able to answer that question. In the next few months the Government is due to release a Vulnerable Children’s Action Plan. This follows an extensive public consultation process culminating in the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children that the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) brought out last year. Dorothy Scott, Director of the Australia Centre for Child Protection says in the foreword of “Lives Cut Short”, “It may take a decade or more. It will take political will and it will take community support. But it can be done and it must be done – in memory of the children who have died and for those not yet born.”

Many believe that early intervention must feature heavily in the action plan to make any sort of meaningful impact. In Christchurch, there are two home visiting programmes that are working hard to stop senseless deaths with the meagre resources they have. They are early prevention programmes called Family Help Trust and Early Start, and both work to achieve real results in reducing child abuse and neglect. They target the most at risk families, develop a lasting relationship with the vulnerable mother, and provide wrap around support.

These two programmes originated in the United States from Healthy Start Hawaii which later turned into Healthy Families America (HFA). HFA has 30 years of research and

evaluations to back up its proud claim that it has reduced child abuse and neglect in some states by 77 percent.

New Zealand's only countrywide early prevention programme, Family Start, has had problems and is currently undergoing a political review. Nicky Skerman, who runs a Plunket scheme for teenage mothers, says, "I am sorry to say I found that although New Zealand is improving all the time with services for teenage parents we are nowhere near as well resourced and have not implemented the range of evaluated [early prevention] programmes I saw in the United States."

Instead of focusing on prevention, the major response to child abuse in New Zealand is often to act after the abuse has happened. Better information sharing has been one of the main strategies to try and reduce child abuse. Recently support for mandatory reporting has been gaining momentum, and it is one of the major focuses of the recent Green Paper for Vulnerable Children.

Organisations and individuals working in child advocacy are pressing the Government for more early intervention as the most effective safeguard, claiming that if it is done correctly then New Zealand saves lives, saves money, and encourages positive change for our most vulnerable families.

Dr Annabel Taylor, Senior Social Work Professor at the University of Canterbury, Director of the Te Awatea Violence Research Centre, and Chair of the Christchurch based early prevention programme Family Help Trust is in favour of more programmes with the same emphasis as theirs, "This is the fantastic thing about this programme, we have families that have profiles like the Kahui twins, and yet they are doing well. Why on earth are we not rolling this out?"

Past Government Responses:

Dr Cindy Kiro, former Children's Commissioner and Associate Professor at Massey University says, "We tolerate it [child abuse] by not doing things that we could do to stop it, focusing on some of the wrong things and by not being prepared to address the underlying causes of it."

Governments, both Labour and National, have focused mainly on intervening after the

abuse has happened in the past, and have largely failed to focus on early prevention services that address the underlying causes such as poverty, poor education and limited prospects.

Annabel Taylor says, “A lot of research points to early intervention being critical for addressing the causes of a whole range of problems that we have and until we recognise it and see it as an investment rather than an expense, we’re going to be chasing ourselves and we are going to be investing in prisons and courts and hospitals and all those costs associated with families not functioning well.”

Improved communication between agencies is often held out as a general panacea and has been joined by the newcomer, mandatory reporting. Both of these strategies wait until a child is abused before the state can intervene and Taylor says that is morally incomprehensible. “We leave families to flounder in poverty and dire circumstances, and then we are surprised when a child is abused.”

Information Sharing:

More efficient and better information sharing has been regularly recommended as a solution to try and end child abuse, and indeed many severe abuse cases reveal that multiple agencies were involved with information failing to get passed from one service to the next.

1999: Four-year-old James Whakaruru died at the hands of stepfather Benny Haerewa. Haerewa beat little James to death with the steel pipe of a vacuum cleaner, all because James didn’t call Haerewa, “Daddy”.

James had earlier come in to contact with police, Plunket, social services and doctors during his short four years. In fact, it was reported in the New Zealand Herald in 2009 that James had been taken to health professionals 40 times.

In a report examining James’ death, Roger McClay, Children’s Commissioner at the time, said the lack of communication between health and welfare agencies factored into James’ death, and he called for better sharing of information.

Following on from this, Steve Maharey, then Minister for Social Services and Employment (the former title for the Minister of Social Development), set up a high level Ministerial

group to co-ordinate improved information sharing between agencies. When asked whether in retrospect he thought it was successful, he says that although it took a major step forward to strengthen communication, “there is a tendency to [have to] look at it again because child abuse [is still] a major issue”

2006: The death of Chris and Cru Kahui shocked the nation, their picture featured on every newspaper and television set, and they became the new face of child abuse. Once again, it was revealed that multiple agencies had been involved in their three short months on earth; but none apparently were able to intervene and prevent their deaths. Chris and Cru were two of a set of triplets - the third died in hospital soon after they were born. The hospital had raised concerns at the time of their birth whether the parents, Macsyna King and Chris Kahui, were capable of looking after them.

An investigation into the twins’ death resulted in the Ministry of Social Development announcing that daily meetings were to be held between the police, Child Youth and Family, and non government organisations to try and make sure children stopped “falling through the cracks” of the child protection system.

2010: A nine year old West Auckland girl referred to as “M” (her identity is concealed for her safety) made headlines because of the horrific abuse she suffered.

The Government had changed to a National-led coalition in 2009, and the new Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett lamented, “I feel sick to the pit of my stomach every time I hear of a child who has been hospitalised with severe, non-accidental injuries. It is this country's great shame that so many of our children are abused, hurt and even killed while people have looked the other way.”

Strong words from the Minister, but the response to “M”’s torment was exactly the same as Labour’s earlier. Better information sharing was the major recommendation in a report compiled by former Ombudsman, Mel Smith, into her abuse and its wider implications for New Zealand. The report reveals that 25 agencies were involved in “M”’s life, and systematic failure went so deep that one agency actually reported suspected abuse to the District Health Board instead of Child Youth and Family, or the police.

But Anthea Simcock from Child Matters argues that communication breakdown cannot be fixed by adding the words “greater” and “better,” because the real problem results more from the insufficient training of professionals working with children.

She says, “You can talk about information sharing, collaboration, new frontline intervention services as much as you want, but if you don’t train people when to act and what’s abusive, they won’t know when to share information, or how to collaborate, or how to do their assessments properly.”

“If we don’t train our staff then we might as well forget spending millions and millions of dollars putting new things in place.”

Mandatory Reporting:

Mandatory reporting was one of the other central recommendations by Mel Smith and new legislation is presently being drafted. Paula Bennett warns, “My colleague [then] Minister for Justice, Simon Power, has also introduced legislation that will punish people who witness child abuse and fail to report it to the authorities.”

Like information sharing, mandatory reporting has been heavily debated before. Annette King, former Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, and former Spokesperson for Social Development says, “Mandatory reporting is not a new idea. It had been discussed and consulted on over months and months in the 1980s when the Families Act was being written. It was rejected. I don’t think the reasons why we wouldn’t do it have changed.”

Critics of mandatory reporting say that it will result in an “onslaught” of reports that child protection services won’t have the resources to deal with – making it easier for children like Nia Glassie to continue to be missed. Steve Maharey agrees, “Mandatory reporting will simply result with people feeling like they’ve got tough about the issue, but it will over burden an already over burdened system and do nothing for anybody.”

Not only that, international research also suggests that mandatory reporting won’t save children’s lives. In a report by the American National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children that examines mandatory reporting in different countries, it found, “In America [...] which has the longest established mandatory reporting laws, increases in reporting have not been reflected in a reduction in child deaths.”

Media Campaigns:

A less punitive approach has been a series of advertising campaigns to raise the awareness and to encourage people to speak up against child abuse. The 'it's not ok' campaign in 2007 cost the Government \$3 million on television advertising. One advert showed how violence affects a family with the message 'it's not ok', and the second advert showed how friends and the community should get involved, with the message, 'it is ok to ask for help'.

Jenny Corry, Specialist Advisor for the children's organisation Barnardos says, "It is an initiative that has helped families hugely because it's giving families permission to change their behaviour."



F.3: Media campaign: "It is ok to ask for help"

In recent years the campaign's visibility has diminished, although child abuse has not. The advertising budget was supposed to stretch to 2011 but the last advert aired in 2010 and even then the budget was criticised as minimal.

In a 2007 Dominion Post article, *A Brutal Trial of Failed Promises*, Keri Welham reported, "The advertising budget is less than a tenth of the money spent on anti-smoking advertising in the past 10 years and much less than the additional \$44 million over four years pledged to stop-smoking marketing and programmes in this year's [2007] Budget."

The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children:

In 2011, Paula Bennett hailed child abuse as the “single most important debate that the country can have,” establishing a Green Paper calling for public submissions for ways the Government can cut child abuse and neglect.

Public submissions to the Green Paper closed on 28 February 2012. After over 9,000 submissions, the government has proposed a 10-year action plan on how to better protect New Zealand’s most vulnerable children, which will be released later this year.

In a video promoting the Green Paper, Bennett said, “Too many babies have died, too many of New Zealand’s children are being hurt, abused, neglected and broken. It’s time to stand up and stop this. For all of you that just want to do something, this is it, this is the time.”

Jenny Corry says, “I think anything that focuses on children is a good idea. Anything that provides for the community to have a discussion and debate is valuable.”

As an afterthought she adds, “I hope it doesn’t become another paper that gives the politicians and the leaders in our community the opportunity to have another talk fest, and then no action.”

Steve Maharey says, “We’ve done all the work we need to do. One of the most annoying things about this issue is that we are going around the house again and getting people to talk about it and so on, all this has been done [before].”

Unicef has collated the submissions of over 80 organisations, groups and individuals involved in advocating for child well-being. It is called the “The Briefing Paper – All children thriving, belonging and achieving: What will it take.”

Barbara Lambourn, Advocacy Manager for Unicef says, “It has the strength of all of those organisations behind us and it is a common voice, a unified position that if the Government is serious about child abuse, it will have to go much wider than what the Green Paper suggested.”

The Green Paper suggests that in order to fund services targeted to the most vulnerable families similar to the Kahuis and the Glassies, universal services available to all New Zealand children such as Plunket might be sacrificed.

Lambourn warns, “to erode those in any way is an extremely risky position and may have unintended consequences like we increase problems rather than decreasing them.”

She clarifies that targeted services to the most vulnerable families are equally important, but if funding is cut for universal services then families that are presently at “low risk” of child abuse might be bumped up into the “medium risk” bracket.

A core theme of the Briefing Paper is strong policies for early intervention. It calls for policies to address the underlying causes of child abuse and neglect. It says, “Actions should be based on a whole child approach supporting through coordinated systems all aspects of a child’s well-being including poverty, improving housing, ensuring access to health care and quality education and supporting families and whanau in their role of nurturing children.”

Most experts spoken to for this article hold out a great deal of hope in this latest government initiative along with a certain amount of cynicism that once again the quick fix and big headline may be favoured over preventing the problem before it has happened and tackling some of the issues that cause child abuse in the first place.

Focusing On Prevention:

Current government policy does not neglect early intervention completely. It partly funds a variety of initiatives, and one that focuses on preventing violence at the very beginning before abuse has occurred is the Shaken Baby Prevention Programme.

Based on an American model developed by Professor Mark Dias, it is founded on a one-on-one interaction between health professionals and parents to alert them to the dangers of shaking a baby, and strategies to try and avoid it. Kati Knuuttila coordinates the Shaken Baby Prevention Programme in Auckland and praises Mark Dias’ programme, “What he did over five and a half years was educate 65,000 families, and saw the reduction of Shaken Baby Syndrome by 47 percent”

In 2009, the Ministry of Social Development invested \$280,000 to pilot the programme here for two years; the pilot ended in 2011 and currently the programme is going national.

Health professionals give a DVD and brochures to every new parent in an effort to drive

home the dangers of Shaken Baby Syndrome. Knuttila says, “The challenge for Shaken Baby Syndrome is that it happens in every part of society. You do have some risk groups, like anything you have, but we are very conscious that we don’t want to categorise people; we want to educate everybody.”

She emphasises that Shaken Baby Syndrome doesn’t necessarily result from severe and on-going abuse. All it takes is one stressed out parent and one act of violence. One hard shake is all it takes. In the DVD that accompanies the programme, Patrick Kelly, a paediatrician at Starship Hospital says, “Parents and caregivers go through enormous anguish [after a death caused by Shaken Baby Syndrome], it’s not just the anguish of coping with the loss of the child, but it’s also the anguish of coping with the shame and denial.”

The logic of the universal approach goes with the arbitrary nature of the abuse. It is not necessarily a violent end to a life of torment, but often it is a momentary lapse in judgement by a frustrated parent or caregiver.

But that does not hold true for some other babies, those that end up in national newspapers, such as the Kahuis, and Nia Glassie. For these babies abuse is not random. It is severe and on-going and Non Accidental Head Injury is not an accident, or a momentary lapse of judgment. These high-risk families have members that actually intend to hurt their little ones. And tragically they are often not reached by well-meaning programmes such as the Dias project or other much needed forms of early intervention.

Knuttila admits, “The really vulnerable families are hard to reach and they don’t necessarily give birth in a hospital. They certainly don’t have a proper follow up after delivery, or they don’t attend antenatal classes.”

And any intervention has to be comprehensive to have any lasting effects. Annabel Taylor, Chair of home based visiting programme Family Help Trust, says, “Our view is you have to have whole services dedicated to this group, right from the Government down to the newest social worker on the block. You absolutely have to have a commitment to this group.”

She says successful home visiting programmes target the most vulnerable families by identifying the risk factors that make child abuse far more likely. A vulnerable mother can

be identified before her child is born, and if the right service are available to help then the child has a good chance of growing up violence free.

Child Youth and Family (CYF) and the MSD list major risk-factors as poverty, low educational achievement, being relatively young, poor mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, being a victim of family violence as a child, and early offending.

James Whakaruru's mother, Te Rangi Whakaruru, displayed many of these risk factors. She was 15 years old, living in poverty, and 10 days before she was due to give birth she attempted to slit her wrists. The New Zealand Herald reported that violence stretched over five generations in the Whakaruru family after James' uncle, Rangi Whakaruru, decided to speak out about the continual family violence. Rangi Whakaruru told how his father bashed him with the blunt end of a tomahawk, "I wasn't moving quick enough," he says. "I was doing work. He told me to get on with it and he hit me when I didn't move fast enough."

Had an intense home-based early prevention programme been available for little James' mother that targeted those risk factors, James Whakaruru could be a happy and healthy 17-year-old today.

There are already some effective programmes in New Zealand that claim they could have helped little James; but they are only available in isolated areas, not nationwide. They are based on initiatives in the United States, programmes that have led the way internationally in early prevention.

American Home Visiting Models:

Early prevention, and in particular home-based visiting programmes, has been a major focus in trying to reduce child abuse and neglect in the U.S. Professor Anne Duggan, at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, says, "Popularity of home visiting has waxed and waned over the past 100 years. In the recent past there has been an increase in support for it."

In 2010, Barack Obama passed a new law, the Affordable Care Act. It calls for new investments of \$1.5 billion in grants for states, territories and tribal organisations to establish and expand home visiting schemes.

The heavy investment in home visiting comes about because successful home visiting projects have made an impact. Not only do they cut child abuse and neglect, but increase a range of desired results like education and employment.

Duggan says, “I am a believer in early intervention because the early years of life are so important in setting the life course trajectory.”

Healthy Start Hawaii:

Healthy Start Hawaii was set up in 1985 and is the basis for two successful Kiwi early prevention programmes.

The U.S. scheme worked in two ways. First it identified mothers who were at risk of child abuse and neglect, and the second was home visiting. A checklist system was used to determine eligible mothers with risk factors such as; their young age, unwanted pregnancy, alcohol and substance abuse, a history of family violence, and a low socio-economic status. Ideally this was done by health professionals or Healthy Start risk assessors working with a mother during her pregnancy. Once the mother agreed to the programme, she was enrolled on level one - meaning a home visitor would see her on a weekly basis. Once it was felt family functioning had improved, she would graduate to level two - with a home visitor coming fortnightly, then level three – monthly, and then level four – quarterly. It continued over a period of three to five years depending on individual need.

Initially Healthy Start was thought of as a huge success, “Early randomised trials of home visiting suggested positive impact in preventing child abuse, as measured by hospitalisations for injury,” Duggan says.

The apparent success of Healthy Start Hawaii was noticed in Washington and in 1991 the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect endorsed home visiting programmes as the “single most critical element in a comprehensive approach to prevent child maltreatment”.

However, it was Duggan’s own evaluation research of Healthy Start 1999 that put the future of home visiting programmes in jeopardy. She led a research team to test the effectiveness of Healthy Start Hawaii against a control group, and she concludes, “We found little programme impact in preventing child abuse. The HSP [Healthy Start

Programme] and control groups did not differ in indicators of severe abuse.”

She explains that since 1999, Healthy Start Hawaii has made efforts to improve their services, “Examples of actions taken include adding professional staff to the Healthy Start team, improving training for home visitors and supervisors, and adopting a single parenting curriculum.”

The teething problems at Healthy Start Hawaii were the sorts of issues that many programmes go through, and that is why it is essential to evaluate how successful programmes are to tell what works and what needs improving, says Duggan.

The critical point she made is, “there is strong evidence and national consensus that home visiting can prevent child maltreatment and improve functioning, parenting and child health and development.”

Healthy Families America:

Following on from Healthy Start Hawaii, in 1992 Healthy Families America (HFA) was rolled out nationwide. There are 400 sites across 50 states in America which successfully reduce child abuse and neglect.

Healthy Families America was reworked after Duggan’s research in 1999 to fix its shortcomings. Cydney Wessel, Senior Director of Healthy Families America says, “Overall we learned a great deal from that [Duggan’s] study. We’ve been able to utilise the Healthy Start model to improve it over time.” She attributes much of its present success to their home visitors (or family support workers), and where the programme differs from Healthy Start they say is in the quality of training, and the bond of trust created between family support workers and the mother. It also differs in intensity as visits are made weekly instead of fortnightly, monthly or quarterly.

Family support workers have been likened to a “highly educated Nana”, and research led by Judy Krysik, Associate Professor at Arizona State University, backs that up. Her research finds, “Home visitors in the Healthy Families programme have developed relationships that are akin to that of the traditional extended family. Much of the research on home visitation has pointed to the special relationship as the key to programme effectiveness in enhancing the environment and promoting child well-being.”

Supporters say it is this bond between family support worker and mother that makes the weekly visits carry more weight and respect. As revealed by Krysik's research they give mothers advice and support on the day-to-day needs of taking care of a new baby, but they also encourage positive mother and child interactions and prevent negative parenting.

Cydney Wessel says, "It's crucial our mothers trust their home visitors." She recruits family support workers on their ability to connect and relate to vulnerable mothers. Most are passionate and qualified social workers, but she also recruits people who've been in the same situation and have turned their lives around. "No type of education can teach you that experience," she says.

But that doesn't lessen the needs for intensive training. According to researcher, Kimberly DuMont at Healthy Families New York (HFNY), each staff member goes through a one-week intensive training course to learn the basic skills needed to perform home visits and assessments. They then shadow an experienced home visitor until they are ready to be assigned to work with families on their own. On top of this they receive intensive "wrap around" training on topics like domestic violence, substance abuse, physical abuse and neglect, along with well-baby care and communication skills. Family support workers meet at least one and a half hours each week with their supervisors, and their supervisors observe them on site working with families every three months.

In a HFNY report it claims, “Based on mothers’ reports of parenting practices, HFNY generated...

An 88 percent reduction in the average number of acts of very serious physical abuse - age one.

A 75 percent reduction in the average number of acts of serious physical abuse - age two.

An 80 percent reduction in the average number of acts of serious physical abuse - age seven.

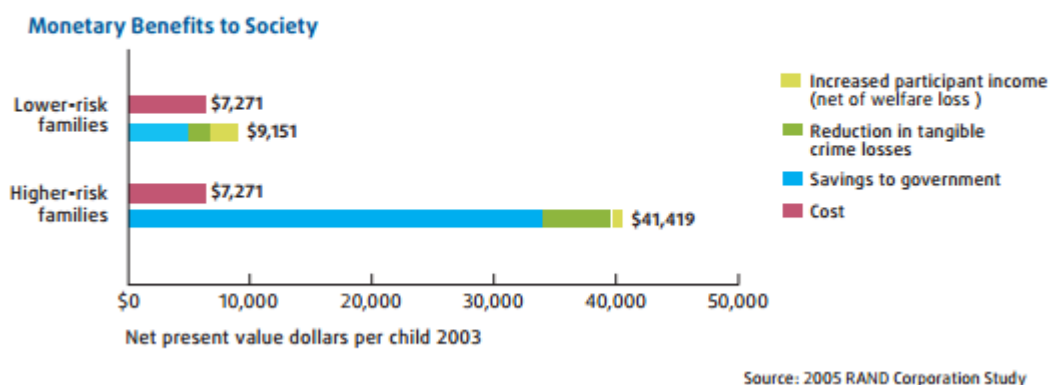
A systematic review of published studies throughout America, updated annually, concluded that home visiting resulted in a 40 percent reduction in child maltreatment incidences, according to research led by Domarina Oshana published in the journal Child Abuse & Neglect.

Home visiting programmes benefit not just the young mothers and their children living in dire circumstances, supporters say the national economy makes large savings from long term costs to the criminal justice system, the health system and conversely increases tax revenue from families getting off welfare and gaining employment.

But these schemes are not cheap and their cost is sometimes identified as one of the reasons politicians shy away from them. The costs rack up because of the intensive nature of the programmes, with the biggest expense being staff with social workers making weekly visits to a family over two years. But one programme boasts that it gets a return of \$5.70 for every dollar spent, its long term benefits far outweighing the short term costs.

It is cost-benefit figures like that that convinced the Obama Administration to invest \$1.5 billion in support for home visitation programmes.

And as the graph below shows, most of the returns come from effective prevention among higher risk families.



F.4: Long term benefits of home visiting programmes.

New Zealand Spin Offs:

While American politicians throw money at home visiting programmes as a successful way to reduce child abuse and neglect, in New Zealand it's a different story. Our main frontline intervention programme, Family Start, suffers constant criticism for not being effective enough and other home visiting programmes are only based in small pockets of New Zealand.

Family Start:

Family Start is the only national programme of its kind in New Zealand. A National Government set up Family Start in 1998. At first only three sites were opened, in Whangarei, Rotorua, and West Auckland. In 2000 a further 13 sites were added over the North and South Islands and now they are spread throughout the country.

It was part of the then Government's Strengthening Families initiative developed in the mid 1990s, aimed at improving child development and well-being, as well as parents' personal and family circumstances and their parenting capability and practice. A home visitor connects with a family ideally when the mother is in her second or third trimester of pregnancy or at least before a child is 6 months old. They then work with the family until the child turns five.

The MSD [Ministry of Social Development] commissioned a review of Family Start in 2009.

The Minister was concerned that the service was spending \$31 million of tax payers' money and it was not justified by the apparently limited success. Paula Bennett says, "We need to make sure that it comes back to core principles - protecting children from abuse and neglect, making families better able to cope and increasing health and education outcomes for children"

The Minister says she wants Family Start to target the most at need, "I believe in home visiting. But we can do better. I expect [providers] to be far more consistent in their practices. There are around eight programmes that are excellent and have quite amazing service that they are giving, there is a big group in the middle that are doing okay but could do better, and there are seven or eight that are probably doing harm."

Of these seven or eight centres that failed to produce positive outcomes, five are not getting their contracts renewed. Five communities have now lost the social support that they once had. Anthea Simcock criticises the cuts, "She [Paula Bennett] is trying to pull it back [...] but that is going to change a whole heap of cultures that have got used to this being a support organisation."

Jenny Corry from the children's organisation Barnardos, agrees, "It's unfortunate for the local clients, I think, when an agency, which has been a provider of that programme, has all of a sudden been taken away. A whole new relationship has to form with a new service provider."

Another criticism of the Government's actions is the quality of the one and only evaluation of Family Start carried out in 2005. The quality of the data collected for the evaluation was so poor that even the MSD themselves admit, "We cannot conclusively say how much benefit the programme had for participants or whether any gains observed in the evaluation would have been achieved without all or parts of the intervention."

Professor David Fergusson, Director of Christchurch's Health and Development Study, says, "[The Family Start evaluation] cost a lot of money, about \$400,000 of the public's money was tipped down the toilet doing that evaluation because the ministry refused to listen to good advice [on how to conduct an evaluation]."

One major difference between home visiting programmes in the United States and those in New Zealand is quality research. Healthy Families America has 30 years of extensive

evaluations behind them to back up its effectiveness or otherwise.

Paula Bennett admits, “Historically there has been little or no evaluation of New Zealand’s social services. This Government is putting measures in place to better evaluate these services to find out what works and what doesn’t but the fact is that we are years behind where we should be in terms of service evaluation.”

Early Start:

While the national programme is under fire for failing to generate enough positive outcomes for children, there are two programmes that say they succeed in effectively reducing child abuse and neglect. They are child focused and instead of looking at a family unit as being “broken” and needing to be “fixed”, they are supportive in addressing the underlying causes behind child abuse.

Early Start began before Family Start, in 1995, but it is based only in Christchurch. It is based on Healthy Families America and targets the top 15 percent most at risk families. Mothers get referred to Early Start by midwives, GPs, social workers, Plunket and self referrals, and a family support worker meets with the family weekly.

Early Start point to their successes which they say includes almost all children being enrolled with a GP and attending early childhood education as well as 92 percent of babies immunised and seen regularly by a well-child provider. But the major result they point to is the reduction of child abuse and neglect. In all comparisons to a control group, they say Early Start clients showed fewer cases of severe child abuse and neglect. By three years of age, 11.7 percent of the families in the control group had committed severe physical abuse compared with 4.4 percent of families in Early Start.

Hildegard Grant, Manager of Early Start, says, “We are actually thrilled with that outcome, and it seems to be that the children that were injured were injured by new male partners when he comes into that family. We’ve always known that a change of males within a really vulnerable family system is a great risk factor for children”

Grant points to three things that she says make Early Start so successful. A field trial (evaluation research) which was set up to run alongside the service right from the very beginning, the parenting programme they use and excellent supervision.

Early Start's field trial evaluated the programme from day one, unlike Family Start's one suspect evaluation in 2005. "When working on a field trial it's like showing your underwear drawer to a researcher that comes in and has a look. We welcomed the fact that our service was scrutinised rather than being reactive and not liking it."

"We discarded the things that didn't work, and focused on things that actually made a difference. It was not easy because as a family support worker you really believe that what you do is best and then to be told that what you've actually done hasn't made a difference at all and that you should do it a different way is hard."

The parenting programme that Early Start uses is called Partners in Parenting (PIP), an education programme again first developed in the United States. It teaches parents skills such as self-esteem, better communication and discipline and it is specifically designed for the needs of teenage mothers. Grant says, "The main thing is the parenting programme, we have a very systematic approach, we focus on child health, we focus on general health, and we are very much child centred."

But alongside a parenting programme there needs to be the right people with the passion and training to engage the mother so that she trusts and respects the advice of the family support worker. Grant suggests that this is something that Family Start was lacking in its parenting programme. "If you are looking at content they are pretty much the same. You know, to be a good mum, do this, do this, do this. It is how you deliver it and which order that makes a difference."

And lastly she puts the success of Early Start down to excellent supervision. Working with mothers in very stressful circumstances, she says it's easy to become too involved. Having supervision on a regular basis allows the family worker to remain objective and not get sucked in to the chaos that some of these mothers face.

"I'm supervised on a weekly basis," Grant says, "mainly because the work is so difficult and we need to ensure that the Family Support Worker stays outside the family dynamic."

*

Here is a home based early prevention programme that its supporters say is successful in reducing child abuse and neglect, yet it is only based in one metropolitan centre,

Christchurch. Grant believes the reasons are political. Even though Early Start began before the national programme, the good ideas of Early Start were not accepted by the Government.

The then National Government led by Jim Bolger visited Early Start in the mid 90's because they were interested in investing more in early intervention. Grant says, "Policy makers came to visit Early Start and took away all our good advice and turned it into something different." This came to be known as Family Start, now being reviewed because the Government believes it has deviated too far from its roots.

Grant says, "When I saw the design of Family Start I knew right away that it wouldn't work because they hadn't grasped the way that Early Start was set up."

"The whole idea was if you piloted something and if you find that the pilot works then you will research it and do proper evaluations with a control study. Then once you have done that, then you roll it out."

"Unfortunately the politicians got hold of it and it became an election issue. Once that happens then it's out of your hands."

Early Start receives most of its funding from the MSD, but only has funding to help 379 families. There are 1,000 families in Christchurch, says Grant, that are in the 15 percent most at risk group. She would like to see more Early Start sites to help vulnerable families, "because then you will see a real difference."

Although five of Family Start's nationwide sites have been closed and retendered, Paula Bennett is not interested in replacing them with Early Start. Instead she is confident that Family Start can be improved, "Family Start is an excellent programme that can really make a difference for struggling families."

Family Help Trust:

Family Help Trust takes reaching the most vulnerable families to the next level, and targets the top five percent most at risk Kiwi families; it too is based only in Christchurch.

Annabel Taylor, chair of Family Help Trust, says, "What we're doing is operating a bit of social triage. It's a bit like the earthquake where we have to triage the needs of the people. Focus on the highest most critical needs first. We sort of regard this as an emergency

situation.”

Family Help Trust was actually formerly part of Early Start but saw the need to go even further and specifically target the most critically at risk. Taylor says that the babies that often end up dead and on the front covers of our newspapers get missed by services that target the 15 percent most at risk.

“We certainly work with families like the Kahui twins, really similar profiles. Our families are not silly, they’re not silly. They know they have a raft of issues going on. They need a complex response.” Under this programme midwives use a risk assessment tick box system, and if a mother gets 10 ticks or more she’s in the top five percent risk group and the midwife can refer her to Family Help Trust.

The risk assessment covers areas like teenage pregnancy, social isolation, drug and alcohol abuse, living in restricted situations (i.e. on the benefit), where there is a history of violence, or a violent partner.

“It’s all voluntary of course [...] our mums know full well they are on the road to nowhere, and that it’s highly likely with this new baby that the same circumstances will apply,” says Taylor.

The cycle of abuse can be broken however with a service that works ‘positively right from the get go.’

“New mums are keen to make a new start. Our whole approach is very much around having a fresh start,” adds Taylor.

The mother and the agency enter into an agreement until the child is five. “It’s the only really long term service available,” she says. Adding that it is important that the service sticks by them in case a family “relapses.” “Mum might have a criminal charge hanging over her and low and behold she suddenly gets pulled into account. That’s crisis time where we would want to be working with her about problem solving for that situation.” She says there needs to be “an agency that knows them really well so they don’t have to go through a whole new process.”

The home visitor from Family Help Trust makes contact with the mum even before the baby is born, then afterwards until that family no longer needs extra support, sometimes it

is 12 months, sometimes it is two years, but Taylor says it's pretty uncommon to work with a family after three years.

"In that time our workers work on a lot of practical issues. Things like whether there's a safety gate at the top of the stairs, whether the property is fenced, whether they've got a dog that's safe, whether the parents have got their licence to drive."

Apart from being a positive long term service that sticks by high risk families, Family Help Trust also recruit social workers with the ability to relate with clients who have often had a "rough-as-guts" journey.

"Our clients are gang members, they've got histories of imprisonment, they often live with highly dangerous men. Our workers face up to some pretty stressful situations every day."

"We recruit social workers that have been around the block and know the difficulties our families face. Often they have gone through a bit of a journey themselves in terms of dealing with their own issues, and they've come out the other side," says Taylor.

An independent evaluation of the programme was done in 2009, and the key results were an increase in children's safety and a reduction of family violence. Family violence dropped from 25.4 percent to 6.8 percent, and partner psychological abuse dropped from 40.7 percent to just 6.8. The main cause of the drop was put down to women having confidence to end relationships with violent and abusive partners. The evaluation says that this is one of the most important positive outcomes because, "current adult partners who are violent towards each other are from three to nine times more likely to abuse their children."

As well as reducing violence between partners, Taylor says that the key outcome would be the reduction of child abuse. She says, "We certainly impacted in reducing the hitting of children and the more obvious abuse that was taking place before we intervened."

The evaluation says, "On entering the care of service, 14 percent of the mothers in the research sample admitted striking or shaking a child in care. By two years the incidence of this had decreased to zero."

Once again here is an apparently successful programme but only a small percentage of the population is benefiting from it.

Taylor says, "We have been in conversation with both Labour and National about rolling

out this model more widely and we are really keen to do this, but the whole business seems to be fraught with the inability to act.”

She believes the inability to act stems from there being “only so much money in the pot” and the decision makers are cautious and critical because the home visiting programme that was rolled out nationwide had not been as successful as they expected.

I went back to Paula Bennett to ask specifically why the two programmes, Early Start and Family Help Trust were not considered for extra funding given their apparent success and the closure of several Family Start centres. But after numerous approaches to speak to the Minister or a Ministry spokesperson, they made only the following email response, “There are no plans to make any changes to the funding of programmes you mention. There are many effective early intervention programmes running around the country and the Government has shown a strong commitment to those programmes making a real difference to vulnerable families, especially in the area of prevention of child abuse.”

The Solutions?

Many of those spoken to for this article complain successively that our governments fail to succeed because they are always looking for a quick fix when no quick fix exists. Former Labour party Minister Steve Maharey says, “people know what the issues are, they know what needs to be done, the issue is doing them and doing them in a co-ordinated way over a sustained period of time to get on top of the issue.”

Anthea Simcock says that although the Government would like to focus on the long term, they respond to what the public wants - and what the public want are results. “I think they are very much aware of it [the benefits of early intervention], but it is how to institute those things without being kicked out because you didn’t achieve something in three years.”

She continues, “I think it makes it difficult. I think that they are aware. I think they would like to do something but I think they’re a little bit caught. They do less of what is

workable and effective because they have got to spend their money on the other areas as well.”

Jacinda Adern, opposition Spokesperson for Social Development agrees that the Government’s focus is on what they can achieve in their political term, “The Government has decided to focus in on things like information sharing and mandatory reporting because those are things that the central Government has control over.”

But the Minister, Paula Bennett, insists that this is the government that is going to make a difference for vulnerable children; no more quick fixes and short-term solutions. “I believe a long term approach is needed to address this country’s shocking abuse and neglect record, so I have intentionally proposed a 10 year Children’s Action Plan to be released this year.”

But in tough economic times will the Government be prepared to put huge resources into areas that will not show instant or even short term gains?

Every Child Counts is a coalition of organisations (including Barnardos and Plunket) that advocates for children to be at the centre of government policy. In one of their research reports it says, “Prevention has large upfront costs. Even if economic and social return justifies the investment, the cohorts paying will not receive much of the resulting benefit. Most of the benefit is likely to accrue to the current generation of children.”

Hildegard Grant from Early Start says home visiting programmes are expensive to start up and maintain, “You’re pouring quite a bit of money into individual families. If I use the example of a family enrolled with Early Start, they would be receiving two to two and a half hours per week home visiting one on one.”

Annabel Taylor from Family Help Trust believes, “[New Zealanders] tend to regard spending on children as an expense rather than an investment. The returns are huge in terms of the economy in future years [if] invested wisely in children.”

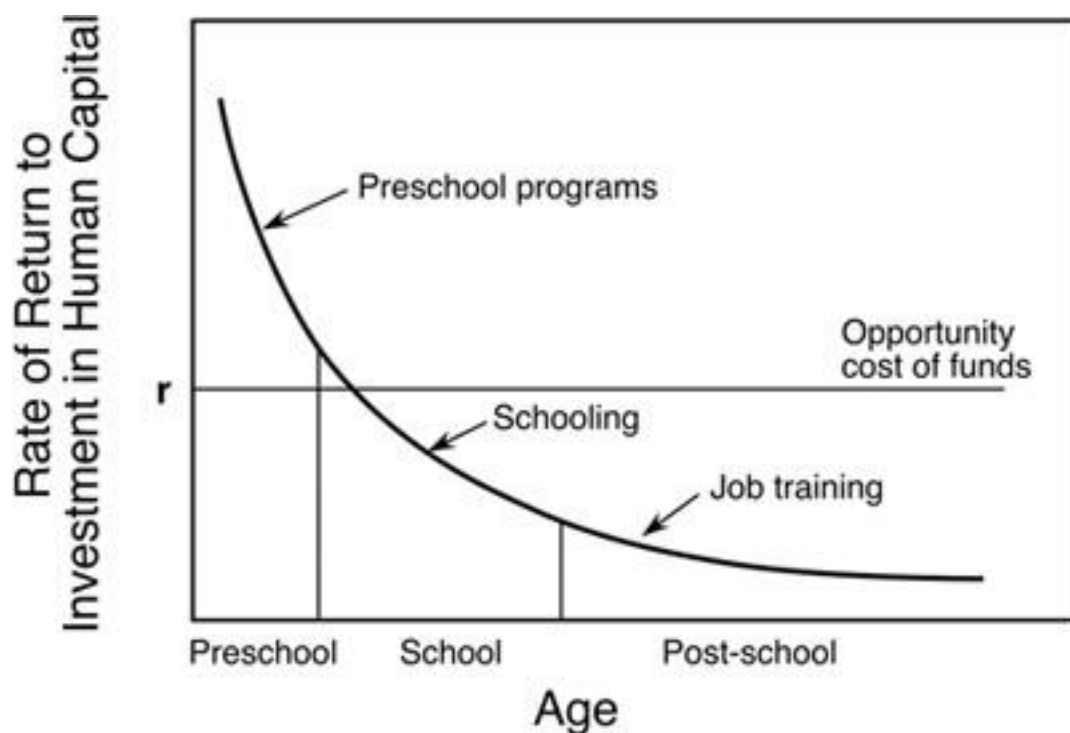
And the experts say you can't start early enough. What Early Start and Family Help Trust say they have in common is that they assess the risk factors for child abuse even before birth. These are the factors that caused Te-Rangi Whakaruru turmoil as a young soon to be mother – social isolation, no support, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues and a history of family violence. Anthea Simcock says, "All sorts of things that you know before the child's born that the midwife could know and make a referral."

Jenny Corry from Barnardos agrees, "I mean all the research shows that if you put the money in the first three years then you're away" and Plunket CEO, Jenny Price, echoes that "evidence shows that those first three years are critical in a child's development."

The Ministry of Social Development themselves showcase research on early intervention and refers to potential savings based on evaluations to American home visiting programmes. Their website notes, "Taking into account savings in criminal justice, educational attainment, benefit savings and increased revenue from taxes, suggests an economic return of between 15 and 17 percent. Similar gains may be possible in New Zealand."

Family Help Trust's own evaluation report in 2009 estimates that it spends roughly \$3,000 on each family, and in regards to preventing a "lifetime of adult offending" in the criminal and the justice system they estimate that they save \$25 for every one dollar spent. Early Start has also seen a 10 percent drop in their clients on welfare.

The graph (*next page*) shows potential savings from investing in the early years with big payoffs coming when the child enters school and job training.



F.5: Investing in the early years pays off when the child reaches school and job training. *Source: Family Help Trust evaluation report, 2009.*

All eyes will be on the Government's 10 Year Action Plan when it's announced later in the year. Will early intervention get better support and what will be done to treat the causes of child abuse, a range of socio economic problems difficult to fix. And if there is re-prioritising where will it happen and where might cuts be made. Already there is a rearguard action that warns against sacrificing universal services for all children in favour of targeted services for only vulnerable children, because it may have the unintended consequences of pushing children at "low risk" into higher scales of risk.

Annabel Taylor worries, "None of us would want to push families at marginal risk and [who] rely on universal services into a more at risk position."

Hildegard Grant agrees, "I think universal and targeted [services] needs to run side by side." She says that part of a family support worker's job is to connect vulnerable mothers to universal services such as child care while the mother furthers her education or is at work.

The early intervention home visiting programmes featured in this article in both the U.S. and New Zealand have differences in staffing, the ratio of visits, who they target and their evaluation systems. But apart from Family Start, they work well and have solid evaluations to back them up and keep them on track.

Taylor from Family Help Trust says, “Our mothers have such potential, why don’t we support that, why don’t we explore that? Rather than wait for the incident to happen which I think is incomprehensible.”

This year the Government will decide if these programmes or something similar will be the focus of policy in the 10 year action plan. Paula Bennett “feels sick to the pit of [her] stomach” at the rate of abuse suffered by kiwi kids, and this year she has the chance to do something about that.

Jenny Corry says she hopes so, “A lot of people, a lot of organisations, a lot of individuals, a lot of groups who are absolutely seeped in child advocacy work have put a lot of time and effort into this response to the Green Paper and if the Government doesn’t listen to that then it would be really unfortunate. I mean Unicef, Barnardos, Every Child Counts, Plunket, they all know what they’re talking about. I do hope that the Government steps up and takes note.”

She sighs, “I’m trying to not sound cynical.” And she accepts that the Government cannot do the job on their own, “It’s about all of us doing it better. Our children are about our future, as a community, as a country, as a planet. That’s a huge responsibility to put on them but we have to give them every opportunity that we can. Every child born on this universe has the potential to contribute in an amazing way and it’s our responsibility.”

And perhaps New Zealanders as a whole do take our responsibilities too lightly to keep our children safe and free from violence. Family Court judge, Michael Brown, noted sadly that, “A society gets the level of violence it’s prepared to tolerate.” Anthea Simcock agrees that New Zealand as a society does not get involved enough. She says, “In Spain, people wouldn’t think twice about going up to a stranger in the street and

saying, “Look your baby’s cold.” Or “Your baby needs to be home in bed now.” They give parents advice [and] they offer a lot of support.” She says in New Zealand, “People don’t get involved. They don’t compliment parents when they see them doing great things and they don’t take responsibility.”

The truth is, we must all take responsibility for the child abuse that happens around us. We must not actively ignore it when we see the warnings signs or passively conclude that there is nothing we can do about it, which sends all the wrong signals to our politicians.

Malcolm Evans’ cartoon was published a decade ago yet it still rings true.



F.6: Malcolm Evans, 2002. Accountability when a child dies.

After many years advocating for children Dr Cindy Kiro concludes that, “We have to have a multi-pronged approach, any one approach isn’t going to solve it. Governments can’t solve it, and families alone can’t solve it. The first thing is to recognise that we are all in it together and finger pointing isn’t going to get us there.”

So, in memory of James, Chris, Cru, Nia, M and all of the thousands of others it will be hoped that the ten year plan will get us there, and produce action at last.

EXEGESIS

Investigative Journalism and Child Abuse.

Investigative journalism is often praised as a “noble art” (Nord, 2007, p. 520) because it has the power to create social reform, and change the world for the better.

Investigative journalism has mobilised people to act and caused political leaders to resign, freed innocent people from jail, caused amendments in policy documents, and in general, ended senseless and unnecessary suffering (Hunter et al, 2009). The best investigative journalism digs deeper than general reports to the heart of the issue, and discovers the truth (De Burgh, 2008). Lipmann (2006) writes, “The function of the news is to signalise an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act” (p. 116). It is an investigative journalist’s job to thoroughly research an issue and make sense of it so that citizens can make informed decisions within their own communities and the world that they live (Adam & Clark, 2006). After thoroughly researching how to reduce severe physical child abuse my investigative journalism piece recommends that early home visiting programmes when done correctly can substantially reduce physical abuse. I aim to write an investigation to showcase this in the hope that this information will create public debate in favour of early intervention being the main focus of government policy.

Although the practice of investigative journalism has honourable connotations, it is almost invisible in mainstream media. The digital revolution of the internet has stolen both audience and advertisers and the future of the commercial business of news production, not to mention investigative journalism, is unstable in this new environment. The advertising industry and audience move online in their masses, “Forty percent of Americans now cite the Internet as a daily news source for national and global news, topping newspapers (at 35 percent) for the first time” (Doctor, 2010, p. 2). News agencies are struggling to figure out how to make money in this new digital era (Doctor, 2010). It has caused traditional media agencies to make drastic cuts, axing reporters, but also changing the way that news is produced. In this new media environment investigative journalism is often neglected because it is “expansive and

risky compared to infotainment and recycling press releases” (Nord, 2007, 517). It also requires time, a commodity that the digital age of news consumption, where stories are instant, simply cannot afford. Universities may become a haven for investigative journalists because academics are free from the constraints of the current political economy of news (Hager, 2012).

In the discourse of social work, the media are often analysed as a negative influence on practice (Connolly & Doolan, 2007), even though investigative journalism has the power to change things for the better. Ayre (2001) suggests that the media in the UK has created a climate of fear, blame, and mistrust which is now endemic in the field of child abuse, and Connolly and Doolan (2007) argue that conditions in New Zealand are not much better. Ironically the main agency that the media blames is Child Youth and Family (CYF), the very agency in charge of protecting New Zealand’s most vulnerable children (Connolly & Doolan, 2007). Another criticism is that media reports are selected so that it seems that only Maori are the ones that commit child abuse. This misrepresentation led social work lecturer, Raema Merchant (2010), to research whether this was fair. She concludes that there is an “in built ethnic or social bias in the reporting of child abuse” (p.6). Lastly, reports are often chosen for their sensationalised content. In the case of Nia Glassie, the media focused on the bizarre and unusual circumstances of her abuse (Merchant, 2010). My investigation was completed outside the commercial newsroom environment and avoids these pitfalls with the ultimate aim of social reform by influencing policies that focus on early intervention. For this to happen, I plan to publish it in mainstream media to open it up to public debate.

Why I chose the topic of child abuse:

Before beginning post graduate studies, I volunteered at an afterschool programme called Aldea Yanapay in Cusco, Peru. The programme taught values and principles such as tolerance and respect (Valencia, n.d). The children idealised the director Yuri Valencia, and they felt able to talk openly and honestly about their lives. Valencia prompted them to talk about the abuse they suffer. Daily beatings by their parents were a normal part of their lives and the volunteers were there to tell them that it did

not have to be that way. I wanted to tell them that in New Zealand we value and respect children and instead of using our fists, we use our words to solve problems - but I knew for a large part of New Zealand, this was not the case. Anthea Simcock from the New Zealand organisation Child Matters (2010) writes, “While the exact extent of child abuse deaths is not clear it is variously estimated that eight to thirteen die each year and thousands more are injured, sometimes physically and almost always emotionally” (p. 16). The horrific statistics on child abuse were no longer numbers and figures. I had met the victims of child abuse in Peru, and at the risk of sounding cliché, I wanted to come home and make a difference for the vulnerable children of New Zealand and search for a solution. Investigative journalism was the perfect medium to showcase my findings because if published, this article could open up the debate to the public and hopefully it will put early intervention and home visiting programmes at the top of the political agenda.

Defining Child Abuse:

Kolko (2002) writes that it is hard for health professionals to determine what injury has resulted from child abuse because a judgement call must be made between the risk factors and the severity of the injury: “Thus there are blurred distinctions between abusive and sub-abusive or non-abusive behaviour” (p. 22) making child abuse difficult to define. Shaffer, Huston and Egeland (2008) write:

“Despite this widespread consideration of child maltreatment as a risk factor for later maladaptation, numerous methodological problems complicate this field of study, most especially the definition and identification of maltreatment, which result in varying estimates of the incidence and psychological sequelae of child maltreatment” (p. 683).

As well as it being difficult to define, there are five subtypes of abuse that can be distinguished – physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment, emotional abuse, and exploitation (WHO, 2012). Within the course of my investigation, I chose to focus on severe physical abuse because this was highlighted most by the media. Therefore the definition of physical abuse that guided this investigation comes from New Zealand legislation. The Children Young Persons and their Families Act 1989

s.2 defines physical abuse as “physical assault on a child by using or threatening to use physical force that results in physical pain injury or confinement. One of the most severe forms of physical abuse is violence against a child or children that leads to a fatality” (legislation.govt, 2012, s.2). The main examples I use within my journalistic piece are Chris and Cru Kahui (died from non-accidental head injuries on 18 June 2006)¹ and Nia Glassie (died from non-accidental head injuries on 3 August 2007) because they captured the hearts of New Zealanders. The media had extensively covered their stories which allowed me to focus on solutions rather than spending the word count detailing the specifics of these cases.

Methods:

Hypothesis based enquiry:

Hunter et al (2009) have written a manual for investigative journalists to follow. At the very beginning of the investigation, they recommend creating a hypothesis and verifying it. Hypothesis based enquiry is used in business, social science and police work. Journalists have adapted this method “to work through [its] implications for the journalistic process, and for the goals of investigative journalism” (Hunter et al, 2009, p. 2). It is an efficient way to conduct an investigation because it gives a clear and definitive starting point, similar to a research question of an essay. It can either be confirmed or denied, and as research continued, my hypothesis also developed. An earlier hypothesis I formed was: *The reason that New Zealand has a disturbing rate of child abuse is because we tolerate our inherently violent culture. Politicians, police, Child Youth and Family and community initiatives can only go so far, but until we stop tolerating it, nothing will change.* Although there was a sufficient amount of evidence to support this hypothesis, it focused on blame, a criticism that I wanted to avoid. It blamed the public for tolerating violence in New Zealand society, and it aimed to change public behaviour towards it. After talking to Dr Annabel Taylor, senior social work lecturer at Canterbury University and Chair of the intense home based prevention programme, Family Help Trust, I realised there was a more important

¹ The coroner’s report detailing the deaths of Chris and Cru Kahui was released when I was due to submit my thesis and therefore it is not mentioned in my article.

hypothesis that focused on solutions: *the Government's main responses to child abuse have focused on intervention rather than prevention. Yet early prevention in the form of intense home based visiting programmes, when they are done correctly, are effective in heavily reducing child abuse.*

Both interviews and research supported my hypothesis. My findings are showcased more thoroughly in my journalism article, however I will summarise the theory here. Home visiting programmes when they are implemented correctly work to reduce child abuse and neglect as well as achieve other positive outcomes like increasing education and employment as well as reducing health issues such as smoking and reducing crime (Dawley, 2005; Krysik, LeCroy & Ashford, 2008; Olds, 2006; Oshana, 2005 & Rodriguez, Dumont, Mitchell-Herfeld, Walden & Green, 2010). They are effective because they determine the causes that make child abuse more likely, called "risk factors", even before a child is born and influence positive change within the family right from the beginning (Olds, 2006). Connolly and Doolan (2007) list the associated risk factors as poverty, low educational achievement, being relatively young, poor mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, being a victim of family violence as a child, and early offending. Home visiting programmes work to reduce those risk factors as well as teaching parents to nurture and play with their child, and connecting families to other services (Rodriguez et al, 2010).

There are two home visiting programmes in Christchurch - Early Start, and Family Help Trust – that dramatically reduce child abuse and neglect by being a support system for highly vulnerable families. The Early Start evaluation report (2005) shows that child abuse rates are consistently lower for Early Start families compared to a control group. One example of this is by 3 years of age 11.7 percent of the families in the control group had committed severe physical abuse compared with 4.4 percent of families in Early Start (Fergusson, Horwood & Ridder, 2005). Family Help Trust (2009) evaluation report also shows positive results: "On entering the care of service, 14 percent of the mothers in the research sample admitted striking or shaking a child in care. By two years the incidence of this had decreased to zero" (Turner, 2009, p. 1). Unfortunately, both programmes are only available to a limited number of families in Christchurch, while the national programme, Family Start, has had five of its site's contracts

cancelled by the Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett, for failing to produce enough positive outcomes (Collins, 2011).

My article highlights the need to implement early intervention services correctly and for it to be the centre of policy in the upcoming 10 year action plan for vulnerable children.

Although the vast majority of evidence supported my hypothesis both in research and in interviews, there was one piece of research of concern. It stated that one early home visiting programme in the United States called Healthy Start Hawaii offered limited results when it came to reducing child abuse and neglect. Anne Duggan et al (2004) concluded, "We found little program impact in preventing child abuse. The HSP [Healthy Start Programme] and control groups did not differ in indicators of severe abuse." (P. 614). Duggan's finding was of concern because New Zealand's national programme, Family Start, was based on Healthy Start Hawaii, and the Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett, used Duggan's research to justify not renewing five Family Start contracts (Collins, 2011). Duggan's research is transparent in my article. In fact, after finding this hole in my hypothesis, I interviewed Anne Duggan and spoke to her about her research. She had since completed a follow up that has not been published yet. It is titled, "Setting the Record Straight on Healthy Start" and it states, "There is strong evidence and national consensus that home visiting can prevent child maltreatment and improve family functioning, parenting, and child health and development" (Duggan, A. Personal communication, July 20, 2012) She sent the information through to Healthy Families Hawaii in an internal memo when the Government was going to eliminate their funding from the state budget. After investigating Duggan's research thoroughly I found that her research was actually another piece of evidence to verify my hypothesis in support for home visiting programmes instead of working against it.

Interviews:

The core of any journalism story is interviews. I performed semi-structured interviews with a set list of questions, however I allowed for flexibility and deviated at times to ask follow up questions or clear up confusion. For investigative journalism preparation is vital. Kathryn Ryan, journalist for National Radio's nine to noon, advises, "For

interviews relating to investigative stories, or questions of accountability, preparation is absolutely critical. The interview process is similar to that of a lawyer in court [...] ideally you never ask a question you don't know the answer to" (Tully, 2008, p. 111). The more prepared I was, the more confident I was to ask counter questions and ask for clarity when needed. Sedorkin and McGregor (2002) write, "the better the interview, the better the information and the stronger the story" (p. 2), however there are often factors outside the journalist's control that may get in the way of obtaining an interview. Journalists struggle to get past the numerous public relations (PR) specialists to talk to political leaders and CEOs. Jon White and Julia Hobsbawm (2007) describe the relationship between the journalist and PR practitioner as 'love-hate', and while, in the past, they may have been mutually dependant on each other to get information out to the public the power dynamic is shifting. They write, "Journalists no longer control information and the interpretation of information to the extent that they may have in the past" (p.286).

An example I encountered of the power struggle between the journalist and PR practitioner was when I tried to obtain an interview with the Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett. It was especially difficult because of her media advisor, Luke Goldsmith. At first it seemed like it was going to be straightforward, however he delayed the interview constantly. Months later I went to see Paula Bennett in person while she was seeking support and submissions for the "Green Paper for Vulnerable Children" and asked for an interview then. She said to send my questions in an email, and that she would then respond to them. Sedorkin and McGregor (2002) write about the draw backs of email interviews: "Email interviews lack spontaneity allowing the interviewee time to consider and edit their answers with no direct pressure to answer the actual questions" (p. 17). Some responses from Bennett were lazily answered by referring me to a different question. However, in a news environment where PR practitioners are increasingly difficult to get past I felt lucky to get a response at all. Had this investigation been conducted in a commercial news environment with the pressure of a deadline, Luke Goldsmith's constant dismissal of an interview would mean that the story would either have been cancelled, or run without the most important voice in it. Conducting it within a university environment gave me the luxury to be persistent, a quality that all good journalists must possess (Tully, 2008).

A similar problem occurred when requesting an interview with a representative from Family Start, the same struggle with PR practitioners existed and the flow of information was distorted. Nicky Hager, investigative journalist, writes:

“We live in an era where the public spaces are being crowded with paid spokespeople, spin and trickery; where news and political discussion are being polluted by the glib outpourings of ever growing numbers of PR people; and where the public spaces available for real democratic activity are drying up” (Hager, 2012).

Information was intercepted by “spin and trickery” once again. I had an Official Information Act (OIA) request in with the Ministry relating to the cost of child abuse in New Zealand - under the Official Information Act, 1982, a request must be answered within 20 days (the Ministry of Justice, 2012). When I requested an interview with Family Start, Senior Advisor, Sebastian Hunkel responded:

“It appears to me that your OIA request and the request for information on Family Start are inherently linked. As such, could you please put your question around Family Start in writing and send them through to Tanya Howlett [the Manager of Official Information] for further processing?” (Hunkel, S. Personal communication, March 14, 2012).

I explained that the two requests were not linked and that I was merely requesting an interview, but the Ministry were staunch that the two topics were related and no amount of persistence would prevail. My questions were answered as part of an OIA request but the flow of information was very much controlled by the Ministry. With PR practitioners dominating the relationship between themselves and journalists it is becoming increasingly difficult to practice investigative journalism, and some argue that it is a dying art in this new digital era of news making (Nord, 2007).

The reason that the power dynamic between the PR practitioner and the journalist is shifting in favour of the PR practitioner is because of the digital revolution of the news. The internet has provided a platform for information to be disseminated without going through traditional gatekeepers such as news editors, and PR practitioners can instead make use of the internet to spread their message (White & Hosbawn, 2007). In 2012, a

major goal of a PR practitioner is to have their message at the top of a Google search or “trending” on Twitter and to keep up, journalism needs to adapt to online with the same goals.

Theoretical Framework:

The political economy of the news in the twenty tens:

The political economy approach examines the power dynamics between the production, distribution and the consumption of the news (Wasko, Murdock & Sousa, 2011). Mosco (1998) writes, “We call it the political economy of information because one particularly useful way to understand social change today is to examine how power is used to shape the production, distribution and the use of information as a commodity” (p. 3). The biggest social change in the twenty tens is the mobility of the internet. It can now be accessed through mobile phones, tablets, laptops - even ipods - and both the internet and its accessibility have impacted on the way the news is produced, distributed and consumed. Wasko, Murdock and Sousa (2011) describe the twenty tens as the “information age” but while information is more accessible, the quality of it is dwindling.

A development of the internet is that traditional media whose format supported long form investigative journalism such as newspapers are slowly becoming a thing of the past in favour of online news content. Doctor (2010) states, “roughly ten years after the emergence of online sites, the first war is over, and newspapers have lost” (p. 76). In this online news environment there is no clear business model to make money. Traditional print newspapers had a clear model with 20 percent of their revenue generated from circulation, and 80 percent from advertising (Doctor, 2010). Online, advertisers are spoilt for choice and with “cookies” that can track consumers’ page history making it easy to target a specific audience (Doctor, 2010). No longer do advertisers have to purchase expensive space in newspapers and hope that their ad gets seen. Google adverts have also given advertisers the option to only pay when a consumer clicks on an advert making advertising economical with more rewards (Wasko, Murdock & Sousa, 2011). *The New Zealand Herald* has an online edition, however access is free and advertisers are paying a fraction of the price. In this new

media environment where money is scarce the media industry has had to make major cuts. Doctor (2010) writes in the “last decade newspapers shrunk not only in staff, but in height, width, weight, and – most important – news” (p. 44).

Little money can be spared for investigations. Investigative reporter, Pat Booth completed his 7 year investigation into the murders of Harvey and Jeannette Crewe in his own time. He says that investigative journalism is “tough, long, hard and sometimes expensive” (Sedorkin & McGregor, 2002, p. 34). These are four adjectives that new media simply cannot afford. Doing this investigation as part of my masters degree might have been the only way to produce journalism of this length (around 9000 words) and quality (20 interviews as well as extensive research) in this new political economy of news production (Wasko, Murdock & Sousa, 2011). It was important to use the medium of investigative journalism because when it does get published, it can mobilise people to act (Hunter et al, 2009).

A commodity that is highly valued in this new digital domain is time. Newspapers are no longer current when they hit newsstands while their online companions are able to update their websites immediately making them an attractive portal for information. The adage, “old news is no news” is even more applicable to the online media landscape with deadlines tighter than ever (Wigley, 2011). Length and research are sacrificed for immediacy and hard investigative news takes time, research and length. My article has taken me a year and a half to complete and being allowed that luxury in the current news environment is highly doubtful. The new media environment is drawn to softer, more sensationalised content because the stories can be produced quickly and economically (Nord, 2007) and avoids investigative pieces like mine because they are time consuming and expensive. With the commodities of time and money being in short supply in the current news environment, it may work in my favour to get my article published in mainstream media. I have already done the “tough, long, hard” work as Pat Booth puts it (Sedorkin & McGregor, 2002, p. 34). All main stream media need to do is publish it.

Criticisms of Reporting Child Abuse – Sensational content:

Political economists critique sensational content as it has implications on democracy; if the public are only exposed to soft news content then the Government can largely go

unmonitored (Mosco, 1998). However when taking into account that news agencies are struggling to turn a profit and time is a commodity they can rarely afford - softer, sensational content is not only cheaper to produce, it also seems it is what the public want to read. Stromback, Karlsson and Hopman (2012) say, "Online news puts a premium on sensationalism and "talker news" which may increase traffic and brand loyalty" (p. 3). On news websites there is often a "most popular" column where it displays the most viewed, most shared and most commented on news stories. Today on the 4th of July, 2012 the media linger on the interest in the Scott Guy murder trial. The verdict has been delivered, Ewen Macdonald was found "not guilty" and national headlines have moved on. Yet the most popular story on *The New Zealand Herald* website belongs in the tabloids. It speculates that Anna Macdonald (Scott Guy's sister) and Ewen Macdonald's (Scott Guy's brother in-law and formerly accused of his murder) marriage is over ("Guy trial: Ewen Macdonald's marriage over", 2012). Like high profile murder cases, high profile child abuse cases also focus on the sensational. Connolly and Doolan (2007) describe it as a media "frenzy" when a child dies and in the case of Nia Glassie, the media focused on the "unusual and bizarre" (Merchant, 2010, p. 10) circumstances of her abuse. She was spun in a clothes dryer set on hot, hung on a rotary clothes line, and used as a test dummy for wrestling moves. By focusing on the sensational aspects of the crime, it loses sight of overarching questions that more investigative stories would ask. The main one being, "how can this be prevented in the future?" which is the question my investigation endeavours to answer.

With sensational content dominating the news environment, universities may be a haven to craft investigative journalism. *Stuff* editor Mark Stevens defends publishing sensationalised content: He says, "We report what people want to read; what is in the public interest as well as what is interesting to the public. We do not set out to be sensationalist but if our most popular story on any day is about 'tits and arse', as they put it, well it is the readers that put it there, not the editors" (Merchant, 2010, p. 8). He claims he is giving the public what they want, but Joe Atkinson (2011) warns against an environment that is dominated by tabloid: "Letting the market prevail is a recipe for more entertainment-oriented, human interest storytelling, avoidance of topics that divide people (e.g., politics and public affairs), and the proliferation of tabloid crime

coverage, often with a conservative law and order focus” (p.106). In the new digital environment of producing news to attract advertisers, editors pander to the sensational and softer content, leaving investigations behind. It is crucial that spaces like universities encourage investigative journalism to fill the holes in the current news climate as long as mainstream media publish it. Democracy depends on good journalism and perhaps the public are becoming soft news consumers because of the journalism they are exposed to. Joseph Pulitzer said, “A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself” (Camp, 2010 , p. 7).

Criticisms of Reporting Child Abuse – Blame:

In the discourse of social work, the media have been criticised for creating a “climate of fear, blame and mistrust” (Ayre, 2001, p. 14). I wanted to avoid this, and instead focus on solutions. Ayre is describing both the public’s perception of social workers, and the client’s relationship with child protection professionals and social workers. The media often holds Child Youth and Family accountable for child abuse deaths and Connolly and Doolan (2007) note the paradox, “Increasingly, it seemed, the statutory agency charged with caring for our society’s most vulnerable children become the agency not only associated with, but also arguably held responsible for, child deaths by the community” (p.15). One of many examples of headlines framing Child Youth and Family as the culprit reads, “Girls 'might still be alive today' if CYF followed procedure” (Berry, 2003), and only a few days ago on July 17, 2012 this headline was published in the New Zealand Herald, “Dozens of children abused while in CYF care” (McNeilly, 2012). Connolly and Doolan (2007) argue that blaming Child Youth and Family will have negative effects on the practice of social work. It causes social workers to become wary of the media, and when assessing vulnerable families they may perceive children to be at higher risk than necessary with the consequence of splitting a family up. This gives a very negative view of the media, one that creates more harm than good. Connolly and Doolan (2007) write, “A sensationalist media that fosters community panic and ‘seek-the-culprit’ mentality has to accept some responsibility for ultimately working against the interest of the child” (p. 110). My investigation aims to help and instead of blaming it promises to seek solutions in the form of home visiting programmes as a way to reduce child abuse and neglect. A 10 year action plan for vulnerable children is going to be released by the Government later this year and

organisations entrenched in child advocacy work advise that early intervention feature heavily in policy.

Solutions are what often get left out of child abuse reports. Dorfman, Mejia, Gonzalez and Cheyne (2011) give a recommendation to reporters of child abuse:

“Prevention and other solutions were largely absent from the coverage. Reporters should ask: “What can we do to prevent another Penn State [The place where the abuse took place]?” “What are communities already doing?” Reporters can query advocates, researchers, policy makers and others in authority and push them for answers to these and other important questions about how to prevent future abuse” (p. 15).

Following on from this advice, this is the course the investigation took. The research I completed for my investigative piece led me to believe that home visiting, when done correctly, works to reduce child abuse and neglect, and I questioned what we were doing as a community and as a country, and why it is not a high priority on the Government’s agenda. By shifting the focus from blame to solutions positive change can occur.

Criticisms of Reporting Child Abuse – Race:

For many people, the only information about child abuse that they will receive will be through journalism, and the criticism that Merchant (2010) highlights is that stories often feature Maori as the victims and the perpetrators of abuse which warps public opinion. She says, “there appears to be a trend towards “sensationalising” child abuse in a manner which fuels the preconceptions of many people that almost all child abuse is perpetrated by Maori and that the Maori as a race are inherently violent” (p.2). This is evident in journalism in the aftermath of Chris and Kru Kahui, and Nia Glassie’s death. United Future leader, Peter Dunne’s comments were echoed around radio, television, newspaper and cyberspace. He said, "It's time to stop pretending that the kind of child abuse suffered by Nia Glassie and the Kahui twins is not a Maori problem” (NZPA, 2007). My OIA request to the Ministry of Social Development reveals that other ethnicities are not exempt from child abuse. In 2010, 1,666 NZ Pakeha were in the care

of Child Youth and Family. Maori are however disproportionately represented in child abuse statistics (Policy, Strategy and Research Group, 2007), but Connolly and Doolan (2007) argue that it has more to do with the associated risk factors with child abuse such as poverty, social isolation, being young parents, and coming from a background of family violence. Because race is not a factor in whether child abuse is more likely, I do not mention race in my article and instead focus on the associated risk factors. Connolly and Doolan (2007) state, “Maori are more likely to experience the socioeconomic factors associated with increased risk of death from child maltreatment” (p.57). Good early home intervention programmes pick up risk factors even before a baby is born. They work to alleviate those risk factors which in turn will reduce child abuse and neglect (Dawley, 2005; Krysik, LeCroy & Ashford, 2008; Olds, 2006; Oshana, 2005 Rodriguez et al, 2010). I wanted to showcase this and be part of the solution. By focusing on ethnicity, which reports tend to do, it gives the public the perception that Maori are the cause of the problem and it will lead the country to false solutions. My article focuses on “risk factors” instead of ethnicity in the hope that it will lead to a positive solution backed up by research and experts.

Investigative journalism as social reform:

A reason why general reporters may fall subject to scrutiny by social workers is because they lack the knowledge that specialist investigative reporters put into their craft. Spark (1999) states, “They [general reporters] are in a hurry. They work on stories chosen by their news desk from an agenda set by major news sources and media (local or national)” (p.5). Because investigative journalism often comes from a place of knowledge, it is considered superior to general reports and at its purest aim is social reform. Hunter et al (2009) write that the goal of investigative journalism is, “to reform a world that generates useless, needless suffering, or conversely, that ignores available solutions to its problems” (p. 2). It strives to make the world a better place by arming its citizens with information so they can act. Adam and Clark (2006) write, “We believe that accomplished journalists can furnish citizens with reliable maps of the here and now [...] We believe further that the democratic systems are able to respond to that knowledge and therefore are open to experience and change” (p.15). The aim of my investigation is to create social reform. What I would like to see happen is that home visiting programmes get put at the top of the political agenda and effective

programmes like Early Start down in Christchurch gain funding to support more families and be rolled out nationwide.

There is however, a problem. As already discussed, the “most popular” columns on news websites are filled with sensationalised content with editors pandering to what the public are interested in, instead of what is in the public interest to try and turn a profit (Mosco, 1998). Publishing my investigation may prove difficult because although journalism has ideals about reforming the evils of the world, news agencies are trading in their integrity in favour of trying (struggling) to turn a profit. If my piece did get published in mainstream media the public may ignore it because of its hard news content as well as its length of around 9,000 words, whereas the average news article could fit onto one page. To combat the issue of length, it could be split in to two articles, or a series of articles, however the ideals of investigative journalism also depend on the ideals of an active and responsible public or citizens. Adam and Clark (2006) write, “central to the concept of democracy are ‘citizens’ – not ‘subjects,’ ‘comrades’ or ‘masses,’ but ‘citizens’ – who in the degree to which they share responsibility for society and it’s welfare, are members of a ‘public’” (p. 16). Without an audience my investigation would be static. It would not cause debate, or outrage that would lead to the intended social reform, and children would still suffer from senseless abuse that can be prevented.

There is hope however, and investigative journalism does exist in the digital age. In 2009 the popular blog site, The Huffington Post, combined forces with Atlantic Philanthropies and other donors to launch the Huffington Post Investigative Fund with an initial budget of \$1.75 million (Bauder, 2009). Co-founder and editor in chief Arianna Huffington hired 10 investigative journalists from the thousands that had been laid off and she says that all news agencies have to do their part to save investigative journalism (Bauder, 2009). The internet has also flattened geography, and investigative journalists from all over the world can be part of a community. Investigative Reporters and Editors website (IRE, 2012) has a wealth of resources as well as story packs for budding journalists to sink their teeth into (although there is no option to join them on facebook or twitter). New Zealand’s most well known investigative journalist, Nicky Hager spreads his ideas and content by writing his own blog and I am hopeful that my

investigation will be published one way or the other. If mainstream media reject it, I may look to self publish via the internet.

Objectivity:

Objectivity has been valued in journalism by presenting facts from an unbiased standing, however it is an ideal that is impossible to achieve in investigative journalism. Tully (2008) writes, “reporting will always be influenced by the values of journalists who construct a reality shaped by linguistic, ideological, cultural, social, professional and organisational contexts” (p. 304). He goes on to say that fact and opinion “become increasingly blurred as journalists are called upon to not simply inform but also to answer the question, what does it all mean?” (Tully, 2008, p. 305). In investigative journalism it is crucial to unpack the meaning, and because of this, objectivity is often sacrificed. Adam and Clark (2006) write, “journalism is not value-neutral or value-free. Conceived as artifice, it is value-laden. The values are those that promote the vitality of democratic life” (p. 18). The conclusion I came to was that early home visiting programmes were the most efficient, effective, and supportive way to reduce child abuse while another journalist might passionately believe that sterilising abusive parents is the best solution. Although I have looked at the facts objectively; I always come back to my conclusion. And the words of Jim Tully (2008) comfort me that I have done right by journalism, “some would argue that objectivity is not even desirable because a complex world requires knowledgeable journalists who explain, interpret, even advocate from a point of view” (p.305).

Conclusion:

Completing this article has had its highs and its lows. Highs occurred after a particularly satisfying interview and obtaining a difficult source and lows prevailed when I was told to completely rewrite my first draft. What got me through the lows was thinking about the end result of possible social reform. I hope it will contribute to getting early intervention and home visiting programmes at the top of the political agenda by informing the 10 year action plan for vulnerable children which will be released later this year. For this to happen, the article needs an audience. Its length and perhaps its hard news content has limitations for getting published in mainstream media as

editors seem to be drawn to the sensational to attract advertisers. It will either be published as a series of articles or shortened in length to combat waning attention spans. If all else fails, I will publish it on a niche investigative journalism blog site and promote it through facebook and twitter. Completing this article in the space of a university has freed me from the political economy of the newsroom where time and money are limited. I believe that I have produced a piece of work that holds true to its investigative form. It goes beyond daily reportage and it seeks to end senseless suffering. It does not fall into the pitfalls of reporting child abuse: Instead of blaming it seeks solutions, instead of focusing on ethnicity it focuses on the risk factors associated with child abuse, and avoids sensationalism. Once it is published, I hope it is successful in translating early intervention and home visiting programmes to be the focus of policy.

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