

# **Strengthening Families Interagency Case Management**

## **Summary Analysis of Final Meeting Forms**

**January 2000 – May 2001**

**JULY 2001**

**Evaluation Unit  
Ministry of Social Policy**

The Ministry of Social Policy and the Department of Work and Income merged to become the Ministry of Social Development on 1 October 2001.

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## 1. Introduction

Strengthening Families uses a collaborative approach with agencies<sup>1</sup> working together to improve the life outcomes of children and young people in families at risk.

After the final collaborative case management meeting, the Lead Agency completes a final meeting form – on a consensus basis - which seeks to review how well the case management approach has worked, and to gain agencies' and families' views on what worked well, and to identify areas for improvement.

This report summarises the information in the final meeting forms received by the Ministry of Social Policy Evaluation Unit as at May 2001. Please note:

1. The forms included in this analysis were received during the period of January 2000 to May 2001.
2. The number of forms received and analysed was 154.
3. Some variations on the original final meeting form were received. Information from all versions has been included in this analysis. The original final meeting form is included at the back of this summary as Appendix One.
4. In order to analyse the forms, two separate databases were established on *Microsoft Excel* and *Microsoft Word*. The *Microsoft Word* database contained the qualitative material, which was analysed thematically. The *Excel* database contained quantitative data, from which tables and figures were created.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'agencies' is used in this report to refer to any organisation or group working with children or families including schools, medical practitioners, legal practitioners and community/voluntary organisations.

## **2. Summary of main findings**

### **Agency involvement**

The average number of agencies involved in each collaborative case was 6.3, with a maximum number of fourteen agencies per case, and a minimum of 1.

Child, Youth and Family referred the most number of cases during the period January 2000 – May 2001 (23%). Child Youth and Family also led the most cases (15%).

### **Agencies' experiences and views**

The majority of agencies involved were positive about the way in which the lead agency co-ordinated the meetings.

The majority of agencies involved also indicated that the Case Management Group were good at identifying tasks and planning action, good at respecting the client's needs and choices and good at working collaboratively.

Of the agencies who commented on what they believed could have been improved in their case, three key themes emerged:

- Better agency involvement (for example, improvement in the commitment and/or communication of agencies);
- The ability of family/whanau to contribute to meetings; and
- Timing/process issues (for example, beginning the Strengthening Families process earlier, holding meetings more regularly).

Of the agencies who commented on outcomes achieved, four key themes emerged:

- Greater support for family/whanau (for example, through the provision of services);
- Improvement in the behaviour of the child/young person;
- Improvement in the well-being/safety of child/young person; and
- Further assessment/monitoring (for example, referring child on for further assessment or monitoring was seen as an outcome achieved).

### **Families'/ whanau experiences and views**

From the responses provided to questions about the experiences and views of families/whanau<sup>2</sup>, it appears that the majority of families/whanau agreed that:

- Meetings were held at a convenient time for them;
- They were listened to or mostly listened to; and
- Agencies understood or mostly understood what was important to them.

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<sup>2</sup> Of the final meetings forms received, approximately one third did not include responses to questions about the experiences and views of families'/whanau.

Eighty-five families/whanau commented on what things they found helpful in the collaborative case management initiative. Three main themes emerged:

- Greater support for the family/ whanau;
- Improvement in the families'/ whanau situation; and
- Agencies working together in a collaborative way.

Sixty-three families/whanau commented on what things could be improved. Three key themes emerged:

- Communication and information about Strengthening Families between agencies and/or between the agencies and families/whanau;
- Commitment and input of agencies into the process; and
- Earlier intervention by agencies.

### 3. Agency involvement

The average number of agencies involved in each collaborative case was 6.3, with a maximum number of fourteen agencies per case, and a minimum of 1.

#### *Districts*

Table 1 outlines the number of final meeting forms received from each district. The average number of final meeting forms received was 5.3.

**Table 1 Collaborative case management meetings by district**

<b>District</b>	<b>Total</b>
South Canterbury (Timaru)	50
Hastings/Napier	12
Nelson/Tasman	9
Waitaki (Oamaru)	9
Buller/Westland	8
Taranaki	8
Invercargill/Southland	6
Tararua (Dannevirke)	5
Hutt Valley	5
Manawatu (Feilding)	5
Dunedin	4
Horowhenua (Levin)	4
Wellington	4
Auckland	3
Central Hawkes Bay (Waipukurau)	3
Clutha (South Otago)	3
Palmerston North	2
Taumarunui	2
Marlborough (Blenheim)	1
Central Otago (Alexandra)	1
Hamilton	1
Kaikohe	1
Kawerau	1
Porirua	1
Rotorua	1
East Coast (Ruatoria)	1
Far North	1
Whangarei	1
Not specified	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>154</b>

**Interim Lead Agency**

The interim lead agency is the agency that initially refers a case for Strengthening Families Interagency Case Management.

Child, Youth and Family referred the maximum number of cases during the period January 2000 – May 2001.

**Figure 1 Interim Lead Agency: National Figures**

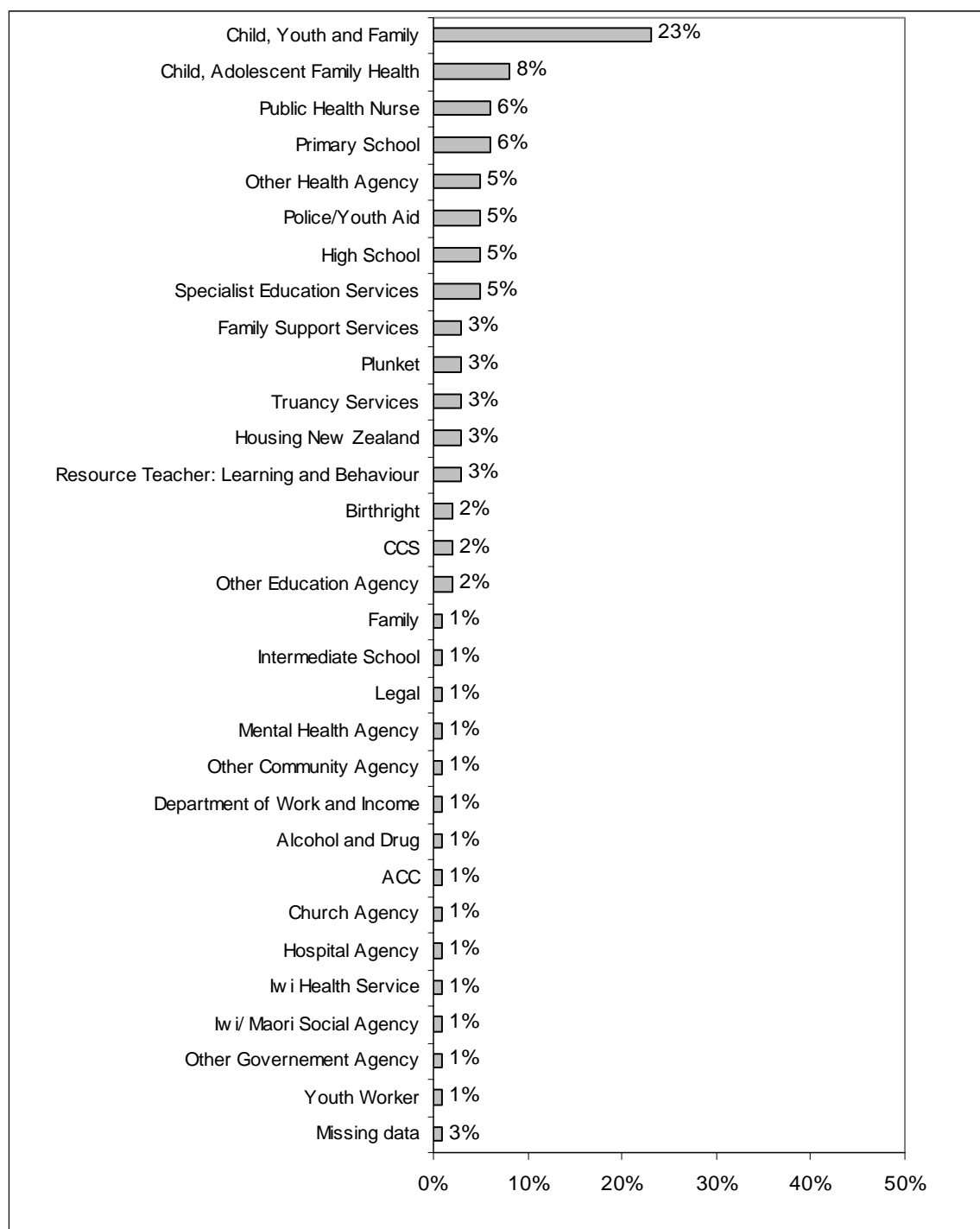


Figure based on 154 final meeting forms received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

Figure 2 below indicates the sector source of the referral agencies.

Child, Youth and Family referred 23% of all cases, with the remainder of the government agencies referring 12% of cases. Health and education based agencies referred a similar proportion of cases, 23% and 24% respectively. Community based agencies referred slightly less with 15% of all referrals (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2 Sector Source of Referral Agency (Interim Lead Agency)**

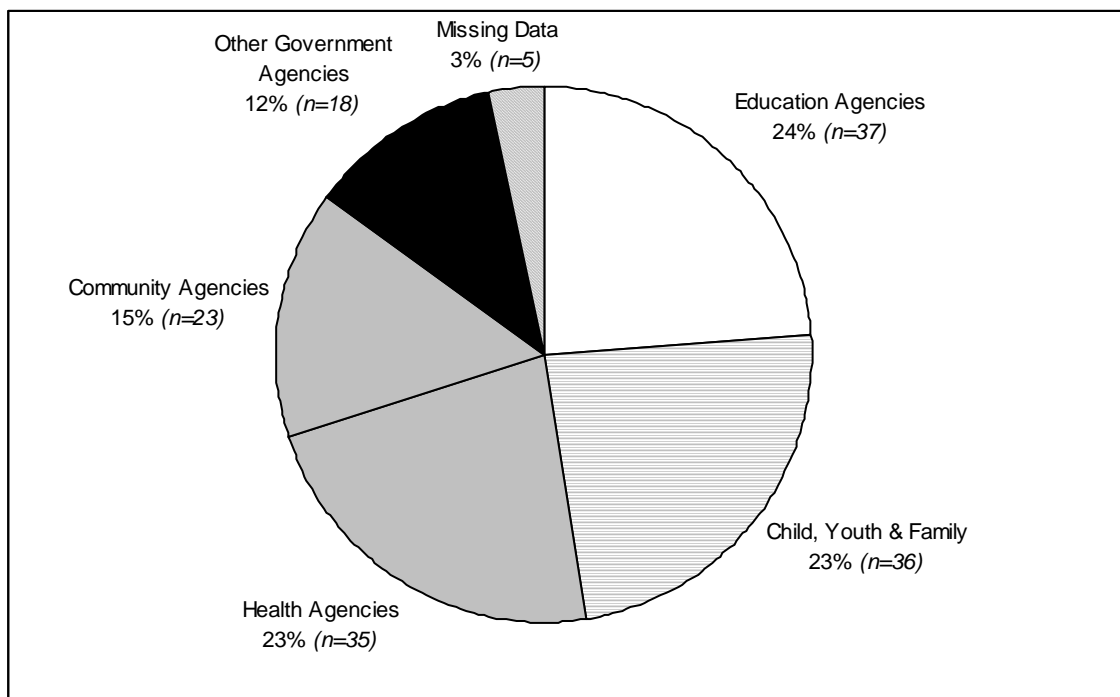


Figure based on 154 final meeting forms received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)



### Lead Agency

The lead agency is the agency that accepts responsibility for working directly with the family once a collaborative case plan has been agreed upon.

The average number of cases led by each agency involved was 4.6 (excluding cases that are led jointly). Child Youth & Family led the most cases (15%).

**Figure 3 Lead Agency: National Figures**

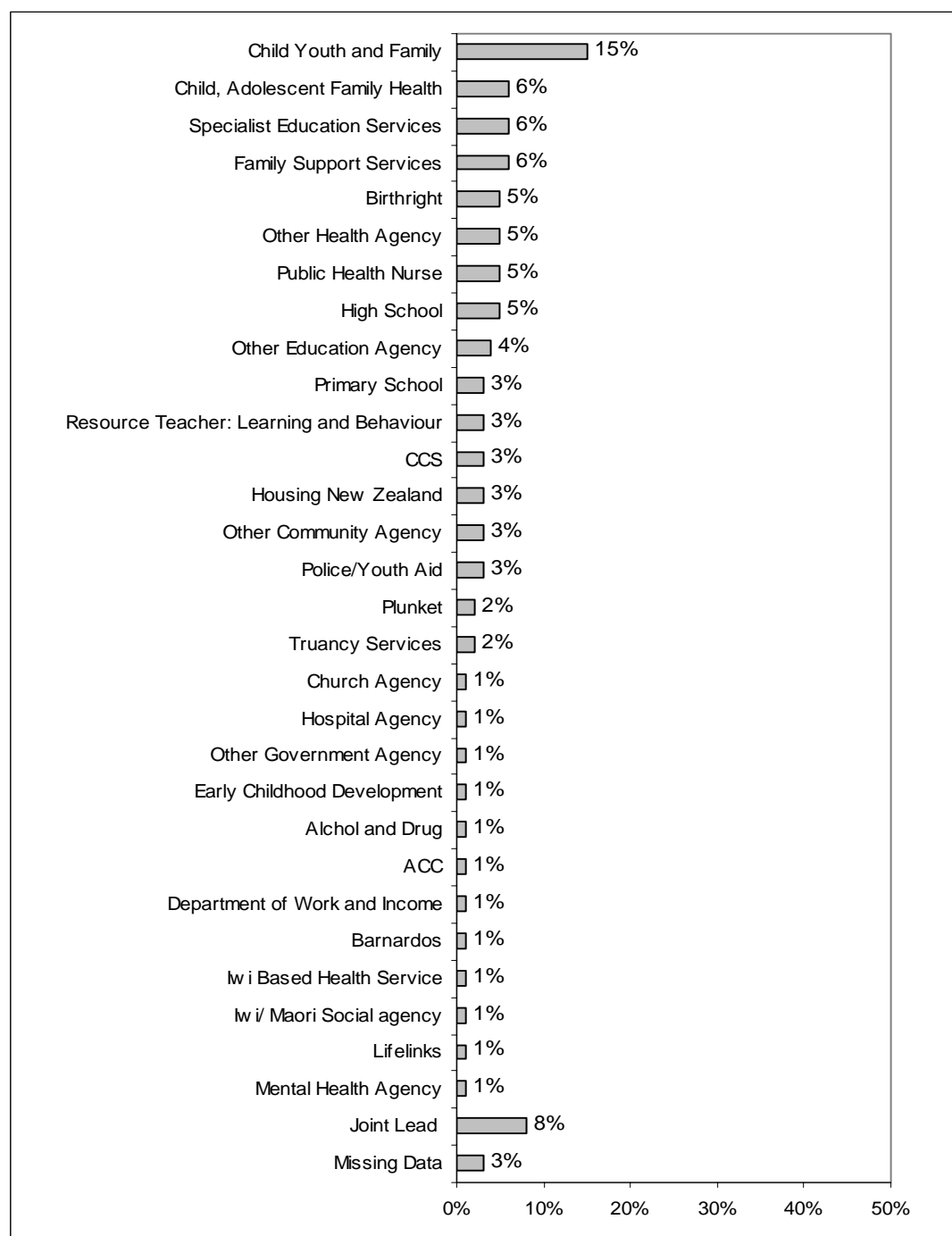


Figure based on 154 final meeting forms received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

Figure 4 below indicates the sector source of lead agencies.

Education and community based agencies each led approximately one third of the cases in this analysis. It is worth noting that 12 cases (8%) were led jointly<sup>3</sup>.

**Figure 4 Sector source of Lead Agency**

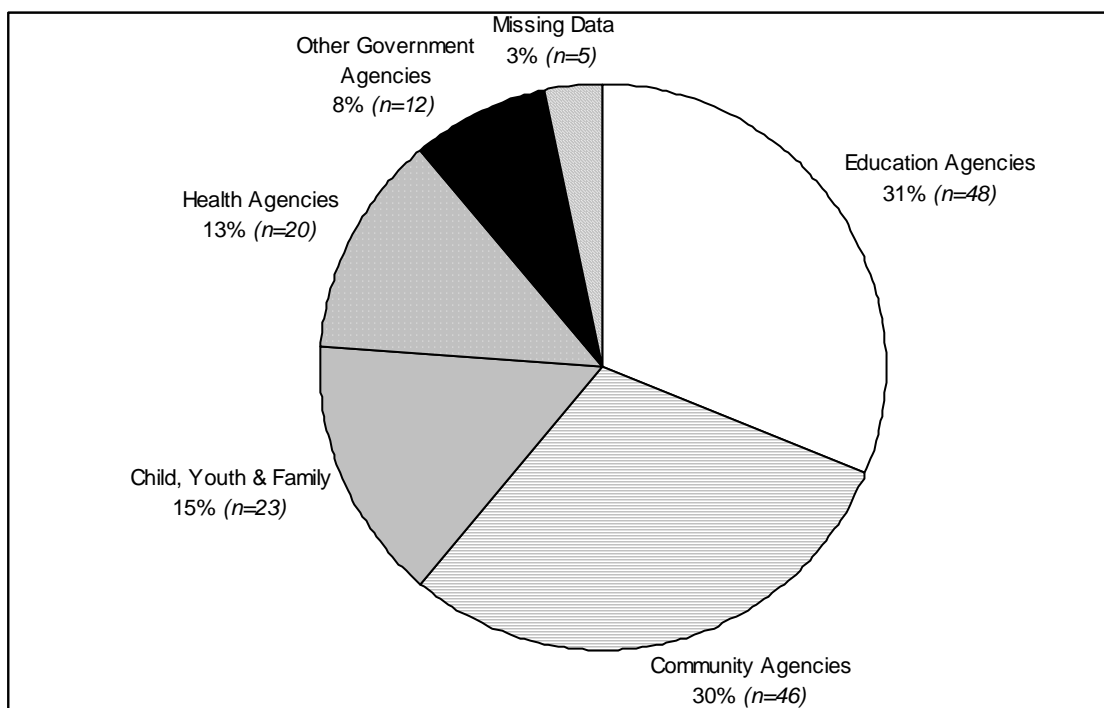


Figure based on 154 final meeting forms received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

<sup>3</sup> Cases that were led jointly involved a maximum of two lead agencies. Child, Youth and Family were involved in 6 of the jointly led cases, with Birthright and Mental Health Agencies involved in two jointly led cases each. This information is included with the community based agencies category.

### Sectors

Agencies initially involved in the collaborative cases tended to be evenly spread across the sectors, with agencies from the education sector making up 27%, government agencies 25%, health agencies 25% and community based agencies 23% (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5 Sector source of agencies initially involved in the collaborative case management meetings**

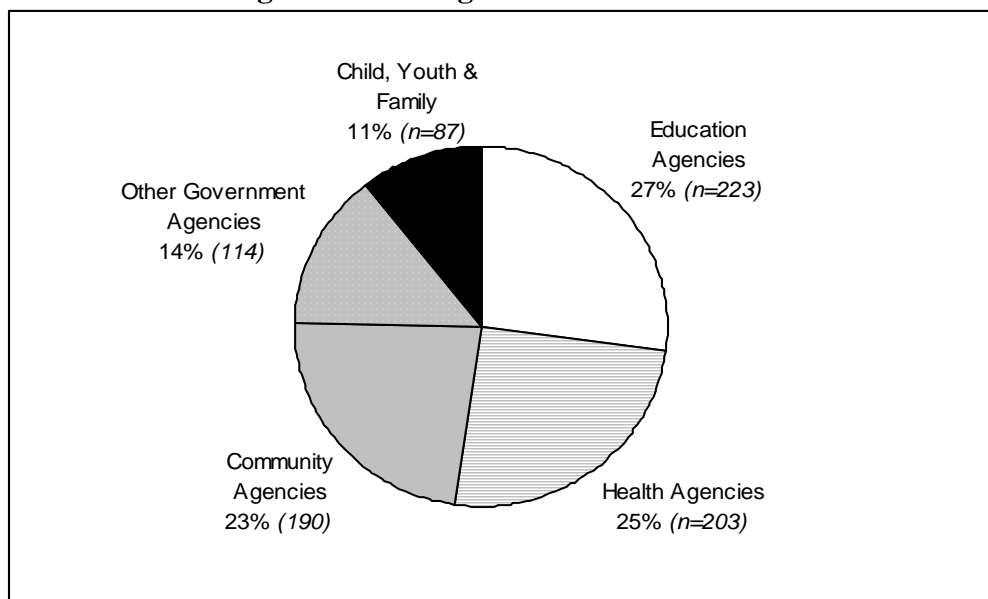


Figure based on 154 final meeting forms received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

Community based agencies (36%) made up the largest group of agencies that became involved over time in the process (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6 Sector source of agencies that became involved over time**

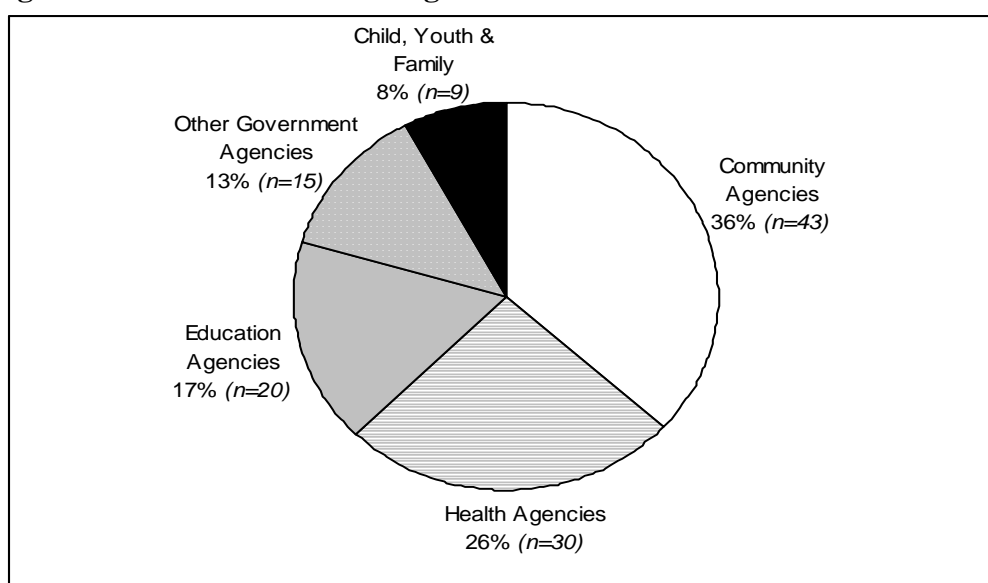


Figure based on 132 final meeting forms that collected information on this aspect received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

## 4. Agencies' experiences and views

### 4.1 Performance of Lead Agency in co-ordinating meetings

The majority of agencies involved (81%) provided a positive response about the way in which the lead agency co-ordinated meetings (see Figure 7). This was reflected in comments made by the agencies.

*“Excellent sharing of information, re: times of meetings, etc.”*

*“Meetings overall were positive with good interaction and collaboration.”*

Only a small number of agencies (4%) indicated that the Lead Agency was poor at co-ordinating meetings (see Figure 7). Reasons given for poor performance included input into, and attendance of meetings, as well as a need for better understanding of their role.

**Figure 7 Performance of Lead Agency in co-ordinating meetings**

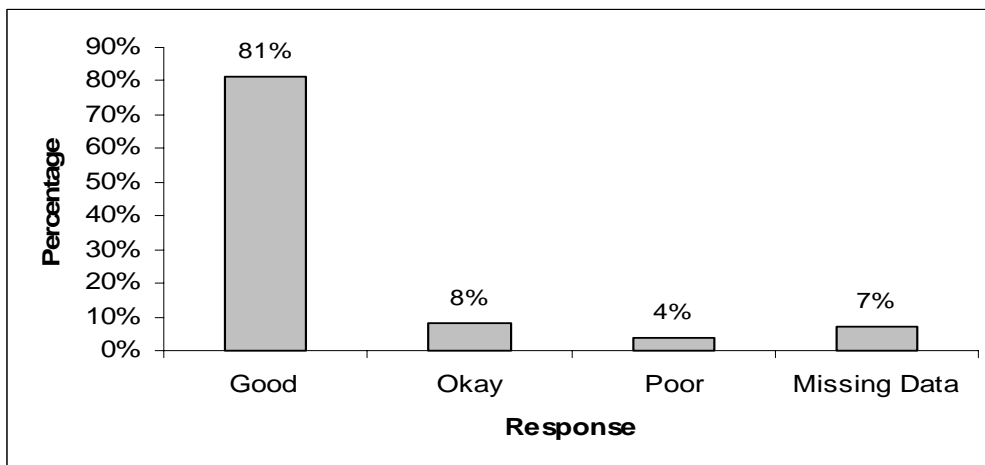


Figure based on 127 final meeting forms that collected information on this aspect received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

### 4.2 Performance of Case Management Group

#### *Identifying tasks and planning action*

Eighty-one percent of agencies indicated that the Case Management Group were good at identifying tasks and planning action (see Figure 8).

*“Tasks identified well and action plans always carried out.”*

*“Clear, concise reports from each meeting gave clarity and continuity, especially the action plan.”*

**Figure 8: Overall performance of the Case Management Group in identifying tasks and planning action**

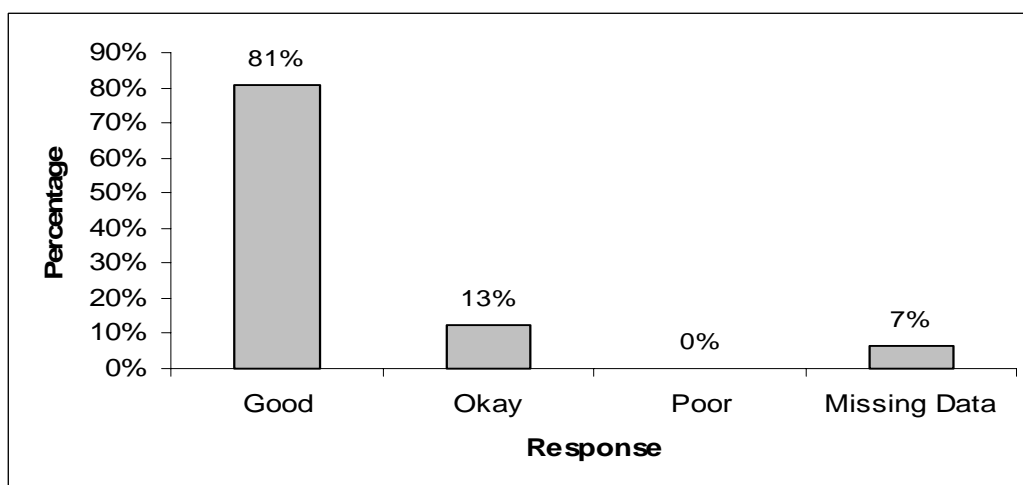


Figure based on 135 final meeting forms that collected information on this aspect received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

### ***Respecting client's needs and choices***

The majority of agencies (76%) indicated that the performance of the Case Management Group was 'good' in respecting the client's needs and choices (see Figure 9).

Agencies commented that the clients were involved in the decision making process or that the Case Management Group was sensitive to the needs of the client.

*“Offered a variety of resources and support, and family made the choice.”*

*“Group tried to look at issues from the family's perspective.”*

**Figure 9: Overall performance of the Case Management Group in respecting clients needs and choices**

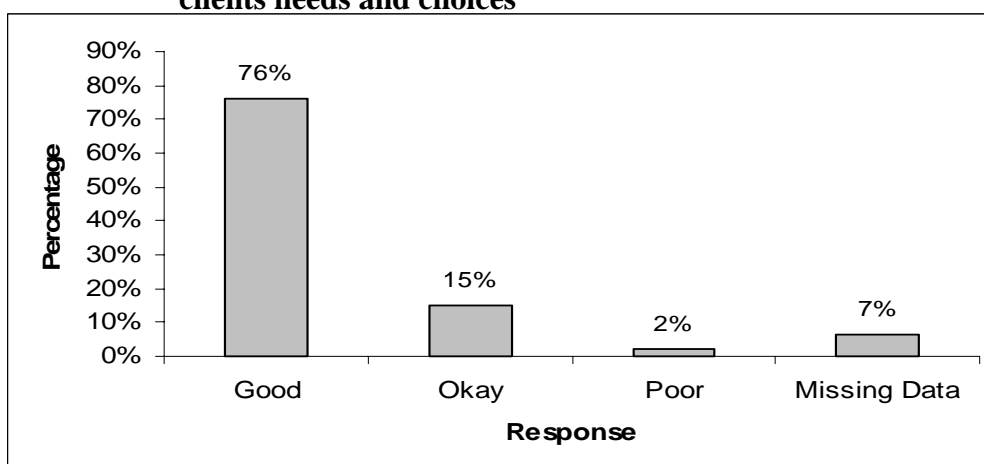


Figure based on 135 final meeting forms that collected information on this aspect received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

### ***Working collaboratively***

The majority of agencies (78%) indicated that the Case Management Group was ‘good’ at working collaboratively (see Figure 10).

A number of agencies commented that the agencies worked well together in a supportive environment.

*“Excellent – issues and concerns have been clarified by sharing information.”*

In particular, a large number of comments were made regarding the sharing of information and open communication.

*“It was an opportunity to collate information and feelings about the child in an open forum where action could be immediately agreed upon.”*

*“Working as a team knowing what everyone was doing – everybody involved. Came to one meeting to deal with matters, all working to the same goal.”*

A small number of agencies made negative comments with regard to working collaboratively. It was expressed that communication could have been better between the agencies involved.

*“Some agencies felt that [two agencies] could have done more to help and support the family.”*

**Figure 10 Overall performance of Case Management Group in working collaboratively**

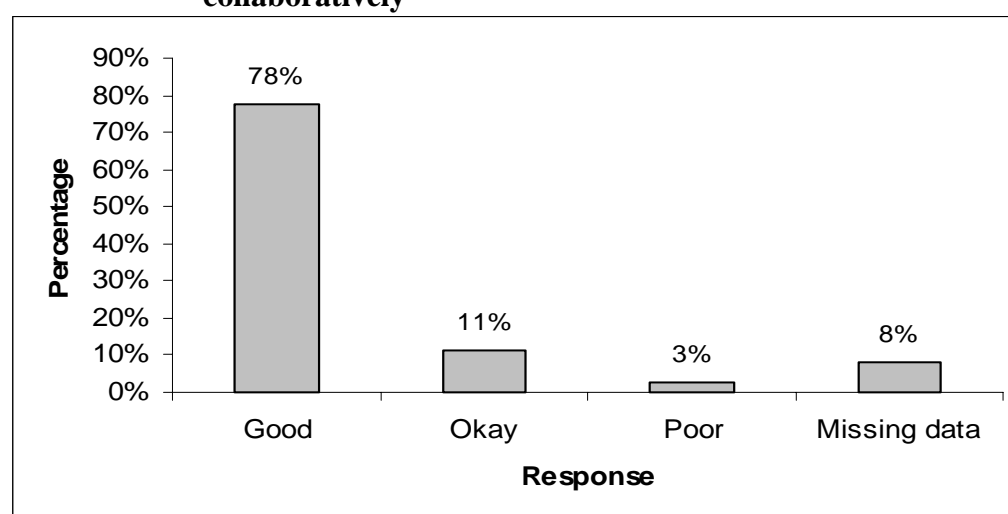


Figure based on 135 final meeting forms that collected information on this aspect received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

### 4.3 What worked well?

The collaborative approach was viewed positively by the majority of agencies involved. It was indicated that the process encouraged co-operation and open sharing of information between agencies.

Eight agencies indicated that the inclusion of the family/whanau was beneficial.

*“Bringing in extended family support. The meeting was able to be called at relatively short notice at a time when the needs of the family were greatest.”*

Another agency commented that this approach empowered families, and helped them understand the connections between agencies and services available to them.

### 4.4 What could have been improved?

Three key areas of improvement were suggested and are outlined below.

#### 1. Better agency involvement

The comments of twenty-three agencies indicated that the commitment and/or communication of some agencies could have been improved. This included issues around the attendance of meetings, taking responsibility for work, and communication between agencies.

*“Enthusiasm of some agencies tailed off over time – others remained committed.”*

*“Other agents could have contacted the head agent about concerns.”*

A small number of agencies commented that the facilitation of the meetings could be improved, or that the Lead Agent could have had a more active role in the case.

*“Difficulty with chairing the meetings as many agencies there and issues quite difficult to deal with.”*

*“Lead Agency failed to provide or ensure a plan was distributed to SF group members. Process broke down, and as co-ordinator I have been unable to ascertain what is now happening/who is involved.”*

Two agencies suggested having a male representative in the Case Management Group would improve the case management:

*“Have a male as part of the team, so that when there is a male in the family you are working with, they may feel more comfortable.”*

#### 2. Family/ whanau contribution

Twenty-three agencies indicated that the inadequacy or inability of family/whanau to contribute to the meetings had an impact on the success of the initiative.

*“Family have been quite mobile in the past, and it was disappointing to see them move to another area. Family were unwilling to address financial issues, leading to the need to move on.”*

*“It was disappointing that the family did not wish to take actions to improve the situation, or avail themselves of services offered.”*

### **3. Timing/ process issues**

Ten agencies felt that there were timing issues that could have been improved. These ranged from beginning the Strengthening Families process earlier, to holding the meetings more regularly. Frustration was noted over delays in some cases.

*“There is a current difficulty in South Canterbury to have young people seen or assessed by psychiatrists or psychologists, and this causes frustrations.”*

*“Some members of clients family angry over delays and process.”*

One agency suggested that:

*“The young person should be provided with an advocate and met prior to this meeting to discuss concerns, issues, etc.”*

## **4.5 Outcomes achieved**

One hundred and twenty seven of the agencies commented on the outcomes that were achieved as a result of the case management initiative. Four key themes emerged.

### **1. Greater support for family/whanau**

Thirty-six agencies indicated that collaborative case management provided greater support to family/whanau. This was through the provision of services, as well as the family/whanau feeling supported through sharing their experiences and issues.

*“More support and options for the [young person] and their family.”*

*“[Father] and [Mother] attending relationship counselling together. Child management and home management strategies put in place.”*

Twenty three agencies indicated that issues had been successfully conveyed to, and taken on board by the parents, resulting in a positive outcome.

*“The parents acknowledge that they need to address their problems. The young person is achieving in spite of the parents anger towards each other.”*

Three agencies outlined how working together helped the client by enhancing their understanding of the issues, as well as providing them with a more efficient service.

*“Good to prevent ‘agency hopping’ by client. Allows client to see which worker does what. Time efficient to co-ordinate services, thus cost effective.”*

### **2. Improvement in behaviour of child/young person**

Twenty three agencies indicated that progress had been made with the child/young person, and this was demonstrated in a reported improvement in their behaviour.

*“Previously, the family had been dealing piecemeal with a number of people and had the feeling that they were not achieving much. The Strengthening*



*Families process gave the family strength to put the necessary changes in place. From School's point of view [child's] remarkable turnaround in behaviour sustained now over four weeks, academic progress excellent."*

*"Truancy and school work improvement. Improved relationships at home and criminal activity ceased."*

### **3. Improvement in the well-being/safety of child/young person**

Twenty-one agencies commented on an improvement in the well being, and health and safety of the young person/child and family/whanau.

*"Placing him in whanau environment. Meeting child's needs, more open communication amongst whanau. Having boundaries in place for student introducing a whole family lifestyle. Having a male person (uncle) as caregiver."*

### **4. Further assessment/monitoring**

Twenty agencies identified referring the child on for further assessment and/or monitoring as an outcome. In 13 of these cases, the child/young person was referred onto Child, Youth and Family under the Truancy Act and/or because of concern for their care and protection.

*"Referral was made to Child Youth and Family – notification of concerns re safety of the child involved. Decision reached that Strengthening Families was not meeting the family's needs."*

Eleven agencies commented on the need for further monitoring and intervention.

*"It is always sad to feel the plans made with the young person are not making any difference, and that he has made other choices which may have a negative result. Maybe an FGC will address issues in a better way."*

## 5. Families’/ whanau experiences and views

When reading the following section, it is important to be aware that in approximately one third of final meeting forms received, there was no response to questions for family/whanau. This is shown in the figures below as ‘missing data’.

### 5.1 Were meetings held at a convenient time?

The majority of families/whanau who responded agreed that the meetings were held at a convenient time for them (see Figure 11).

However, two families/whanau commented that they needed more time in the meetings.

*“More time could have been allowed – felt that the priority was to reach a decision (any decision) in order to get out of the meeting even though no issues were being resolved.”*

**Figure 11** Were meetings held at a convenient time for you?

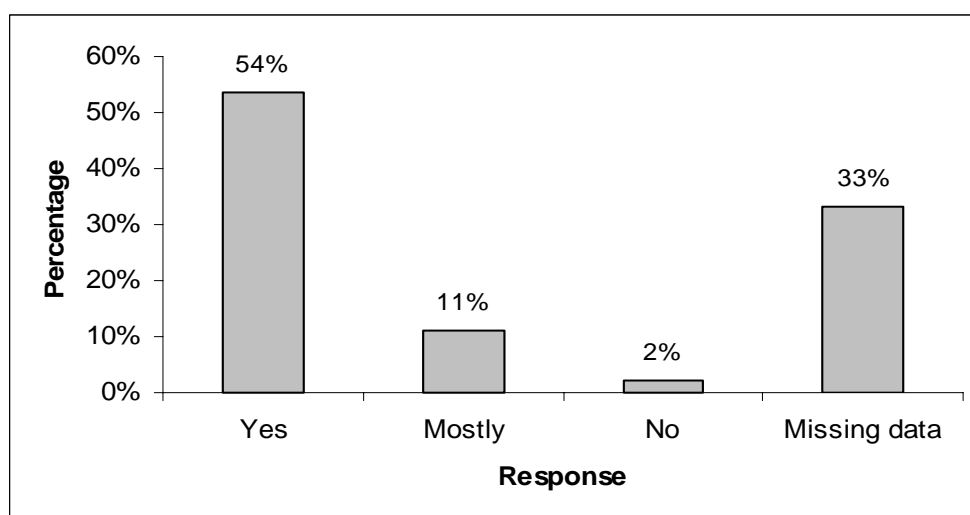


Figure based on 136 final meeting forms that collected information on this aspect received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

### 5.2 Did agencies listen?

The majority of families/whanau who responded agreed that they were listened to or mostly listened to (see Figure 12).

The majority of the twenty-nine families/whanau that indicated they were ‘mostly’ listened to commented that there was some room for improvement. For example:

*“They listened to what they wanted to hear (some of them).”*

*“Sometimes felt as though it was my fault.”*

**Figure 12 Did you feel that people listened to you?**

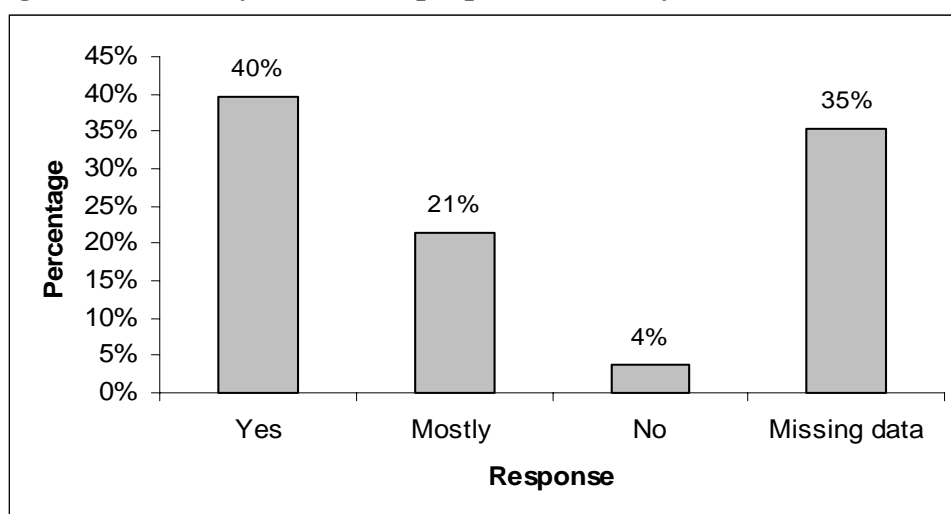


Figure based on 136 final meeting forms that collected information on this aspect received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

### 5.3 Did agencies understand?

The majority of families/whanau who responded agreed that the agencies understood or mostly understood what was important to them (see Figure 13).

A number of those who indicated that they ‘mostly’ felt that agencies understood what was important to them, made comments that indicated there was some room for improvement. For example:

*“Felt the school may have been there because they ‘had’ to be.”*

A small number of families/whanau did not believe that agencies understood what was important to them.

*“I didn’t think people were interested in me, just the girls.”*

*“People didn’t seem to listen and hear the [young person] was not happy at school.”*

**Figure 13 Did you feel that people understood what was important to you?**

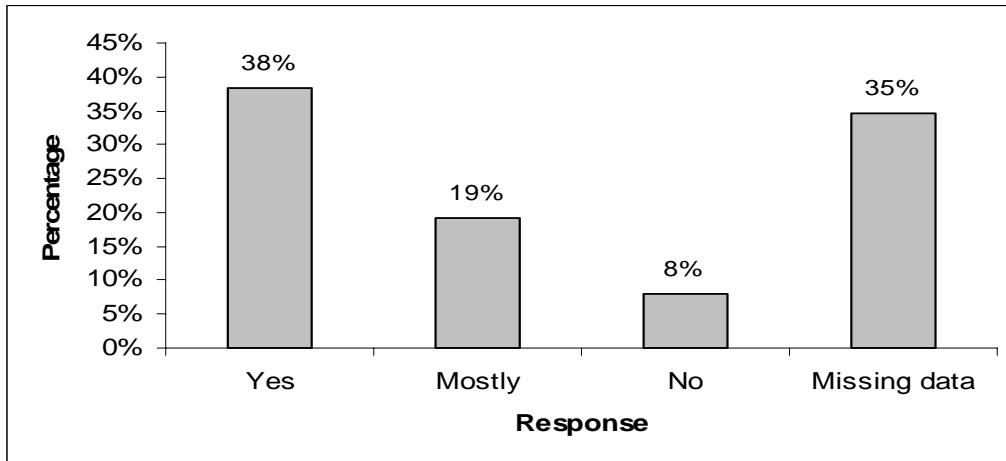


Figure based on 136 final meeting forms that collected information on this aspect received by MSP (January 2000 – May 2001)

#### **5.4 What did families/whanau find helpful?**

Eighty-five families/whanau commented on what things they found helpful in the collaborative case management initiative. Three main themes emerged.

##### **1. Greater support to family/whanau**

The comments of thirty-five families/whanau indicated that the initiative was supportive and a good forum to air concerns.

*“The fact that there were plenty of people, the right people, listening. [I] felt good knowing that people love her children and look forward to seeing them.”*

*“Made me realise the support was there for me if I wanted it.”*

##### **2. Improvement in family/whanau’s situation**

Twenty-two families/whanau commented there was an improvement in their situation, or that strategies were implemented to improve their situation.

*“Parentline counselling was excellent. After daughter had baby CYF good too.”*

*“I was a bit nervous, scared not knowing what was going on but overall things have turned out so good. I’m less stressed and my babies are back to being happy once again.”*

##### **3. Working collaboratively**

Fourteen families/whanau commented that the agencies working together collaboratively was helpful.

*“Just getting the group together – a combined approach helped.”*

*“That everyone got together at the same time”*

Eleven families/whanau saw open communication as an outcome of the collaborative case management.

*“All the hui – communication always open. What’s going down. No hidden agenda.”*

However, of those families/whanau who commented, a small number indicated that they did not find the collaborative case management useful.

## **5.5 What could have been improved?**

Sixty-three families/whanau commented on what things could be improved. Of these, 12 families/whanau indicated that communication and information about Strengthening Families between agencies and/or between the agencies and families/whanau could have been improved.

*“Mental health needed to attend, as lay people we needed an explanation on why the child was on what we thought a heavy dose of Retalin.”*

*“Pamphlets to explain the process to the family might help reduce anxiety before the first meeting.”*

Eight families/whanau commented that the agencies could have improved their commitment and input into the process.

*“It would have been good if the invited could attend.”*

*“For other agencies to stay committed to Strengthening Families.”*

Earlier intervention by agencies was seen as a suggested improvement by four families/whanau.

*“SES involvement sooner. School didn’t refer on soon enough. Wishy-washy, no clear direction with school.”*

Other suggestions for improvement included greater involvement of young people in the process, more time allowed to discuss issues and to have more information available about Strengthening Families.

## **5.6 Overall – how did families/whanau find Strengthening Families?**

Eighty-two families/whanau commented on how they found Strengthening Families overall, the majority of whom responded positively about the process.

*“Successful, very reassuring for [Mother] to know that skilled people willing to help, to give [children] skills to reach their potential.”*

*“Worthwhile, important that it happened.”*

A number expressed that the changes implemented were generally effective in meeting their needs.

## Appendix One: Final Meeting Form

### Strengthening Families - collaborative case management

#### Final meeting form

The Lead Agency should complete this form – on a consensus basis – at the final collaborative case meeting (when closure is agreed). The form seeks to review how well the case management approach worked in this instance, and to seek agencies’ and family’s views on what worked well and to identify areas for improvement.

#### Agency involvement

District		Date of final meeting	
Who made the initial referral to Strengthening Families?		Who was selected as Lead Agency?	
What agencies were involved <b>initially</b> ? (ie in the first 6 months)			
What other agencies became involved over time? (eg after the first 6 months)			

#### Agencies’ experiences and views

Please rate the overall performance of the:	good	okay	poor	comments/ suggestions for improvement
<b>Lead agency</b> - in co-ordinating the meetings				
<b>Case management group</b> in 1) identifying tasks, and planning action				
2) respecting clients needs and choices				
3) working collaboratively				

Overall – what worked well?	
Overall, what could have been improved?	
Please identify outcomes that were achieved as a result of the case management initiative	

### The family/whanau experiences and views

	yes	mostly	no	comments/ suggestions for improvement
Were meetings held at convenient times for you?				
Did you feel people listened to you?				
Did you feel people understood what was important to you?				

What things did you find helpful?	
What things could be done better?	
Overall, how have you found Strengthening Families?	

### Any other comments

From the <b>family/whanau</b> perspective	
From the <b>agency</b> perspective	

**Thank you for completing this. Please send this to**  
 Strengthening Families Project Team, C/- Ministry of Social Policy, Private Bag 39993, Wellington.  
 Telephone: Barry Shea 0-4-916 3756 or Fax 0-4-916 3778 or email Barry.Shea004@mosp.govt.nz

## Appendix Two: Agencies

Category	Examples of agencies included
<b>Government Agencies</b>	Department of Child, Youth and Family Services NZ Police/ Youth Aid Department of Work & Income Housing New Zealand Accident Compensation Corporation Ministry of Education Youth Justice Community Correction/ Probation Prisons
<b>Education Agencies</b>	Specialist Education Services Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour
<b>Health Agencies</b>	Public Health Nurse CAF, YSS (Youth Speciality Service), CAMHS, CAFT, CYMH, Child and Adolescent Unit, CAMS, Youth Wellness Centre
<b>Community Agencies</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations (eg. Barnardos, Budget Advice, CCS, Lifelinks, Plunket)