



# ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE FOR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Principles and practices for a new service

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## Introduction

This discussion paper reports on the fourth and final session of the Connections! Hui: Principles and Practices for a new sexual violence response service for ethnic communities (see Appendix for questions that were used to prompt group discussion). This session asked those attending **how** Shama should establish a new sexual violence response service, in the context of existing responses that may not always work for ethnic communities. The need for this service to be nationally available and adequately resourced underpinned these discussions, which began by exploring service principles.

Previous papers in this series include two papers about sexual violence prevention, and a third paper that describes effective responses to sexual violence for ethnic communities.

During this session of the Connections! Hui, participants were in focus groups that contained a mixture of people of different ethnicities, religions, migration pathways, ages and professions. The groups explored principles to underpin a new service, additional supports for survivors and supports for therapists working in the service. This paper is structured as follows:

1. Principles to underpin a new service to address the gaps
  - a. Respect for cultural and ethnic diversity
  - b. Client driven
  - c. Holistic, professional and innovative
  - d. Advocating for change
  - e. Safety is paramount
  - f. Community grounded
2. Additional supports that need to be put in place for ethnic survivors
3. Support needed by therapists and community workers.

## Principles to underpin a new service to address the gaps

There were six interconnected and overlapping principles which many focus groups explored in response to this question.

### 1. Respect for cultural and ethnic diversity

To include everyone in ethnic communities, the new service must hold a core value of respect for cultural and ethnic diversity. Culturally sensitive approaches, which some groups referred to as cultural humility, acknowledge the complexity and diversity of ethnic communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Respect for cultural and ethnic diversity is demonstrated by cultural safety and cultural competency in these ways:

- Recognizing the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi principles of protection, participation and partnership, and aligning the concept of tino rangatiratanga or self-determination for Māori and ethnic communities
- Acknowledging the context of structural racism
- Employing diverse workforce on the service front line, and ensuring awareness campaigns and publicity about the service has an “ethnic face” including in terms of languages
- Acknowledging, accepting and demonstrating respect for cultural differences, including in sexual practices and experiences of faith and belonging
- Reducing and removing access communication barriers for ethnic communities eg for resources in diverse languages about sexual abuse and consent, using diverse communication modes including interpreting and visual aides to break down language barriers and material accessible for those living in remote regions
- Using a humanitarian focus on human rights, social justice and gender equality
- Including all ethnic people regardless of residential status

### 2. Client Driven

The new service must ensure that it responds to the needs of individual survivors. The term “survivor” was preferred to “victim” by several focus groups. People who have experienced sexual violence will have diverse needs, and the journey of every survivor is different. To be client driven, focus groups wanted the new service to be:

- Non-judgmental of how sexual violence occurred. This includes avoiding and challenging victim blaming ideas and reducing shame for survivors by validating their experiences
- Promoting strengths-based empowerment by treating survivors with dignity, providing accurate information and education about systems and promoting informed choices wherever possible. The service is not the “problem solver” for the survivor
- Tailoring delivery of services to the survivor eg working with someone’s faith if they have one; matching gender and culture of staff with the survivor if that is preferred; age-appropriate responses for children and young people

- Demonstrating sensitivity, openness, care, manākitanga/whānaungatanga and compassion for the trauma survivors experience with empathy – not sympathy

### **3. Holistic, professional and innovative**

All focus groups wanted to see the new service operating in holistic, professional and innovative ways, including the wise use of adequate funding. The kinds of responses ethnic survivors may need may be different from those offered by “mainstream” sexual violence service, including the need to see survivors as part of their whānau and community. In particular, focus groups asked for:

- Services and support which are integrated, multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional and multi-generational. This would include a team with different skills, different belongings and from different generations to increase accessibility. This kind of wraparound support is needed to address the wellbeing, legal, housing, visa/immigration, and financial needs of ethnic survivors
- Professionally competent team with up-to-date and specialist knowledge of sexual violence, the impacts of sexual violence, and key components of a safe and transparent service, particularly for ethnic survivors
- Collaboration between different services and different communities to promote context-based problem solving and improve strategies to address sexual violence. This includes the opportunity for the new team to connect with other professionals
- A professionally safe environment for paid and voluntary staff, including clear boundaries and role expectations of what professional integrity means, and structures which support self-care and cultural and clinical supervision. This should include an acknowledgement that all those involved need to be aware of how to manage their own experiences of trauma
- A continuous learning environment for paid and voluntary staff, including ongoing professional development and education and the expectation that the new service will learn from survivors who seek help
- Openness to adaptation of new service components and culturally sensitive practices to work with ethnic survivors, based on community feedback. For example:
  - Early intervention and prevention programmes to upskill and empower ethnic communities, such as expanding employment options
  - Psycho-social group work to support survivors who wanted to be in a support group and considering restorative practices and resources which could support both survivors and those causing sexual harm
  - Sexual violence prevention awareness campaign specifically for ethnic communities

### **4. Advocating for change**

Focus groups wanted to see the new service fulfilling an advocacy role to address and challenge structural racism in Aotearoa New Zealand, in addition to providing the service. The service itself should explore new service components, but focus groups also wanted to see change being sparked inside multi-agency and public service systems that respond to ethnic communities. This included advocacy directly with politicians as well as:

- Working with New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki to create a more culturally safe and appropriate response to child protection for ethnic communities
- Increasing the cultural education and training available to those working in the sexual violence sector including helplines
- Increasing the cultural education and training available to those working with ethnic communities in health, legal and social services contexts
- Developing pathways to professional roles for ethnic therapists and social workers by providing cultural safety and awareness training inside education and professional body contexts
- Changing cultural attitudes about sexual violence inside ethnic communities eg prevention programmes based inside ethnic communities and restorative processes that are appropriate for ethnic communities where both perpetrator and survivor(s) are part of the community
- Advocating for legislative gaps in service provision to change eg access to support for people regardless of residential status; access to ACC support for people who experienced sexual violence before migration
- Creating a specialist services directory for existing services for survivors from ethnic communities. Such a directory allows the new service to highlight gaps around service provision and advocate for changing funding and delivery of services

## 5. Safety is Paramount

The importance of the new service being safe for survivors was emphasised, particularly because risks for people in ethnic communities might not always be well recognised by existing responses. Focus groups suggested these principles were important:

- Confidentiality and privacy guidelines for ethnic communities. This includes ensuring that the way survivors experiences are discussed anywhere does not put them at risk of being identified by others in their community
- Risk assessments should include emotional and physical safety, as well as survivor assessment of their own safety, both when they disclose and in an ongoing way
- Display and adherence to code of ethics and professional affiliations so all service processes are clear and transparent for survivors
- Trauma informed practice delivered by trained and professional staff and volunteers
- Zero tolerance of sexual violence

## 6. Community Grounded

The final value focus groups identified was the new service being grounded, collaborative and resonating with community, while recognising the Aotearoa New Zealand laws and context. This meant focus groups wanted:

- The service name to be inviting to ethnic communities, by using terms like “helping”
- Processes to be developed that support accountability back to community

- Diverse paid and voluntary staff members, and diverse leadership in terms of board and governance structures
- Recognition that ethnic communities may have tension between them in terms of culture, faith, generation or other factors and good faith negotiation of these issues
- Outreach and collaboration through existing community groups, including religious institutions, to bridge the gap between community and the new service

## **Additional supports that need to be put in place for ethnic survivors**

The second question in this session asked focus groups to explore additional supports which might be required for ethnic survivors to promote healing and develop resilience. Focus groups want the new service to be free for survivors, and identified these additional supports:

- Streamlined pathway to avoid retraumatising survivors with one lead agency and one key worker. The strengths-based wraparound service needs to include:
  - Mental health service support and long-term therapy options
  - Sexual and reproductive health service support, including choices around pregnancies
  - Information about financial and welfare support options and entitlements, including for people with uncertain immigration status/marriage visas
  - Housing and immigration support
  - Gender and culture matching if required
  - Support for survivor during and after the disclosure for as long as they need, to ensure re-integration into community works well
  - Safety plans and risk assessments for survivors inside their cultural context
  - Nationwide reach
  - Social work support if needed
- National ethnic directory/helpline/app where people can find counsellors, support services and community workers
- Systemic change in the form of primary prevention and education programmes, using the ecological model to understand the risk and protective factors for preventing sexual violence. This should include using the idea of culture positively to inform, restore and enhance mana, and acknowledge the collective nature of ethnic communities by operating in intergenerational ways
- Funding and training for ethnic professionals and counsellors on sexual abuse and trauma
- Advocacy for changing systems and legislation which addresses contexts for ethnic communities eg support for people who have experienced sexual violence before migration not currently covered by ACC
- Community involvement and outreach including community leaders and faith groups holding events, workshops and promoting the new service

- Culturally sensitive safe houses which are accessible for all ages
- Cultural safety and awareness training for health professionals and hospitals to better respond to ethnic survivors
- Professionals working with ethnic survivors to be well supported
- Well trained, professional, ethical and safe interpreting services who can be trusted by ethnic survivors
- Support for wider family and community within cultural context – relationships groups, father and child groups
- Restorative options and alternative interventions for both victims and perpetrators – culturally specific with accountability
- More research into experiences of ethnic survivors
- Collaboration and networking between communities, professionals and support services
- Development of resources and information accessible to different groups inside ethnic communities eg for Rainbow ethnic survivors
- Need for support for perpetrators so ethnic survivors know there is a possibility of rehabilitation

## **Support needed by therapists and community workers**

The third question in this session asked what kinds of supports might be needed for therapists and community workers in order to make the new service successful. There were clusters of responses to this question, including:

- Adequate funding to support work with diverse groups, and attract, expand and develop a multi-disciplinary, professional workforce for ethnic services for ethnic people
- Adequate funding for professional development for therapists and community workers to keep up-to-date with best practice in responding to sexual violence and trauma
- Recognition of overtime
- Professional development opportunities for therapists and community workers in advocacy, responding to sexual violence and trauma, including a professional body that oversees this training and offers qualifications
- Professional development opportunities to expand culturally safe practice across different contexts (health, legal, social services), including a professional body that oversees this training and offers qualifications
- Clinical and cultural supervision, which is safe, affordable and compulsory for people working in this area to encourage strong wellbeing and self-care norms
- Awareness of the possibility of vicarious trauma and burnout in this area of work, including a willingness to provide additional mental health/sick leave, massage vouchers and other forms of culturally appropriate self-care information and resources

- National ethnic directory/helpline/app where staff members can find a database of counsellors, support services and community workers
- Networking opportunities for ethnic communities with a focus on sexual violence
- The evaluation of adapted therapeutic models for ethnic communities
- Adequate funding and training for interpreters to be professional, ethical and safe
- Existing research into experiences of ethnic survivors and therapeutic responses to be collated and made accessible to the ethnic workforce
- More research to address gaps in existing knowledge including collaborations within academia
- Regular network meetings and peer support and supervision sessions to share resources and interventions. This could include both New Zealand based and internationally based therapists and community workers, and support newer people into these roles
- Connections with Police Ethnic Liaison Officers
- Different culturally appropriate therapeutic modalities and approaches eg family work, couples work
- Robust health and safety and employment policies which support all paid and voluntary staff and treat them as people
- Feedback and collaboration with ethnic communities to understand policy and legislation context and support advocating for necessary changes, including presentations and workshops by Shama. This could include different communities and groups forming advisory groups to increase accountability
- Co-ordination of and collaboration between support services to ethnic survivors, including a toolkit for first responders to promote consistency of response
- Monitoring of NGO social services in regards to supporting ethnic communities



## Final words

This document is a collation of minutes taken in the fourth session of the Connections! Hui. For any questions or comments, please contact Bex Fraser on 021 084 20952 or [rmfraser.rf@gmail.com](mailto:rmfraser.rf@gmail.com)

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The Shama staff, Board and Advisory group members worked incredibly hard to create a space that was safe, respectful and nurturing for this discussion. We look forward to seeing the seeds of it grow.

### Appendix 1: Questions to guide this discussion

Shama is establishing a sexual violence response service. We know that new responses are needed for ethnic communities and that existing responses do not always work for us.

- What are the principles that should underpin this new service to address the gaps?
- What additional supports need to be put in place for ethnic survivors?
- What support needs to be put in place for therapists and community workers?
- What parts of this are important to feed back in the final session?