

## Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki Definitions

### *An important note on interpreting the data*

The majority of data in the summaries has been drawn from administrative and service data. As such, they are dependent on reporting and recording practices and cannot be used as indicators of the incidence of family violence in the population. In addition, they cannot be used to comment on trends in the occurrence of family violence over time. Sexual and family violence are often not reported to authorities and so can be very hard to measure from administrative data.

### Introduction

When the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki (MVCOT) receives a notification, it determines if further action is required (FAR), and what needs to happen to keep the child or young person safe. Notifications consist of reports of concern and Police family violence referrals. Reports of concern are assessed by MVCOT to decide if further action is required. Police family violence referrals are not assessed by MVCOT. Police Family Violence Referrals are the result of Police attending a family violence incident where children are present or normally resident at the household concerned, and where Police assess that MVCOT action is not required. These referrals are considered by local interagency groups which may refer the family or child directly to non-government services or agree that no further action is required.

An assessment or investigation may result in one or more substantiated findings of emotional, physical or sexual abuse, or neglect. Where a finding cannot be substantiated, a result of 'not found' is recorded.<sup>1</sup>

Report of concern: A report received by MVCOT, usually at the national contact centre, that any child or young person has been, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treated, abused, neglected or deprived. A report of concern can be received from a range of avenues including parents, family, whānau, members of

local communities, schools, the Police, health care organisations and other government and non-government agencies.<sup>2</sup> More than one report of concern may be received for the same child or young person in any given year.<sup>3</sup>

Care and Protection Assessment: A care and protection assessment (by way of investigation or child and family assessment) is undertaken where there is an allegation of harm or abuse, including exposure to serious and/or ongoing family violence or where the report of concern indicates that the care, safety or wellbeing of child may be at risk. MVCOT's first engagement with a child or young person and their family or whānau most often occurs when it is completing a care and protection assessment in either a child and family assessment (CFA) or investigation phase.<sup>4</sup>

An investigation response is appropriate when the notification involves an allegation of abuse that may constitute a criminal offence. All cases receiving an investigation response are worked in consultation with Police and follow the Child Protection Protocol (CPP).<sup>4</sup>

Substantiated findings:

As a result of an assessment or investigation, the social worker may make a substantiated finding of emotional, physical, sexual abuse, or neglect. Reported findings relate to assessments or investigations completed in that year and may not relate to reports of concern received in that year. It is important to note that the numbers of findings do not reflect the numbers of children or young people involved. A child or young person can have more than one investigation in the period and may have more than one type of finding as a result of a single investigation.

*Trends*

Prior to 2010/2011, Child, Youth and Family did not report Police family violence referrals separately. From 2006/2007 to 2011/2012, notifications (including Police family violence referrals) increased. From 2010/2011 to 2011/2012 the increase in notifications was driven by increases in Police family violence referrals and may reflect New Zealand's increased awareness of the need for the care and protection of children, and a growing willingness by communities to contact Police in family violence situations.<sup>4</sup> Dramatic increases in reporting over a short period of time, such as those shown in the data summaries, may also be driven by policy shifts, such as increased reporting by the Police to Child, Youth



and Family (CYF) in family violence call-outs due to the Family Violence Interagency Response System (FVIARS).

There was a significant reduction (13%) in reports of concern requiring further action (FARs) in 2013/2014 compared to the previous year. CYF states this was in line with the organisation's focus on better decision-making at the intake phase (i.e. responding to reports of concern).<sup>5</sup> In addition, the proportion of reports of concern requiring further action from Police decreased, indicating that Police may have been referring more cases that did not need further action by CYF.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2014, social workers have increased their focus and resources on the most vulnerable children and young people. This has been assisted by the introduction of a revised Decision Intake Response Tool (used at national contact centre and sites to determine appropriate action to be taken regarding reports of concern).

Along with the 13% decrease in FARs, there was a significant decrease in emotional abuse findings (19%) and neglect (15%). These types of findings are more likely where the report of concern was the result of a family violence incident or longstanding complex family issues, but there are no immediate safety concerns for children.



## References

---

- <sup>1</sup> Child, Youth and Family. (2016). [Key statistics and information for media](#). Retrieved 7 June 2017.
- <sup>2</sup> Ministry of Social Development. (2012). [The Statistical Report for the Year Ending June 2011](#). Retrieved 7 June 2017.
- <sup>3</sup> Gilbert, R., Fluke, J., O'Donnell, M., Gonzalez-Izquierdo, A., Bronwell, M., Gulliver, P., Janson, S., & Sidebotham, P. (2012). [Child maltreatment: Variation in trends and policies in six developed countries](#). *Lancet*, 379(9817), 758-72.
- <sup>4</sup> Senior Advisor, Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki (2017, May). [Definitions: Personal Communication].
- <sup>5</sup> Manager, Planning and Business Analysis, Child, Youth and Family. (2016, June). [Definitions: Personal Communication].

