

# MODEL CHARACTERISTICS: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES 1997-2019

## Strengthening Families Research Project: Model characteristics from literature scan and document analysis

	1997-1999: TO FULL NATIONAL ROLL-OUT	1999-2005: TO RE-LAUNCH	2005-2015: TO MSD 2015 REVIEW	2015-2019: TO PRESENT
<b>1: PURPOSE</b>				
<b>1.1 Name</b>	Strengthening Families Local Coordination (MSD, 2005). Initially Strengthening Families Local Coordination "was part of an umbrella <sup>1</sup> Strengthening Families strategy, which also encompassed Family Start, and subsequently led to the development of High and Complex Needs (HCN), and Social Workers in Schools (SWiS) programmes" (MSD, 2005, section 3.2).	Strengthening Families Local Coordination (MSD, 2005).	Strengthening Families.	Strengthening Families.
<b>1.2 Rationale</b>	Government agencies often working (sometimes inter-generationally) with the same families who were experiencing disadvantage across a range of dimensions, at a time when for many there had been a 'breakdown' in interagency collaboration arrangements and	"Shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives, to prevent things from going wrong in the first place" (MSD, 2016, Foreword).	"SF [Strengthening Families] is Early Intervention/ Prevention, as well as Intensive Support" (MSD, 2015, p. 4).	"SF [Strengthening Families] is a model for interagency service coordination that is based on developing family/whānau strengths. It is distinguished from other integrated service models by its reliance on family/whānau direction for the development and

<sup>1</sup> In most early Strengthening Families sources this apparent distinction between Strengthening Families as an umbrella term for a range of programmes, and a specific one in relation to local coordination, is not clear.

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	practice: "SF [Strengthening Families] is at heart a strategic initiative to deliver core services in the welfare, health and education sectors more effectively to that group of families experiencing the most serious disadvantage. Its central aim is to improve outcomes for children, and is based upon two assumptions: that families are important in shaping children's outcomes, and that cross-sector co-ordination in service delivery is likely to achieve better outcomes than uncoordinated sector-specific approaches. Strengthening Families is a process or a way of working, not a programme or provider" (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999, section 3).	Key national outcomes for Strengthening Families "should be to achieve better outcomes for at-risk families through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "enhanced collaboration in the development, implementation and delivery of policies for vulnerable families</li> <li>• service delivery tailored to regional/local needs</li> <li>• improved coordination and alignment of family-related initiatives</li> <li>• enhanced development of inter-sectoral initiatives for vulnerable families" (MSD, 2005, section 1.2).</li> </ul>		implementation of the interagency service plans" (Oranga Tamariki, n.d, p. 10).
<b>1.3 Target client group</b>	"New Zealand's most at-risk children, young people and their families...those experiencing multiple and persistent disadvantages which compromise family functioning and increase the chances that their children may have poor long-term outcomes" (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999, p. 1).	Notwithstanding the shift to an early intervention focus above, the High and Complex Need (HCN) Unit's (2005) national strategy highlighted that HCN cases will usually be collaboratively managed through existing Strengthening Families arrangements and associated mechanisms (2005).		"Vulnerable <sup>2</sup> children or young people and their family/whānau who have multiple and complex needs and require a coordinated intervention from more than one agency" (Oranga Tamariki, n.d., p. 9). However, Strengthening Families <b>is not</b> to be used for cases requiring a statutory response or intensive cases.

<sup>2</sup> "Vulnerable children [and young people aged 0-17 years] are children who are at significant risk of harm to their wellbeing now and into the future, as a consequence of the environment in which they are raised, and in some cases, due to their own complex needs. Environmental factors that influence child vulnerability include not having their basic emotional, physical, social, developmental and/or cultural needs met at home or in the wider community" (Oranga Tamariki, n.d., p. 9)

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<b>1.4 Target agencies</b>	Government agencies (Majumdar, 2006; MSD, 2015; Walker, 2001) including local authorities, with some NGO involvement.			National (but no longer local) government agencies and NGOs. However, the majority of participating agencies are now NGOs (Oranga Tamariki, 2019).
<b>1.5 Outcomes sought</b>	Improve long-term outcomes of the most at-risk children, young people and their families in the country.	<p>“Long-term Outcomes: The health, education and social outcomes for children, young people and their families/ whānau are improved through Strengthening Families. As a result, they feel stronger, more connected to, and supported by their communities” (MSD, 2010, p. 1.3).</p>	<p>The effectiveness review (MSD, 2015) ‘drops’ the reference to “long-term” outcomes altogether, replacing it with “the outcomes that we expect to achieve are improved social, health, and education outcomes for children, young people and whānau” (p. 3).</p> <p>New Zealand Productively Commission (2015) suggest that outcomes now sought were more modest than when Strengthening Families was first introduced.</p>	
<b>1.6 Coverage</b>	Strengthening Families country-wide.	Strengthening Families country-wide.	In areas where Children’s Teams were introduced, Strengthening Families provision was discontinued – covers majority of country.	Covers majority of country.
<b>1.7 Evidence-informed models, practice or strategies?</b>	None identified.	None identified.	None, although there are some similarities between the 7 stated Strengthening Families core principles (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.) and the US National Wraparound Initiative’s 10 principles of the wraparound process (Bruns et al., 2004).	None identified.
<b>2: PLANNING</b>				

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<b>2.1 Extent of national profile</b>	Very high (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999).	High (MSD, 2006).	Moderate (MSD, 2015-a).	No evidence identified.
<b>2.2 Leadership/ Ownership</b>	<p>Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health, and with designated leads in each agency, and inter-policy work (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999).</p> <p>“Setting up a national Strengthening Families Coordinating Committee chaired by Bazley [Department of Social Welfare Chief Executive] which monitors progress around the country in implementing its protocols” (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999, p. 7), although the New Zealand Productively Commission (2015) has since questioned whether such high level integrated leadership was ever sustainable (p. 258.).</p>	By 2005 all “governance and operational management is now effectively carried out by Family and Community Services in MSD” (MSD, 2005, section 4.1. Key Finding); recommendation to strengthen cross-sectorial governance (MSD, 2005, section recommendation 1).	<p>An existing forum of the CEs of MOE, MOH, MOJ and MSD (later known as the Social Services Forum), to take responsibility for setting Strengthening Families' strategic direction and to consult with other Government t Chief Executives as required, and to be supported by a national level operational management group (MSD, 2006, pp. 6-7).</p> <p>2006/07 strategic framework signed by 11 Chief Executives (Justice, Education, Social Development, Health, ACC, Corrections, Housing, Inland Revenue, Internal Affairs, Police and Te Puni Kōkiri (MSD, 2006, Foreword).</p> <p>The 2012 White Paper for Vulnerable Children and the establishment of Children’s Action Plan.</p> <p>However, MSD (2015-a) notes that “there is no national cross-government group responsible for the operational delivery of SF [Strengthening Families]” (p.10).</p>	<p>Partnering for Outcomes, Oranga Tamariki.</p> <p>2016 establishment of Investing in Children programme (MSD, n.d.) with inclusion of early intervention focus.</p> <p>Despite the establishment of “the Social Wellbeing Board (which also supports the Chief Executives of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Oranga Tamariki in their accountability to deliver the Child Wellbeing Strategy), the Child Wellbeing Chief Executives’ Group, [and] the Vulnerable Children’s Board (MSD, 2018, p. 13), no evidence of any national interagency leadership or oversight identified.</p>
<b>2.3 National management</b>	The appointment of 6 senior staff across the 3 sectors (including 4 from the Department of Social	MSD assumed leadership for Strengthening Families when established in 2001 (MSD, 2005,	Family and Community Services until the establishment of Community Investment.	Responsibility for Strengthening Families (Community Investment) moved from MSD to Oranga

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	Welfare) to drive the project” (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999, p. 20).	section 3.2). Initially managed by MSD’s Interagency Collaboration Unit, and then Family & Community Services (Family and Community Services).		Tamariki in 2017 – now called Partnering for Outcomes.
<b>2.4 Funding</b>	Initially, Strengthening Families operated without Coordinators (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999) or indeed any national funding (Brown, 2000). Some areas chose to fund Coordinator salaries from existing budgets locally (Ministry of Social Policy), while other areas chose not to do so with some of the view that Strengthening Families would be more effective without Coordinators (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999).	Annual national funding, including Coordinator salaries, approved by Cabinet in 1999 (MSD, 2005).  \$1.7m for F2004 from 10 govt. agencies (incl. MSD & Child, Youth and Family Services) for a \$230k administration fund, \$200k discretionary fund, \$65k Coordinator (and facilitator) training fund, and \$1.2m for Coordinator salaries (MSD, 2005).	\$4.2m as well as ‘in-kind’ support (2015/16) (Oranga Tamariki, 2015).	\$3.5m as well as ‘in-kind’ support (2017/18) (Oranga Tamariki, 2018).
<b>2.5 Published plans and strategies</b>		As well as published national plans, with the Local Government Act 2002 and the requirements for local authorities to produce Long Term Council Community Plans, Local Management Groups would link in with these arrangements (MSD, 2005).	Development of a Strengthening Families strategic framework (only 2006/07 identified).  Regional Strengthening Families Governance Groups responsible for developing regional strategic plans (MSD, 2010, p. 2-8).  National Strengthening Families Strategic Plan (only 2010-2012 identified).	No national plan, or action on recommendations (MSD, 2015-a), or since, identified. Also no explicit reference in the Ministry’s statutory strategic intentions documents
<b>2.6 Related Programmes</b>	Family Start; Social Workers in Schools (SWiS); and High & Complex Needs. Other 1990s provision included Family Service Centres, Parents as First Teachers, and Early	Differential Response; Youth Offending Strategy.	Whānau Ora; Social Sector Trials; Community Hubs; Youth One Stop Shops (MoH); Youth Action Plan;	Education hubs (MoE, 2018).

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	Start in Christchurch, and Family Link in Dunedin (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999).		Family violence initiatives; Children's Action Plan; Children's Teams.	
<b>3: PEOPLE</b>				
<b>3.1 National</b>	"The 3 Chief Executives [Margaret Bazley, Karen Poutasi, & Howard Fancy] visiting mayors around NZ seeking their cooperation in establishing a collaborative case management protocol in their areas" (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999, p. 20).	Minister announces the establishment of "a national Family Services unit in Wellington, and four regional offices in Auckland, Rotorua, Wellington and Christchurch. The national unit will be supported by a national advisory body, with representatives from government and non-government agencies, iwi/Māori and Pacific peoples. The advisory body will help develop family support strategies and oversee their implementation" (Maharey, 2003).  Strengthening Families as a predominantly locally managed initiative facilitated by a small national unit housed within MSD (MSD, 2005).	Richard Wood (head of Family and Community Services and MSD's Deputy Chief Executive) was a strong advocate of Strengthening Families and led the initiation of what was a major change process.  In 2005 Family and Community Services expanded their small Strengthening Families unit with the creation of the role of National Strengthening Families Coordinator, to work closely with Local Management Groups and Coordinators, and raise the profile of Strengthening Families.	As well as Partnering for Outcomes leadership, one Strengthening Families Senior Programme Advisor (and contract management and support through regional Partnering for Outcomes advisors).
<b>3.2 Regional leadership</b>	The evolution of some regional steering groups e.g. Nelson/Tasman, Horowhenua/Manawatu and Dunedin (MSD, 2005, section recommendation two).	Recommendation for establishment of Strengthening Families Regional Governance Groups (MSD, 2005, recommendation 2) with responsibility for regional strategic planning, and accountable to a national governance forum (also recommended that over time they be funded to develop services and to "directly oversee the governance of other cross-sectorial family-related	"RGGs play a policy, advocacy and strategic development role in SF. RGGs comprise senior managers of key government agencies, local authorities, community organisations, iwi and other appropriate stakeholder groups. They have the authority to make decisions about their organisation's services in their region and to shift	Reference to Regional Governance Groups but no specific description of their functions (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.).  Regional Governance Groups not referred to on Strengthening Families website (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.)

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		initiatives at a regional level") (MSD, 2005, section recommendation 2).	resources as required. RGGs are responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing a regional strategic plan;</li> <li>overseeing the operation of Local Management Groups; and</li> <li>overseeing alignment with other family/whānau-based initiatives in their region" (MSD, 2010, p. 2-8).</li> </ul> <p>6 (2013/2014) Regional Governance Groups in Auckland, Central and Southern regions only (MSD, 2015-a)</p>	
<b>3.3 Local Management Group</b>	By November 1999, there were 70 Local Management Groups (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60 Local Management Groups (Maharey, 2003)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60 Local Management Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>32 Local Management Groups (or other inter-sectoral governance groups)</li> </ul>
<b>Coordinators</b>	Initially some local areas, for example Masterton, preferred to implement Strengthening Families without employing Coordinators (Ministry of Social Policy, 1999).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>66 Coordinator positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinators (42 NGOs and 2 Oranga Tamariki)</li> </ul>
<b>Contracting and support</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MSD Community Investment regional relationship managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnering for Outcomes regional advisors</li> </ul>
<b>4: PROCESSES</b>				
<b>4.1 Infrastructure</b>	Local Management Group Memorandum of Understanding – national template but adapted locally (Walker, 2001)	2003 two-day national conference for Local Management Groups (Maharey, 2003).	Strengthening Families handbook published (MSD, 2010).  Lead Agency contracts introduced in some areas.	Collaborative, client-led case conference co-ordination process with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening Families website (some information out of date)</li> </ul>

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										<i>SF Reporter</i> case management and reporting website-based tool launched in 2014.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>SF Reporter</i> reporting and case management system (updates and data cleaning required)</li> </ul>									
<b>4.2 Operational phases</b>															<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral by government or community agency (or self) to local Coordinator</li> <li>• Preparation (on accepted referrals)</li> <li>• 1st meeting – ideally facilitator-led</li> <li>• Action plan – develop &amp; implement</li> <li>• Reviews involving family/whānau</li> <li>• Case closure – actions completed</li> <li>• <i>SF Reporter</i> data collected/uploaded</li> <li>• Local Management Group reviews <i>SF Reporter</i> data/other information</li> <li>• Local Management Group makes decision on any local Strengthening Families changes (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.).</li> </ul>									
<b>5: PERFORMANCE</b>																								
<b>5.1 Evaluation and Research studies</b>					Christchurch City Council (1999), and Angus (1999) (as cited in Majumber, 2006).					Visser (2000), Bennett (2002), Parsons (2002) and Nuthall &					One (Dunedin-only) evaluation identified (McKenzie, 2010).					None identified.				



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		Richardson (2003) (as cited in Majumber, 2006).	<p>Internal effectiveness review undertaken (MSD, 2015-a) “which suggests Strengthening Families is achieving its objectives to improve social, health, and education outcomes for children, young people and whānau” (p. 1). Included a stakeholder survey as part of a stated plan to subsequently build a Strengthening Families evidence base (MSD, 2015-a). In the same year the Ministry also undertook a line-by-line review (MSD, 2015-b)</p> <p>Effectiveness review found 5 areas for improvement identified (consistency across country; support for personnel; data collection; alignment; and governance/support) and 19 recommendations (‘opportunities’) for action.</p> <p>However, no documented evidence sighted that these, or developing the evidence base, were progressed.</p>	Reliance upon <i>SF Reporter</i> administrative data. As well as some accuracy issues, there are also some design issues e.g. family/whānau questionnaires are only sought from the minority of family/whānau for whom a planned final Strengthening Families meeting was convened.
5.5 Contracted Strengthening Families contracted volumes			<p>Te Tai Tokerau: 170/300 Auckland: 797/1320 Midlands: 797/1320 Central: 632/1013 Southern: 392/647 (MSD, 2015)</p>	

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