

Fact Sheet 4: Additional Specialist Family Violence Services

Whittlesea Community Futures is seeking State and Federal Government support for additional specialist family violence case managers and brokerage funds.

What is happening right now?

- The rate of family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at a critical new high at 1249 per 100,000 people, compared to 1071 for Victoriaⁱ. This is the highest rate of reported family violence in the Victoria Police Northern Division 5ⁱⁱ.
- Over the past five years the number of incidents reported to police in the Whittlesea LGA has almost doubled (see WCF Family Violence Fact Sheet 1) leading to local agencies declaring family violence a critical public health issue for our community and establishing the Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce to address this.
- In 2012-13, 2110 family violence incidents were reported to Victoria Police including one homicide (an increase of 35% on the previous year); in 743 of these incidents children were presentⁱⁱⁱ;
- An average of 40 incidents of family violence are reported to Victoria Police every week;
- More than half (56%) of all assaults arose from family violence;
- Family violence was the context for 46% of all rapes and 15% of all other sex offences (95% of the victims were female; 100% of the alleged offenders were male)^{iv};
- Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service have received significantly more referrals for women (3618) from the Whittlesea municipality than from any other municipality in the northern metropolitan region (NMR);

The local settlement service Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC), reports that from April 2012 to June 2013, 362 individual clients presented at the service experiencing family violence. The majority (79%) of these clients reported to the community legal service and for just under half of these clients (44%) this was the first time they had ever reported the violence. WCC are not alone, many non-family violence specific agencies anecdotally report similar experiences.

Crossroads Family Violence Service will begin outreach from WCC in November 2013. Due to funding limitations this program will only be available for three hours a week for WCC clients. Crossroads have a commitment to never turn a women or child away from their service and do not believe in keeping waiting lists because the nature of family violence requires an immediate response to ensure the safety of women and children. This stretches current resources. With increased funding they would be able to build on the current response to Whittlesea residents and co-locate a full-time case-worker at WCC

How can we build a better future?

Whittlesea Community Futures requests the State government to provide additional case managers and brokerage funding for local family violence specialist services which will:

- Increase immediate response from agencies to police referrals
- Provide secondary consultations to other services
- Undertake case-work and therapeutic response for women and children.

How much will it cost?

| Item | Cost (per annum) |
|--|------------------|
| 2 additional family violence case-managers | \$230,000 |
| Brokerage | \$50,000 |
| Total (per annum) | 280,000 |

How will the community benefit?

Despite the increasing demand for services (as demonstrated by increased reported rates of violence) there has not been a proportionate increase to the workforce, program funding or additional resources in the family violence sector. The already-stretched services supporting women and children and holding men accountable for their violence are unable to continue to offer services.

Family violence occurs in all communities; it is critical to provide specialist family violence services with a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) focus in the City of Whittlesea given the high CALD population, the current and projected growth rate as well as the geographic isolation of some areas due to the urban/rural interface. The high rate of family violence incidents requires a comprehensive approach to not only address the critical issues arising currently but to meet future needs. The cost may be significant in the short-term but the results will be extremely beneficial and the programs and proposed changes cost-effective in the long term.

| Element | Immediate impacts | Longer term benefits |
|---|--|---|
| Additional case-managers and brokerage funds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved response to police referrals and high-risk cases -Immediate response to women in crisis -Improved response to CALD women and children due to co-location with the settlement services -Provide secondary consultations to other services -Provide case work & therapeutic response to women and children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved response to police referrals and high-risk cases -Improved capacity of non-family violence services to identify family violence in clients -Safety for women and children -Reduced violence against women and children |

What objectives does this help us to achieve?

Federal Government

- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010-2022
- National Plan First Action Plan 2010-2013: Building A Strong Foundation

Victorian Government

- Everyone Has A Responsibility To Act – Victoria's Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children 2012-2015

City of Whittlesea

- Council Plan 2013-2017
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017
- Connect: A municipal plan for children, young people and their families 2013-2018
- Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership Action Plan 2011-2016
- Building a Respectful Community A Strategy for the Northern Metropolitan Region 2011-2016
- Department of Justice North Metropolitan Region Regional Community Safety Plan 2011

Key Messages

- Specialised family violence outreach and case-work for the City of Whittlesea is limited due to funding restrictions and stretched resources.
- Capacity of non-family violence services to respond effectively to reports of family violence will be built through the co-location of specialist family violence case-managers.
- The rate of family violence in the City of Whittlesea is at a critical new high at 1249 per 100,000 people, compared to 1071 for Victoria^v. This is the highest rate of reported family violence in the Victoria Police Northern Division 5^{vi}.
- Over the past five years the number of incidents reported to police in the Whittlesea LGA has almost doubled (see WCF Family Violence Fact Sheet 1) leading to local agencies declaring family violence a critical public health issue for our community and establishing the Whittlesea Family Violence Taskforce to address this.
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- ⁱ Recorded Family Incident Reports, Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police, September 2013
- ⁱⁱ Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik, Whittlesea
- ⁱⁱⁱ Victoria Police Family Incident Reports
http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?a=internetBridgingPage&Media_ID=72311
- ^{iv} Women's Health In the North Family Violence Fact Sheet Whittlesea LGA 2012-2013
- ^v Recorded Family Incident Reports, Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police, September 2013
- ^{vi} Banyule, Darebin, Nillumbik, Whittlesea
- ^{vii} Victoria Police Family Incident Reports
http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?a=internetBridgingPage&Media_ID=72311
- ^{viii} Women's Health In the North Family Violence Fact Sheet Whittlesea LGA 2012-2013
- ^{ix} Police referrals received by NFDVS by LGA Financial Year Comparison July 2009 - June 2013