The Impact of Notification to Statutory Services on the NGO Client-Worker Relationship

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ABSTRACT:

Making a notification of child abuse to Child, Youth and Family can have a significant impact on the client-worker relationship. This study explored two main issues: what was the effect of notification on the client-worker relationship, and whether there were strategies, tools or aspects of a case that mitigated the potential for conflict and impasse as a result of a notification proceeding. Practitioners from a Family Works site were interviewed about what the effect of notification had been and what they believed helped in working through the notification process with their clients. As these workers were all from the same agency and are trained regarding child abuse issues, this allowed an in-depth look into the effect on the client-worker relationship of notification.

This study found that notification can lead to significant stress in the client-worker relationship and the power dynamic can be heightened but the majority of relationships continue to function despite this. Use of transparency and providing ongoing support are significant strategies workers can utilise to assist with maintaining the client-worker relationship following notification. Factors such as the level of engagement the client has with both the worker and the intervention that is occurring are potential indicators as to whether the client-worker relationship can be maintained through a notification. Supportive organisational relationships for the worker and clear policies and procedures in the work place assist the practitioner to manage with the notification and navigating through this with the client.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This research and its context will be broadly outlined in the introduction. Key elements of the research will also be identified.

RESEARCH

In the course of social work and family support in an NGO (non-government organisation) social service agency, workers occasionally suspect or become aware that abuse is occurring to a child. The worker then undertakes a process to make a notification of the abuse to the New Zealand government agency (Child, Youth and Family) charged with the care and protection of children. This qualitative research focuses on the impact on the client-NGO worker relationship of notification by the worker of suspected or actual child abuse or neglect. A qualitative approach was taken as qualitative research allows for an in-depth study of participants views. "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001, p. 3).

This thesis is concerned with the impact of notification to statutory services on the client-NGO worker relationship. This relationship is important because clients receive the support they require and assistance to bring about change in their families through this relationship. While there is limited research on this topic, practitioners are certainly concerned that notification can have a negative effect on the client-worker relationship and result in disengagement by the client (Alvarez et al., 2004). The research questions asked in this research were: a. what is the impact of notification on the client-worker relationship? and b. are there strategies or factors that assist or threaten the maintenance of the client-worker relationship through the notification process? As there was limited New Zealand research specific to NGO social service agencies this research fills clear gaps in the available research. It is hoped that this research could help to inform practice in terms of describing the impact of notification as well as exploring what was learnt in relation to factors or strategies that helped the client-worker relationship be maintained and functional following notification.

This constructivist research aims to understand the subjective viewpoint of the participants and provide enough context and detail in order to allow for transferability. From the detail the reader can deduce whether the findings relate to particular circumstances or environments.

This research occurred within an NGO social service agency and used semi-structured interviews to discuss with front-line workers their experiences.

RESEARCH SETTING

Family Works is a nationwide non-government organisation (NGO) that operates independent sites throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand. The branch of Family Works referred to in this study; hereby referred to as Family Works; is a Child and Family Support and Community Service as identified by s396(3) and s403 of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989. Child and Family Support and Community Services were established under the Act in order for there to be choice for families to engage with a community service with interventions focused on child protection (Beddoe, 1993; Read, 1993). This choice was considered to be important for several reasons including that it would assist some families to have limited engagement with the statutory system, allow families to choose a culturally specific service, and give the community more responsibility for supporting their families. There were concerns that this sociological based legislation (Cooper, 1993) was not adequately resourced to the disadvantage of NGO social services and their clients (Read, 1993). Child and Family Support and Community Services have adapted over time to source additional funding streams to supplement the part-funding from the government funding agency.

As a Child and Family Support and Community Service, Family Works provides a range of support services including foster care in a variety of ways (e.g respite care support and care for the Chief Executive of Child, Youth and Family). Child, Youth and Family is the government agency with the statutory role of protecting the children and young people of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Family Works is contracted to provide services for Child, Youth and Family in a number of ways, with the family's consent. This includes contracted work to provide counselling and social work support services as part of a Child, Youth and Family plan to

support a family. Child, Youth and Family contracts specific support relating to a number of goals including return home, or intensive support to prevent entry to care. There are times when Child, Youth and Family require Parenting Assessments to be completed which focus on issues as identified by Child, Youth and Family. The goals of these assessments are specified by Child, Youth and Family and may be a focus on supporting change or assessing what changes have occurred and the parental capacity to provide a safe and secure home for their children. These are an example of some of the types of work that Child, Youth and Family contract Family Works to provide.

Family Works provides a variety of services for children and young people in the 0-18 year old age group. In addition to the work contracted by Child, Youth and Family, families can self-refer for support or ask other services involved with them to make the referral on their behalf. This can involve group work (parenting or family programmes), or working directly with the child/young person, including the parents/caregivers (and/or other family members) at some level, family work or parenting support may occur with the parents/caregivers without the child or young person. Family Works recognises that it is imperative when working with children/young people that work includes the parents/caregivers, so that they can contribute to and understand the work that is occurring with their children so that they can provide the appropriate support.

As an NGO, making notifications about suspected or actual child abuse or neglect is a small part of the work of this agency. The majority of the work is helping and supporting clients with a focus on a wide range of issues.

Family Works has a policy outlining the limits of confidentiality where concerns are evident in relation to the care or protection of any individual. Clients are informed that it is Family Works policy to inform the authorities if there are any safety concerns identified when working with them. The Privacy Act, 1993 legally allows for disclosures of personal information held by agencies where it occurs to "prevent or lessen a serious threat" (Principle 11(f)). The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) Code of Ethics also allows for disclosures of client information where not doing so may result in harm or an individual being

endangered. The Code is clear though that a social worker should only disclose if they have consulted "with a supervisor or colleagues" (3.13). At Family Works, the worker must raise all safety issues with their supervisor and decisions are made at this level as to what action will be taken to ensure the safety of the child. It is a type of internal mandatory reporting policy however there is discretion to utilise different strategies if this is considered to be a more appropriate course of action in the case consultation process.

Family Works employs mainly social workers and family/whanau workers to work directly with clients. These staff are contractually obligated to have membership with ANZASW and have registration if it applies to their profession. Qualifications are varied within the workforce however staff are required to complete a Child Protection Studies (CPS) Certificate after they begin working for the agency. Further study toward a recognised qualification is expected of staff members who do not have a formal qualification when they are employed by Family Works.

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

The wider context for this research is Aotearoa/New Zealand a country with over four million citizens. The population is mainly centred in urban areas with smaller populations in the rural areas. The main focus for business in New Zealand is on tourism and primary industry such as agriculture.

The tangata whenua or native people of New Zealand are Maori. In 1840 a treaty was signed between the Crown and many of the local iwi/tribes which included the principles of partnership, participation and protection. The Treaty of Waitangi as a document has been misunderstood and misrepresented having a huge and devastating effect on the Maori culture of New Zealand. While the Government has worked toward honouring the Treaty and righting the wrongs of the past, the statistics for Maori continue to be concerning in many regards – with high crime, domestic violence and poverty (Murphy, 2010). For social workers in New Zealand it is essential and part of training to have a good understanding of maoritanga (Maori culture) and protocols in order to offer a culturally appropriate service. In the 2013 census, Statistics NZ state that 14.9 percent of the population

of New Zealand identify as Maori, 74% identify themselves as of European descent, 11.8% Asian and 7.4% Pacific people.

New Zealand is a culturally diverse nation. Immigration occurs for many reasons including in relation to international students and particular employment skills being sought from overseas. To provide social work within New Zealand knowledge about different cultures within the community is necessary in order to ensure that people are in a position to seek the support that they require.

While New Zealand has a long list of sporting, artistic and innovation achievements, there are many aspects that are concerning such as poverty, child abuse and domestic violence. There are school based programmes to provide breakfast in some schools due to the fact that some children in New Zealand arrive at school having had no morning meal. There are some schools that have a free lunch programme to ensure that all children have the fuel on board in order to learn. In 2013, the Office of the Children's Commissioner published the report: Child Poverty in NZ: Building on Progress to Date which noted in terms of poverty "as many as 25 percent – up to about 265,000 New Zealand children – currently live in poverty." (p.1). The Unicef Innocenti Research Centre (2000) focused on child poverty and stated: "The persistence of child poverty in rich countries undermines both equality of opportunity and commonality of values." (p.3). Their report in 2014 indicated that New Zealand poverty rates had stagnated while other countries had managed to make significant change to child poverty rates. In terms of child abuse the Unicef Innocenti Research Centre (2003) reported that New Zealand was one of five countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that "have levels of child maltreatment deaths that are four to six times higher than the average for the leading countries." (p. 4). The report suggested that the rates were declining, however it was concerning that New Zealand had such a high child death rate from maltreatment. The report also noted that these rates linked to adult assault rates, that when child death rates due to maltreatment were high then the adult assault rates were comparably high relative to other countries.

New Zealand children, families and work referred to in this research needs to be seen within this context. There are many contextual factors that impact on the development of a child. Social workers work to support children and their families within their environments and advocate for clients when required within these systems. The social service environment itself can have a significant impact in terms of the policies, practices they have in place and access for people in the community. Social workers also exist within an organisational system that constrains and supports them in different ways. The client-worker relationship exists within this complex system.

OVERVIEW

The findings of this research show that making a notification does not necessarily result in the client disengaging from the service. Notification was noted as stressful on the client-worker relationship and presenting a challenge that needed to be worked through, in order for the relationship to continue to be effective and helpful to the client. While it was clear that there were no guaranteed ways to ensure that the client-worker relationship would continue following notification, participants noted strategies and factors that assisted with relationship maintenance following notification. Participants identified client engagement and transparency regarding the organisation's policy to report abuse and in relation to any concerns that were held by the worker, as helpful for the client-worker relationship. How the matter was approached by the worker was significant, as was continued support offered to the client. Encouraging the client/parent to make the notification themselves was expressed as an empowering process and useful in the context of the support being offered. The communication with Child, Youth and Family was potentially useful but also at times provided some frustrations for the ongoing work with the client. It was also noted that prior involvement with Child, Youth and Family could be a positive factor as the client knew the process and understood what was going to happen.

For the workers themselves, it was useful to have organisational support in the process of making a notification and in terms of the ongoing work. Participants stated that their belief in the need for notification and their experience and

knowledge were also helpful in terms of proceeding with the notification and working with the client around that.

The context and an overview of this research has been provided in this chapter. In the next chapter the literature is reviewed in relation to mandatory reporting of abuse, notification issues and therapeutic impasse after summarising the child protection laws as they relate to New Zealand. Then an explanation of the methodology that has been used in this research is presented followed by the data analysis and results from the research. The discussion states the findings as they relate to literature in the field and notes the limitations in this research. The practice implications from this research and recommendations that can be made from this then conclude this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review relates to the impact of making a statutory notification of child abuse and neglect on the client-NGO worker relationship. Client in this context refers to the person who seeks the support from the NGO worker. It opens with an outline of the law that relates to child protection in New Zealand. The review then covers issues of mandatory reporting, therapeutic impasse and the notification process. Mandatory reporting is explored for two reasons. Mandatory reporting literature explores the issues for clinicians in regard to making a notification. In addition, as stated previously Family Works has an aspect of mandatory reporting, as pertains to service policy rather than being legally mandated. An exploration of the literature which elaborates on the issues regarding making a notification regarding child abuse is constructed. The issues include evaluating risk and making the decision to notify. Then literature relating to therapeutic impasse focuses on the therapeutic relationship and factors concerning impasses that occur and how this may relate to the client-worker relationship when making a notification. Finally a conceptual framework is constructed which focuses on stress and support.

NEW ZEALAND LAW

In New Zealand the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989 is the law that focuses on the care and protection of children. For the definitions of care or protection concerns see Appendix A: s14 Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989. The Act does not include mandatory reporting of abuse. This Act was considered to be an innovative document and was praised for the focus on the safety of the child and the emphasis on the importance of the family in reference to decision making (Turnell & Edwards, 1999). The Act was established following discontent over the previous law (Children and Young Persons Act, 1974) and the fact that it did not appear to be working and particularly not for the Maori population (Connolly, 2004). The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989 came into being in part due to the recommendations made by the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare in their ground breaking report Puao-Te-Ata-Tu (Day Break), (1988). They recommended a comprehensive approach to deal with what they

stated resulted from "cultural imperialism, deprivation and alienation" (p.8). With the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989 New Zealand could be viewed as having a welfare orientation which had aspects of both family support and child welfare, due to the emphasis on family decision-making processes (Connolly, 2004).

Delaronde, King, Bendel, and Reece (2000) refer to flexible reporting systems in other countries. In these systems family assessments rather than statutory investigations are conducted due to presentation of lower risk. This system is utilised in New Zealand, as an intention of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989 was to have the community and agencies more involved in the protection of children.

The Vulnerable Children Act, 2014 was introduced following a nationwide consultation process in recognition that New Zealand needed to do more to protect the children of the country. It was thought that through consultation and sharing ideas that new and creative solutions might be found. The Vulnerable Children Act, 2014 focuses on the well-being of vulnerable children in New Zealand. It stipulates that identified organisations must have policies in place for the protection of children and that people working with children will be safety checked. While the Act made the stipulation that identified organisations have in place a policy relating to dealing with child abuse concerns and reporting to Child, Youth and Family, all Child and Family Support Services already had robust policies in place in their organisations. Introducing mandatory reporting was contemplated but it was decided that New Zealand already had a high notification rate, and it would possibly lead to over-reporting and increase the risk that families would be needlessly involved with the statutory agency, as stated by the Social Development Minister, Paula Bennett (2014). She was informed in these ideas from the literature review on mandatory reporting prepared by the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (2012). In September 2013, Jacinda Ardern, Member of Parliament, stated in the first reading of the Vulnerable Children Bill, that the Labour Party agreed that mandatory reporting should not be included in the Act and that "pseudo-mandatory reporting" was evident with the expectation that identified services would have reporting policies in place.

New Zealand's focus on the safety of the child is enhanced with being bound by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) to provide protection to children from sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect. UNCROC was ratified by the New Zealand Government in 1993. Kids Missing Out, a report written by Unicef New Zealand in 2013 has been critical that New Zealand has been too slow to implement recommendations made by the United Nations Committee. The report states that all children's rights are not catered for in New Zealand as the focus has been on vulnerable children. The report highlights poverty as an ongoing area of concern impacting on children and remarks on a number of areas where New Zealand is not adhering to UNCROC recommendations. There is additional concern that there is a lack of transparency regarding how New Zealand is meeting its obligations.

EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE

The short-term and long-term effects of child abuse are well known (Dubowitz & Bennett, 2007; Ludwig & Rostain, 2009). "The risk of mental health problems, relationship difficulties and social problems is high amongst those who carry unresolved issues of loss, abuse and trauma into adulthood" (Howe, 2008, p.79). Academic issues and criminal behaviour can occur (Ludwig & Rostain, 2009) as can welfare dependency (Spratt, 2009) and physical health issues (Felitti et al., 1998). Child abuse can result in permanent disability and death (Thyen, Thiessen, & Heinsohn-Krug, 1995). The process of disclosure (revealing that abuse has occurred), is an ongoing one and it is suggested that for the child who has been abused, having belief in oneself is imperative to proceeding with disclosure (Staller & Nelson-Gardell, 2005). Through analysis of prior focus group data of girls who had survived sexual abuse, Staller and Nelson-Gardell (2005), further found that the girls spoke of the feelings they experienced in relation to the abuse and that for them the most important part of the disclosure process was "that they believed in themselves" (p.1421) rather than that others believed them. The continued role of the social worker/family worker could therefore be extremely beneficial to the child with the support provided. It would potentially be very disruptive for the child if the relationship ends due to the notification. If the child

is at risk however, the loss of the client-worker relationship is secondary to ensuring the safety of the child.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Mandatory reporting is when professionals in contact with children are compelled by law to refer to the statutory agency any suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. There are many advantages and disadvantages to mandatory reporting, well rehearsed in the literature. This is an important aspect of this study because the literature explores the issues of reporting for workers and clients and also Family Works practitioners operate within a policy which has aspects of mandatory reporting.

Mandatory reporting is legislated in a number of countries in a variety of ways. "Mandatory child abuse reporting laws have developed in particular detail in the United States, Canada and Australia..." (Mathews & Kenny, 2008, p.50). Mandatory reporting laws first developed in the United States of America and identified medical professionals as being mandated to report physical abuse (Mathews & Kenny, 2008). Over time the American laws extended to include other types of abuse, other professions and other people but there is variability between states (Mathews & Kenny, 2008). In Canada there is variability in mandatory reporting laws between provinces but the types of abuse to be reported on are universal (Mathews & Kenny, 2008). In Australia, each state has different laws in relation to the reporting of child abuse. Some states identify particular professions which are mandated to notify and specify which types of abuse they must notify about. There is variability between states in relation to whether the abuse to be notified has occurred in the past, is occurring in the present or likely to occur in the future. The Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (2012) report in relation to mandatory reporting contains a good overview of the Australian mandatory reporting laws.

It is raised as a concerning possibility that having mandatory reporting may lead to clinicians choosing not to ask about abuse as a way around the issue or that once clients are informed of mandatory reporting they choose not to tell (Nicolai & Scott, 1994). In addition to the child/young person's safety continuing to be at risk, the outcome of both of these possible consequences is that the client/family

does not receive the necessary therapeutic assistance or support due to disengagement or not seeking help when it is needed. Changes to how children and families seek help is a reported negative impact of mandated reporting laws (Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, 2012; Munro & Parton, 2007).

This suggestion that mandatory reporting may exclude openness and exploration about abuse issues in therapy or social work support is concerning when there are already a multitude of reasons why it does not occur already. For the victim/survivor of abuse there may be issues related to fear, stigma or dissociation. For parents there may be concerns about having statutory services involved, having their children removed from their care or feelings related to shame or guilt. For clinicians there may be times abuse queries are not made, due to an understanding that it can be upsetting for people and when it is not the presenting issue the clinician does not want to cause undue stress. A review of New Zealand Community Mental Health records in the study by Agar, Read, and Bush (2002) revealed that "... enquiry about abuse is not routinely taking place" (p. 533). With the incidence of disclosure being so low, abuse queries may provide the opportunity of revealing when abuse has occurred (Agar et al., 2002; Read, 2007). While this literature relates to services working with adults, it is also found that for children disclosures occur when they perceive that there is the opportunity to do so in a supportive way (Jensen, Gulbrandsen, Mossige, Reichelt, & Tjersland, 2005). It serves to illustrate the point that in work with parents or children, things can be said or situations alluded to where the worker can choose to explore these further or take a different direction. The worker may choose not to explore issues more fully if they are concerned about needing to report abuse and the impact on their working relationship with the family.

Those who argue in favour of mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse argue that it is necessary for the safety of the child. "It is, indeed, difficult to formulate a moral argument *against* the position that therapists should act to protect those whom they believe to be endangered, as should all human beings."(Appelbaum, 1985, p.429). However, predicting risk and knowing what happens behind closed doors in terms of abuse is not straight forward, as the notification statistics show.

NOTIFICATION STATISTICS

The Child, Youth and Family website stated that in 2013, 148,659 notifications were made to the statutory agency and 61,877 (42%) required further action. Of these initial 148,659 notifications, 22,984 (15%) were found to substantiate abuse, relating to 18,595 children/young people. These percentages are consistent with other years (Mardani, 2010).

There may be many reasons for why less than 50% of notifications require follow up. It may be that child protection services thresholds for intervention change due to policy (Hansen & Ainsworth, 2013), or that Child, Youth and Family encounter barriers to evidence gathering in their investigation that result in not enough information for further follow up, or that the care and protection system is overloaded (Hansen & Ainsworth, 2013) and therefore assessments are not as thorough due to time constraints, or that notifications are made that wrongly accuse people of abuse (Levine & Doueck, 1995). It is also suggested that the volume of these unfounded notifications indicate that there needs to be further education at a community level and at a professional level regarding child abuse (Hodgson,1993; Taylor,1993).

The rate of substantiation of notifications of abuse is low and this rate varies across Child, Youth and Family site offices. The Child, Youth and Family website shows the notification, follow up and substantiation of abuse rates across regions and site offices. Table 1 shows the variation between two regions.

Table 1. Variation of Follow Up and Substantiation of Abuse between Two Child, Youth and Family Regions

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Central Region – Lower North Island	% followed up	41.7	34	33.2	33.1	36.3
	% substantiated	15.7	10.7	10.9	11.1	10.9
Southern Region – Otago/Southland	% followed up	55.9	61.5	56.7	47.8	46.2
	% substantiated	18.8	19.7	15.8	14.9	14.4

The reasons for this variation may relate to directives regarding thresholds varying between regions or that the gate-keeping mechanisms in place vary between regions, as Buckley identified as an issue in Ireland in 2000. Gatekeeping can result in thresholds being raised in order for services to manage with workloads, resulting in frustration for notifiers (Scott & O'Neil, 2003). It can affect

future reporting if a notifier becomes discouraged that their previous reports were not followed up as they may be inclined not to follow through on further reports (Flaherty, Jones, & Sege, 2004). Humphreys (2008) reflects on the Australian system and states that this difference between the number of reports, the number investigated and then the number of abuse claims substantiated reflects a system that is not functional. She recommends further funding to community based services to more adequately and appropriately manage many of the notifications made in relation to domestic violence.

THE NOTIFICATION PROCESS

There are a number of factors that may influence a decision whether to notify. Jones et al. (2008) completed telephone interviews with paediatric clinicians and found that familiarity; how well the family was known to the clinician; is one factor that impacts on decision-making. If the clinician had a positive working relationship with the client then they might be more likely to view the incident in a favourable light and be less likely to report, whereas if they were aware of a history of risk factors then they would be more likely to notify.

The fine balance for practitioners is continuing to engage and support clients whilst also assessing and managing risk. The struggle for the practitioner is to be the mediator of risk, an 'expert' position and at the same time utilise the practice values of empowerment and partnership (Keddell, 2011). When the work with the client involves risk factors the worker may be concerned that rather than being an agent of change their role is an agent of control. It can feel to the worker like they are no longer walking alongside the client in making change and rather dictating that change to them. Healy (1998) notes that being judgemental is at odds with social work and when the impact on people's lives can be so significant when a notification is made, it puts social workers in a difficult position. While she notes that these decisions must be made and acted upon, she recommends doing this openly allowing for client participation.

Risk is a large component of the issue of maintaining the client-worker relationship when making a notification. Risk is evident in a number of different ways. Primarily there is risk to the child/young person which necessitates the

notification being made. Further risk relates to the client-worker relationship and whether in making a notification, the client will choose to disengage from the service. Services need to be aware of the effect the policies and procedures they have in place in response to risk have on the client-worker relationship. This is particularly so in the child protection service where following child death inquiries "the result is more procedures, more targets" (Howe, 2010, p.332).

The practitioner needs also to assess the risk of introducing Child, Youth and Family into the family system and the impact that this will have on the family. The risk of the statutory child protection service being involved with the family may be that intervention will not be of benefit to the child and family (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Jones et al., 2008; Zellman, 1990) and could result in the parent(s) feeling stigmatised (Moore-Newberger & Newberger, 1982) and undermine their belief in their parenting ability. The risk may relate to concern that harm could occur to the child as a result of the notification due to the added stress to an already stressed family (Eisbath & Driessnack, 2010). The risk may be seen as interrupting any progress toward change that the family are making at the time of the notification, or the risk that the child will be removed from the home as an outcome of the Child, Youth and Family involvement and then the worker's actions have led to a disintegration of the family. Removal would mean safety from the harm they were experiencing in their home and there is evidence that young people do well following return home from foster care (Maluccio, Pine, & Warsh, 1994). Unfortunately there is also evidence that due to the impact on the parent-child relationship of separation through foster care, once the child develops into a teenager and if there has not been a focus on repairing this relationship there is a risk that tensions will build resulting in further abuse (Scott & O'Neil, 1996). There is also evidence of educational issues for children in care however this is comparable with children involved in social services (Maluccio, Ainsworth, & Thoburn, 2000) and may therefore be attributed to the issues experienced in the home environment. Doyle (2007) studied children where a decision to place them in to foster care was marginal and due to the circumstances could alternatively have lead to a decision not to come into care. He noted that significant benefits were not evident from these children being placed into care and in fact there were

negative effects on schooling, pregnancy statistics and lower wages when they began in the work force. Doyle (2013) reported delinquency in adolescence and need of short-term emergency health care again for children marginally placed in foster care. In both these studies Doyle (2007, 2013) noted caution that this effect of placement could not be compared with children where serious abuse had occurred or those children who had never required foster care. Living in long term foster care indicated a risk of concerning sexual behaviour however this may have related to the abuse that resulted in the child coming into care (Carpenter, Clyman, Davidson, & Steiner, 2001). Timms and Thoburn (2006) note that children experience grief with the separation and loss of contact with family, friends and previous caregivers. They also found in their questionnaire feedback from young people in care, that many stated that they felt safe in care and recognised that living at home had not been safe for them. The risk of introducing a child protection service has to be balanced with the advantages to the child of protecting them from further harm and the impact that abuse has in terms of outcomes for the future (Spratt, 2009).

Risk to the child on various levels has to also be assessed in relation to making a notification. It raises a number of vital questions, for example: if the perpetrator or even the potentially protective parent is spoken with prior to the notification being made, will this result in further risk to the child? Will the perpetrator blame the child for disclosing or will the perpetrator become enraged by the notification and use the child as a target of their anger? If the child is told by the practitioner that a notification is being made to Child, Youth and Family will they share this prematurely with a parent/perpetrator and therefore be put at greater risk? It could be argued that the issue at hand is the risk for the child in terms of ongoing abuse if a notification isn't made. There are also risks for the worker such as the possibility that the client/parent objects violently in response to a notification being made. At times there may be a risk that the practitioner needs to restrain themselves from confronting a perpetrator about their abuse to the child, in a blunt way due to how this abuse has affected the worker. There is the risk to the practitioner of having their work judged, challenged, scrutinised by their own organisation, Child, Youth and Family, lawyers and courts. It is accepted that there

is a "necessity to take risks in order to be an effective advocate for clients" (Stanford, 2010, p.1077) and that it is important that there is "organisational support for social workers to take risks in their interventions" (Stanford, 2010, p.1078).

The difficulty for practitioners when risk is evident is discerning whether it indicates that a notification needs to be made. For practitioners they must consider the "... uniqueness of each individual's circumstances and the diverse knowledge sources required to make sense of complex, unpredictable problems." (Ruch, 2005, p.111). In talking this through with their supervisor the practitioner can clearly explore the issues and ascertain whether a notification needs to be made. It also needs to be recognised that "given the content of social work practice, its potential to distress and disturb practitioners who are engaged in sustained professional relationships with clients is considerable." (Ruch, 2005, p.119). This impact on the practitioner may have the potential to effect their decision-making regarding making a notification. Howe (2010) notes the complexity of working in families where there are care and protection issues. He notes that this difficulty impacts on the client-worker relationship as "in their efforts to regain control, increase predictability and reduce stress, workers are liable to resort to power and procedures, while parents retreat and disengage" (p.331). Decision-making is impacted when the worker comes from this stance. Howe (2010) states that workers need to work from an understanding of the impact of emotions and consequently practice more safely. He also comments that workers must be supported in their organisations in order to do so.

There may be factors relating to the case that impact on a decision whether to notify, "…(i.e., lack of sufficient evidence, respect for cultural differences, a belief that CPS intervention is not effective, or reporting may harm the child (and/or possibly result in the removal of the child from their home)…" (Delaronde et al., 2000, p.907). Some negative impacts on the child of notification can be not being believed by the family, being removed from the care of the family into foster care and being involved with a number of services focused on the abuse that occurred (Staller & Nelson-Gardell, 2005). An overloaded care and protection service not managing in a timely manner is also highlighted in the literature, especially as

countries where mandatory reporting is introduced note increased notification rates but not necessarily in substantiated cases of abuse (Ainsworth, 2002). The ongoing stress for the client of not knowing how the child protection service will respond to the notification may result in further harm to the child (Eisbath & Driessnack, 2010). In addition this stress could impact on the client-worker relationship if the client is not happy about the notification being made or if the client struggles to focus on a meaningful way forward. The worker may subsequently be affected by this in future decisions whether to notify or not.

THERAPEUTIC IMPASSE AND NOTIFICATION ISSUES

Social work roles and focus can vary with support, education, facilitation, advocacy and counselling being some aspects of this. The research on therapeutic impasse; where there is an interruption "in the flow of therapy" (Nathanson, 1992, p.510); shares many of the same issues in relation to the dilemmas faced by social service workers deciding about notification. The issues of trust, respect and confidentiality are fundamental to social work.

Steinberg, Levine, and Doueck (1997) reported on an American national survey of psychologists regarding notification, that a dilemma may occur in terms of confidentiality in the therapeutic relationship versus safety. Where a notification is made the worker may be concerned about the potential of therapeutic impasse and therefore the client would not have this support in relation to the abuse issues. Impasse is likely to result and be unable to be overcome when amongst other factors there is a disagreement between the therapist and client over the tasks and goals of therapy (Hill, Thompson, & Rhodes, 1996). Impasse following notification could occur where the client does not wish for a notification to be made despite the disclosure of the abuse or due to denial regarding the indicators of abuse.

Following notification the strength of the therapeutic alliance and having informed the client of the limits to confidentiality were important to ensure that the therapy continued (Alvarez, Kenny, Donohue, & Carpin, 2004; Levine & Doueck, 1995; Steinberg et al., 1997). Steinberg et al. (1997) found that the more explicit the psychologist had been regarding the specifics of confidentiality the better the

client response when a notification needed to be made. They also found that the strength of the client-psychologist relationship was significant in how the client responded to the notification being made. This may however be determined by whether the abuser is a third party to the therapy rather than being directly involved (Steinberg et al., 1997). When there is a therapeutic impasse, the working relationship is very important for managing the impasse, with trust being a central component of that (Moltu, Binder, & Nielsen, 2010). Where the child is the client an impasse may occur by proxy, as the client would prefer to continue to attend sessions but the parent/caregiver chooses to terminate contact.

With regard to disclosure of abuse, it is noted that it is important not to allow the client/abuser to abdicate responsibility by disclosing to the clinician who is then obligated to notify. Appelbaum (1985) notes that including the client in the "decision-making process" (p.428) encourages him/her to maintain responsibility. Clients are unlikely to disclose and are more resistant if the social worker is addressing issues without expressing empathy (Forrester, Kershaw, Moss, & Hughes, 2008). The importance of informing the parent when a notification is made is also noted (Ludwig & Rostain, 2009). Transparency about the issues is important to facilitate client engagement (Healy, Darlington, & Feeney, 2011). There will be situations however where it is inappropriate to inform the parent particularly where it may place the child at greater risk of being harmed.

Scott (1998) queries whether in deciding if abuse issues are present the worker may limit the hypotheses in order to "avoid the 'cognitive dissonance' of multiple hypotheses, and to seek evidence which fits our pre-existing schema and belief systems?" (p.87). A further issue in the decision whether to notify can be " 'second guessing' " (p.85) the outcomes in terms of whether there is enough evidence that would lead to action from Child, Youth and Family, the Court or the Police. In these instances the negative outcomes for the family of notifying are considered against the clinician's belief regarding the likely outcomes from the child protection agency (Jones et al., 2008; Zellman, 1990). In highlighting this issue Flaherty et al. (2008) commented on the possibility that the "chronically abused children with repeated minor injuries" (p.616) may subsequently miss out on assistance. The fact is that the clinician needs to acknowledge that what they are aware of may be

a part of a larger picture. If they notified and all other people with concerns (teacher, extended family, friends, coaches, other agencies …) notified then a full picture would be available for Child, Youth and Family to follow up and secure the safety of the child.

Social service workers engage with clients assisting them to identify goals and help them to make progress towards change (Fylan, 2011; Ruch, 2006). It is important that clients feel supported to be engaged in the relationship with their social service worker (Yatchmenoff, 2005). Workers can be concerned that a client will disengage if a notification is made (Jones et al., 2008). Identifying factors or strategies that may help or threaten the client-worker relationship following notification may assist the worker to maintain the relationship with the client. Following a notification the worker needs to help the client to manage the emotion, continue to work toward goals and form a safety plan (Turnell & Edwards, 1999). Having a clear process in place in order to make notification decisions and explore the issues is a helpful tool for workers (Turnell & Edwards, 1999). As agencies often work together with families it is important that it is cohesive involvement in order to benefit all involved (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010).

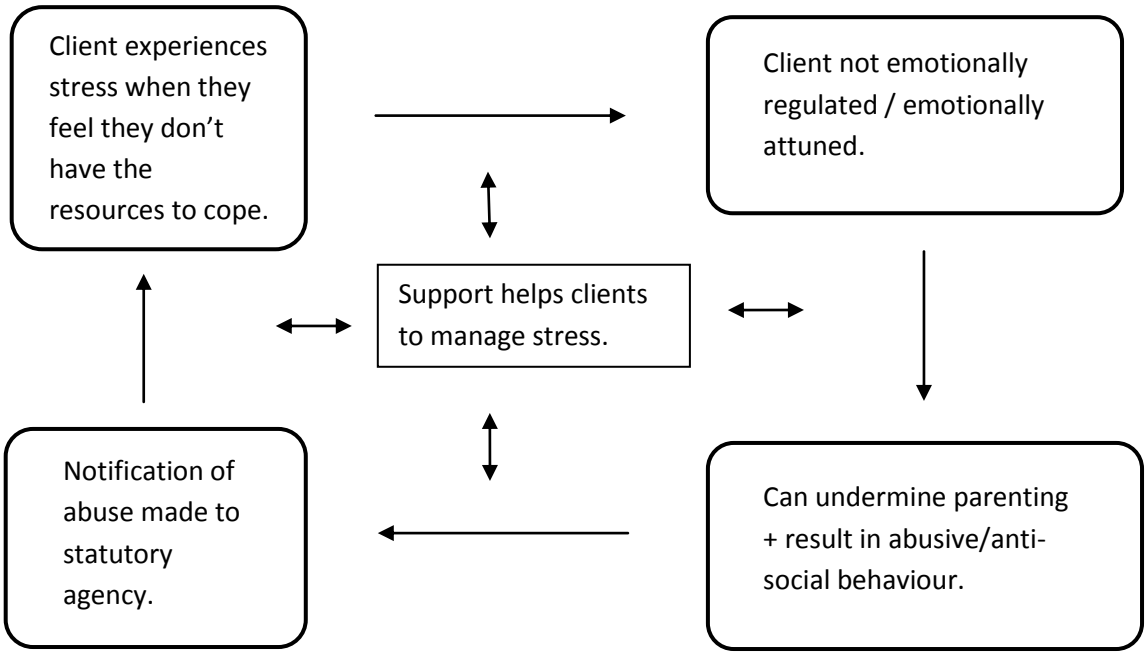
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Notification and the client-worker relationship could be understood in terms of stress and support. Howe (2008) explains that the impact of feeling unable to cope with the stress that clients identify in their lives, can result in abuse occurring and a notification needing to be made. If the social worker can provide support to the family at any stage of this stress it may assist the family to manage and not result in abuse occurring. If abuse is identified and a notification needs to be made, the ongoing support offered by the worker to the family can assist them to put in place a safety plan and work through the issues, improving outcomes for the child. Following notification it is important that the client-worker relationship remain intact so that the client can be supported and assisted to manage at this time of additional stress.

Figure 1 shows a model of Howe's (2008) ideas in relation to stress and support. If the client seeks support and the social worker provides this in the first three

parts of this process this may even avert the abuse occurring and then there is no need for notification. If abuse does occur and the worker needs to make a notification to the statutory agency, being aware of factors or strategies that may assist the client-worker relationship to remain intact would be useful so that the family could receive continued support and not disengage.

FIGURE 1: NOTIFICATION FRAMEWORK



(adapted from Howe, 2008)

Naturally there are other factors that impact on why abuse occurs but to some degree the stress will be the trigger that may then result in the flow on effect. The stressor could be a range of things and it is important that the worker understands how stress impacts on people, so that they can best assist the client. "The Double ABCX Model of Adjustment and Adaptation" (McCubbin & Patterson, 2013, p.20), provides a good overview of how people perceive and manage stress. As with the Double ABCX Model, Howe (2008) also identifies the subjective nature of stress and how people perceive their ability to cope.

There are a range of situations referred to in the literature, relating to varying professions, work environments, confidentiality policies, working relationships and safety issues. It is difficult to gauge transferability of the knowledge gained in

research because of the significant differences across settings, professions, client groups and countries, with the definition of abuse at the very least (Runyan et al., 2005) , cultural differences, laws (Dubowitz & Bennett, 2007) and services.

What this continues to highlight is the need for clear practice-based research that compares similar situations so that some clarity can occur. Often the research has focused on paper-based cases for the clinicians to share their views on and not actual cases. This study attempts to begin this bridging of the research by focusing on an agency that has all of its workers trained regarding care and protection issues, has a clear policy regarding reporting and confidentiality, and has all front line workers gain membership in a professional body. The majority of workers belong to ANZASW which means that they have a code of ethics to abide by.

In conclusion, there are times despite notification occurring that it has been possible to continue a good working relationship. There is limited literature on the conditions which have the potential to enable the good working relationship to continue despite the notification occurring. “Clinicians need to study and share methods for minimizing potential damage associated with reporting” (Steinberg et al., 1997, p.121). One of the aims of this study is to explore if there are methods that workers use and ascertain if there are some common themes. The focus of this research is on exploring the impact of notification on the client-worker relationship, specifically to identify if there are strategies or factors that assist or threaten relationship maintenance.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the methodology of this qualitative research. The theoretical perspective is explored. The sampling method and how data collection occurred is shared. The plan for the data analysis is outlined followed by the ethical considerations, the strengths and limitations of the research.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This research utilised qualitative methodology from a constructivist perspective. Constructivism fitted well with the research focus on participants views on the effect notification of child abuse had on their working relationship with the client. Constructivism is a term that relates to "epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on 'the meaning-making activity of the individual mind'..." (Crotty, 1998, p.58). The focus of constructivist research is on the subjective viewpoint of the participant and the meaning they place on the issue in question, "... the process of reality construction" (Rodwell, 1998, p.27).

Crotty (1998) concurs with this view of humans as meaning-makers, stating that "Constructivism describes the individual human subject engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them." (p.79). Within this focus, every individual's viewpoint is as valid as any other viewpoint and the uniqueness of the individual experience is emphasised (Crotty, 1998). Reality is seen to be "socially and psychologically constructed" (Rodwell, 1998, p.18-19) within the social environment of the individual (Rodwell, 1998).

While the emphasis is on the subjective nature of reality, constructivist research recognises the importance of transferability. This emphasises the meaningful and usefulness aspect of research. Constructivism is clear that this is not to be considered to be generalisability rather that "transferability allows for the possibility that information created and lessons learned in one context can have meaning and usefulness in another" (Rodwell, 1998, p.101). That the research should attempt, through detailed description, to allow for transferability to be assessed by the reader.

Constructivism allows for respect of the participant due to the expectation that detailed description of what the participants had to say is expected to be presented in the research, in order to give justice to the participants' viewpoints. In constructivist research "... meaning and, therefore, reality, is constructed in a way that is reflective of all participants" (Rodwell, 1998, p.28).

In addition there are also important links between constructivism and social work practice. For example, confidentiality is important in social work practice and is particularly detailed in the constructivist approach (Rodwell, 1998). In social work practice working with the client with a focus on their perspective and gathering thorough information in order to practice effectively is similar to the constructivist focus on the viewpoint of the participant and gaining detailed information (Gilgun, 1994). The principal of empowerment is also emphasised in constructivism and is a primary objective in social work practice. Constructivist research considers the participant to be empowered throughout the process as they are fully informed, consenting and participating in the co-construction of the data (Rodwell, 1998). Objectivity is therefore not the aim for constructivist research where the interaction between the participant and researcher is pivotal (Rodwell, 1998).

Through the empowerment focus respect for the reader is also considered in the constructivist approach. The researcher is urged to think about whether the reader may become empowered due to their access to this work and the detail entailed in it (Rodwell, 1998). As it was hoped that this research might have an impact on practice and a positive effect in working with clients, this empowerment focus also highlighted this. By having a greater understanding of the impact of notification on the client-worker relationship, that the effect of this may be for the reader/worker to reflect on practice and make changes in order to best meet clients' needs when notifications are made.

The practical application of constructivism was also appealing, as it recognised the reality of deadlines and restricted timeframes (Rodwell, 1998). Constructivism recognised that convenience sampling can be utilised if this is more suitable. As

noted further on, there were specific reasons that convenience sampling was utilised in this study.

While the theoretical perspective is often not specifically stated in research, it appeared that many of the articles I consulted had utilised a constructivist approach (Fylan, 2011; Maiter, Palmer, & Manji, 2006). Fylan (2011) used a case study to demonstrate how she worked with a family in a respectful way when focusing on difficult circumstances, in child protection work. She reflected on how she viewed the work and how it impacted on her and her clients, effectively outlining how she made sense of this. Maiter et al. (2006) also focused on making sense of what clients found positive and negative about their experiences with Child Protection Service workers by interviewing parents to ascertain their thoughts and feelings. It is important for the theoretical perspective to be stated so that further research can take this into account and therefore a greater understanding and possibility of transferability can occur.

A qualitative constructivist research approach was utilised in my study as it highlighted the subjective, emphasised empowerment and was practical in its application. Due to the fact that there was limited research on the issue of the effect of notification on the client-worker relationship in a non-government agency in New Zealand, the emphasis on subjective meaning making of constructivism was most appropriate.

SAMPLING

Convenience sampling was used, a "… technique that uses an open period of recruitment that continues until a set number (of participants) … are enrolled" (Luborsky and Rubinstein,1995, p.104). This was chosen as most suitable due to the fact that the participants are from a "… predefined population" (ibid.). Participants are front-line workers at Family Works where the majority of staff are employed as family/whanau workers or social workers. The aim was for ten participants as a useful size for this study. I felt that it was small enough a number to allow for an in-depth study of participants views and yet it was a large enough sample (28.57% of the front-line workforce at Family Works) in order to get a range of viewpoints to consider similarities and differences. This potentially

allowed an opportunity for transferability of the findings. I consider it to be convenience sampling in the sense that participants were accepted as they volunteered (if they met the criteria for selection). Staff were eligible to participate if they had made at least one notification to Child, Youth and Family or the Police regarding suspected or actual child abuse or neglect.

Participants were staff from Family Works, a Child and Family Support and Community Service. There are approximately thirty-five front-line staff at this Family Works site. They are contractually obligated to belong to or be working toward membership in a professional body and have or be working towards registration if this is available in their profession. Selection criteria did not specify a minimum number of years experience or qualifications as all front-line staff receive training in relation to the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989 and to recognise signs of child abuse and neglect. There is a good understanding regarding child abuse and a clear process within the service should any worker be concerned about suspected or actual child abuse or neglect.

With research in many environments it is necessary to approach the gatekeepers (Weis & Fine, 2000), in order to have the support and/or the authorisation to proceed. Being detailed and specific as possible regarding the research and the requirements, management approval was sought. This included allowing staff to be interviewed in their work time, at the work place and being able to be specific about the agency. Management approval was granted.

An important part of research is presenting information on the study to gain approval from the University Ethics Committee. This process ensures that all ethical issues have been considered and managed appropriately. I completed the necessary form detailing my research and the ethical considerations. Management approval, the consent form and Information sheet (see Appendix B,C,D) were included. While the Otago University Ethics Committee granted approval they raised two queries that needed to be addressed (see Appendix E).

I had advised that I would be giving a notepad to participants in appreciation of the time they had given for my research. The Ethics Committee queried this and were advised that this was a small paper notepad and not an electronic notepad. It

would understandably raise ethical considerations if participants received an expensive gift for participating in research, as to motivation and whether they may be more inclined to answer as they perceive would please the researcher.

The second query from the Ethics Committee related to insider research, with the fact that I am employed within the organisation where I planned to conduct the research. The Ethics Committee specifically indicated concern regarding "any conflict with the student researcher's colleagues" (see Appendix E), with this being insider research. Insider issues were addressed with the Ethics Committee in order to allay their concern. It was noted that as I was conducting this research as an insider, it was helpful as it reduced the number of questions I needed to ask, as I was already aware of the policies, procedures and services within the agency. It therefore eliminated this time-laden aspect from the interview. Having a prior relationship was a potential encouragement for my fellow colleagues to volunteer to participate and with rapport already established had the opportunity to then add to the in-depth nature of qualitative research. It was identified in my research that I needed a uniform sample and that seeking participants in the one organisation allowed for this to occur. Finally it was noted that as a student I had limited travel funds available to me and therefore it was a practical consideration in choosing the agency I worked in. As I had included the consent form for participants (see Appendix C) in the initial information submitted to the Ethics Committee, this clearly outlined how any practice issues – a potential situation for conflict – would be managed.

Once the Otago University Ethics Committee approval was gained the research was able to proceed. Recruiting began with sending an email to management that I was proceeding with my research and seeking participants. Immediately after sending this email one was sent to the front-line staff. The subject line in the email was "Seeking Participants". The email had an information letter attached that gave the particular details regarding the study and what it would entail for them including how their details would be stored and anonymity maintained. Staff members were advised to contact the researcher directly if they had any questions about the study or were interested in being a participant.

Motivation to participate came in varying forms. Some people spoke of their work enjoyment and their pleasure in talking about what they do, others spoke of being supportive of the research process and seeing this as very important. For some people participation came after talking with others they shared an office with and hearing about the interview experience.

The initial participants came soon after the first email. This was followed up with a further email, again first sent to management and then sent to staff. In addition I spoke directly with team leaders who had queried me about my progress and advised them that further participants were required. Some team leaders spoke with staff to encourage them to participate as they saw the benefit of doing this research and felt that the workers would have valuable insights to offer. Some team leaders offered themselves as participants but had to be turned down as I had specifically wanted front-line workers perspectives without a management perspective. Two front-line workers offered to participate but through discussion it was not appropriate. One had had frequent contact with Child, Youth and Family but did not meet the selection criteria as she had not actually made a notification. The other staff member had made one notification but as I was also involved with making that notification I felt that it was not appropriate for that staff member to participate. I felt this did not adequately allow for the anonymity of the client/family.

It is an expectation in research that anonymity would extend to persons referred to by the participant (Bell & Bryman, 2006). As clients did not consent to the discussion regarding their situations, I felt that it was a breach of their confidentiality if I knew the client to whom we were talking about in the interview. I did not want to further complicate the insider aspect of the research of having the full details of the client situation, as it may have been difficult to hear the participant without interrupting with my interpretation of how the notification unfolded at the time. Weis and Fine (2000) caution against this insider potential to over-identify and shift focus toward self and away from the participants view.

When only three more participants were required no further offers to participate were forthcoming. I was loath to directly approach individual workers in order to

recruit further participants as I did not want to put anyone in an awkward position. I decided that I needed to attend a staff meeting and ask face to face whilst not putting any pressure directly on anyone. This setting allowed for questions to be asked about the research without obligating anyone to then volunteer.

PARTICIPANT SPECIFICS

The ten participants were recruited and interviewed over a 12 week period. Of the ten participants, eight had university qualifications related to their work and two had Child Protection Studies (CPS) level training. The participants had worked at Family Works between 9 months and 10 years with overall years experience in their professions between 2 and 17 years.

While undoubtedly there are a myriad of reasons for people choosing not to participate I am aware from one staff member that the hour long interview was too much of a time commitment with the work time frames they had. I assume that this pertains to others. Within Family Works everyone is busy and we have a waiting list for the majority of our services. It may have been that the time commitment was the main reason that further staff did not volunteer however this could not be verified.

The unsolicited feedback from participants was positive about the interview process. Many found it helpful as a reflection process and also as a recognition of the skills they bring to their work. Some comments were made about the view that others would also find it positive and that they planned to speak to others about participating in this research. Eight of the ten participants were sharing offices with at least one other participant which suggests that this sharing about the process did occur.

While the topic of child abuse is unpleasant, none of the participants required time out during the interview process or became visibly upset during the time. In the consent form the participants were advised that they were able to take a time out if necessary at any time in the interview. I planned to support them by working through the upsetting aspect with them until they felt able to resume the

interview, or postpone to another time if this was required or participants could withdraw consent and end the interview at that time. None of the participants opted out of the interview process at any time. At the end of every interview an offer to debrief the participants was made so that any issues that may have arisen for them could be worked through. No participant required debriefing.

DATA COLLECTION

A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data for this study (see Appendix F). Pilot-testing the interview was recommended in the research as a refining tool (Creswell, 2013; Sampson, 2004). A pilot interview was conducted with a professional from outside the service in order to ascertain if I needed to amend my approach depending on the responses. This was an extremely helpful exercise as it allowed me to run through the interview process from start to finish and made me more aware of the differences between a client-worker interview (session) and a research interview. While I had been made aware that they were different (Creswell, 2013; Padgett, 1998), it was not until the pilot interview was conducted that this was made more concrete for me. My responses had to be different for the research focus in that it was not my role to work through the persons issues with them as it is in a client-worker session and I had to remember not to take that stance. In addition, the focus was specific to my research whereas in my work it is about the client choosing the focus. I did find it particularly difficult at times to contain my natural curiosity and maintain an entirely research focus rather than a social work viewpoint.

In addition, the pilot interview helped me to tailor the initial questions in order to begin to get the information that was needed for this research. I changed my approach from asking the participant to tell me about a notification they had made, to include a brief background about the case and then tell me about the notification. This meant that I had some context for the notification, as I found in the pilot interview that I had needed to interrupt the flow to ask questions for context.

Changes were also made in the interview format. I wrote a note to myself at the top of my interview questions as a reminder of the things I needed to repeat from

the consent form, before we proceeded with the interview. For example, that the participant not use client names and instead use pseudonyms or family roles. I had found in the pilot interview that initial nerves meant that I stumbled on these.

The pilot-testing interview was conducted on 8 March 2013, which was the same day that recruiting for participants began. As this was close to the time when interviews began, it was immediately useful.

I interviewed participants in person and all of the interviews were audio-taped with consent. Handwritten notes (field notes) were used in addition to the audio-taping, to note any particular themes, key points and non-verbal cues. I felt that using field notes would also help me to reflect and ensure that I would note exceptions, to ensure that as an insider to the research I did not assume that I knew the participants viewpoint (Creswell, 2013; Weis & Fine, 2000).

As a token of my appreciation and gratitude for their participation, staff members received a small paper notepad. It was important to note the effort required to participate in a study particularly given our busy work environment. While permission was received from the organisation to conduct the interviews within the staff members work time, I acknowledge that they still needed to complete their work.

I chose to transcribe the interviews from the audio-tape myself, as I felt it would allow a further opportunity to be familiar with the data. As noted by Braun and Clarke "the time spent in transcription is not wasted, as it informs the early stages of analysis, and you will develop a far more thorough understanding of your data through having transcribed it" (2006, p.88). I did find it interesting when I was transcribing, the things that I had missed when I was present in the interview. This type of reflection enhances our work as it allows further awareness of the way in which we conduct ourselves. The transcribing process certainly allowed for an in-depth review of the data.

Secondary data options were also accessed within the service in order to give further context to the research. The secondary data was statistical data relating to the number of notifications made by the agency in the financial year 1 July 2013 to

30 June 2014. This gives some context to the notifications participants made. I found that 33 notifications were made and these related to a total of sixty children. The 33 notifications related to different types of abuse and included neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and Safety Assessments. Notifications also related to domestic violence and concerns of potential risk due to parental/caregiver association with known criminal abusers.

As stated above I received permission from the management team to have the participants meet with me within their work time (see Appendix B). The organisation has been supportive of my research for which I am grateful. I view this research as mutually beneficial due to the potential to benefit clients and staff and I felt it should be seen as a positive endeavour.

INSIDER RESEARCH

I chose to access the organisation I work in for my research because I felt that it would potentially assist the credibility of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified prolonged engagement at the research site as a method to add to credibility of the findings. Prolonged engagement ensures that rapport is established, that time is given to build trust, and that the researcher has a good understanding of the culture of the environment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As an insider to the organisation this has been established already.

The issue of participants saying what they think the researcher wants to hear is an issue for both insider and outsider research but may be more likely when the participant knows the researcher (Weis & Fine, 2000). With the topic being an exploration and an investigation of the issues, I felt that participants would have their own views and would be encouraged to share these. As the participants already knew me, they would feel able to assert themselves which can be a problem with outsider research (Weis & Fine, 2000).

There are varying degrees of being an insider or an outsider in research (Acker, 2001; Le Gallais, 2008; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). In some interviews as I did not work in the service area of the participants I was less of an insider than when I interviewed those from the same work area. It was noticeable at these times as I

needed to ask more process oriented questions in order to have the necessary understanding. An advantage of being an insider is the immediate rapport that is present and therefore the focus can more quickly be established on the research topic. This varied depending on where I was on the insider continuum. While I was an insider in terms of working within the same organisation and having also been involved in making a notification, the degree of being an insider could vary depending on age, gender, culture, profession and service area (Acker, 2001; Le Gallais, 2008).

Of concern for participants in research that is conducted by an insider is that they may unintentionally be more open and elaborate on their view point than they otherwise would if the researcher was an outsider (Acker, 2001). This may also be more concerning for the participant as they will continue to encounter the researcher as they work within the same organisation (Acker, 2001).

While Acker (2001) acknowledged that as an insider it was more relaxing to interview due to having a shared understanding with the participant and therefore it helped the interview to be better, it was also noted that things may have been missed as the participant could choose not to share something assuming it was known by the insider researcher.

Acker (2001) also noted that a participant may feel loyalty to their community rather than to the research if they are being interviewed by an outsider. It may occur like that because processes need to be carefully explained to an outsider.

Le Gallais (2008) commented on participants' views of the research and how safe they felt to share their perspective based on how they perceived the researchers position and how management may respond to what was shared. This was highlighted as both an issue for an insider researcher and an outsider researcher. What was highlighted in this article was that there were benefits and negatives about either position but through reflective practice that the research can be open to issues that may be arising.

Burns, Fenwick, Schmied and Sheehan (2010), referred to the need to be aware of not unintentionally being seen as researching for the management of the

organisation. They noted that a shared understanding with the participants about the research and who it was being reported to were important to ensure the barriers to involvement in the research were limited. It can be of particular concern to participants if they feel that they need to watch what they are saying in the research, in order to protect their position within the organisation. As stated previously participants in this study, stated unbidden how they had enjoyed the opportunity to share their experiences. It was evident in the organisation that management were supportive of research and this research project occurring. Staff were being encouraged to share their experiences for this research by the management team in a positive and supportive way and the participants did not appear to be concerned in any way that this could impact negatively on them.

Le Gallais (2008) noted that working with the research participants allowed for a more complete compiling of information and assessing the data however this could also result in researcher blind spots and reduced clarity due to being too knowledgeable on the area. It was also acknowledged that knowing the participants allowed for immediate rapport, understanding of the data and knowledge of the environment which in turn could allow the participants to feel understood however can also lead to presumptions being made.

The research on the insider/outsider status of the researcher all recommend that reflecting on role and status should occur throughout the process. That while there will be varying impacts depending on the position of the researcher these may be tempered if they reflect on it and amend their practice if required. For example, in this study interviewing technique used in session with clients versus the research interview was something that needed to be reflected upon particularly at the first interview.

As an insider it was easier to work in with participants busy work timetables and minimise what they needed to do to set the interview time up. I was able to book the times that suited, the room that suited and reschedule easily when things came up for the participants meaning that they had to change the interview time. This showed respect for the participants in acknowledging their busy work schedules.

There were advantages and disadvantages to conducting insider research. Through identifying the issues and being aware of them the impact of these can be reflected upon and managed.

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

The literature in this field uses a wide range of data analysis methods. One criticism made in the literature is that often social science research does not specifically note which form of data analysis is used and therefore limits the ability to replicate or critically appraise multiple studies (Attride-Stirling, 2001). I therefore felt that it was important to state specifically which type of analysis I was using, rather than taking an ad hoc approach.

I utilised thematic analysis for the data analysis. As noted by Braun and Clarke (2006), "… , thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (p.78). Template analysis was chosen as the form of thematic analysis because "… any theme must be grounded in what is actually present in the data" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.168). It takes the stance that description will include interpretation when the coding occurs (King & Horrocks, 2010). Template analysis is also appropriate because it "… can be used with any size study;" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.168). I appreciate the fact that template analysis has "… an emphasis on the effective visual display of the analytic structure – to aid the analyst's thinking and ultimately to facilitate the presentation of the analysis to readers" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.172). Data analysis began during the data collection phase and the themes that were extracted from the data were adapted, in response to the ongoing data collected (King & Horrocks, 2010).

I began the data analysis by reading through the first transcript and coding any material that related directly to the research questions. These research questions were identified as:

1. What is the impact of notification on the client-worker relationship?
2. Are there strategies or factors that assist or threaten the maintenance of the client-worker relationship through the notification process?

It is recommended that a small number of the transcripts should be coded to derive the template (University of Huddersfield, 2013) and then this should be applied to all transcripts. A basic template began with the themes of: strategies that help (the client-worker relationship following notification), factors that help (the client-worker relationship following notification), factors that threaten (the client-worker relationship following notification) and the final themes were what helps the worker (following a notification) and difficulties for the worker (following a notification).

As thematic analysis was started from the first interview and did "move back and forth between the data" (Liamputtong, 2009, p.133), it can be seen as a "healthy corrective for built-in blind spots" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.50). Use of this data analysis method allows the researcher to develop the questions to ensure that aspects aren't overlooked as can be seen in response to the data.

I kept "… a record of all the major stages of developing and organizing … themes" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.152), in order to show an 'audit trail' (see Appendix G,H). This will inform the reader as to how the final themes (see Appendix I) have occurred adding to the quality of this research.

I found as I went through the thematic analysis process that each transcript would add a variation that required me to then change the previous template. It was not until I completed coding all of the transcripts that I was able to then work toward a final template. This resulted in a laborious process of going through each transcript for coding and then going through all the transcripts again to re-code once the final template was put together. I felt by doing the coding as thoroughly as this, I could ensure that the depth of information from each participant was not overlooked and all their ideas were presented in the final template.

The final template (see Appendix I) was a process of working through which representation would be most useful to the reader and an accurate presentation of the themes that had been shared by the participants of their experience of the impact on their relationships with their clients following making a notification of actual or suspected child abuse or neglect. The final template contained two sections. The first section related to factors or strategies that affect the client-

worker relationship following notification of child abuse or neglect. The second section focused on factors or strategies that are helpful or difficult for the worker when making a notification of child abuse or neglect. I found that for the purpose of clarity there needed to be these two sections, as some of the themes were universal but the hierarchies were quite different and therefore needed to be separate to highlight this. For example both sections have Child, Youth and Family as a theme but for the client-worker relationship communication was highlighted as an issue while for the worker, frustration was highlighted. Support was also a theme in both sections because how the worker is supported will impact on how they function in the worker-client relationship but it does not directly involve the client.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There were seven main ethical considerations: client confidentiality, participant confidentiality and anonymity, safety issues that may be disclosed in the interviews, participant consent for audio-taping, hierarchical considerations, participant concerns regarding impact of their perspective within the service, and the debriefing process.

Client Confidentiality: I believe that client confidentiality is extremely important. Participants were asked not to use client names so that it should not be evident to me who was being referred to. The participant could choose to refer to the people by their roles (e.g. mother, father, child …) or by a pseudonym in order for there to be clarity in what they are saying but to avoid breaches of client confidentiality (Bryman, 2012).

Participant Confidentiality and Anonymity: There will be limits to participant confidentiality as stated below under 'safety issues'. In addition it may be necessary for management to be aware of who is participating as they will be allowing them to use work hours to complete the interview. Who had chosen to partake in the research was not discussed openly with management, as I felt that it was up to the individual participants to raise this with the management if they felt comfortable to do so. As noted many team leaders in management approached staff members recommending that they participate in this research. If the staff

member chose to do so it was also their choice within that relationship to share the details of this. It is a difficult area of study to consent to being involved in without being pressured into doing so and no participants reported feeling compelled to be involved.

In terms of anonymity in the publication of the thesis, participants will not be referred to by name and therefore the information will not be attributable directly to any participant. I chose to refer to participants by number in the order that they were interviewed as I felt that this was less confusing and no meaning could mistakenly be attributed to it as could occur with the use of a pseudonym. The issues of confidentiality and anonymity were noted in the information sheet sent to potential participants and again in the consent sheet for participants.

Working within the service allowed for greater confidentiality for participants as I was able to complete my own room bookings rather than relying on another staff member to do so. In addition, I knew the participants and therefore was able to distinguish turns of phrase that would have been identifiable and not include them in quotes. If I had not known the participants I may not have realised that some comments would be identifiable.

Due to the diversity of participants' ethnicity it was not possible for ethnicity to be included in this thesis. The concern was that it would lead to assumptions being made about the identity of the participants by other staff or colleagues. One participant did raise this as an issue when ethnicity was queried in the interview. Bryman (2012) cautioned against using information that may lead to a breach in the participants' privacy. This was not a decision taken lightly due to the importance of cultural perspective, however research relies on the anonymity of participants and breaching this would be unethical and potentially put future research in jeopardy, particularly in relation to this research site. Stating that there was diversity in participants' ethnicity allowed for the reader to be aware there was not just one cultural perspective however I sought verbal consent from the effected participants in order to proceed with that statement.

Anonymity of the environment or organisation being studied is a recommendation in some research (Bell & Bryman, 2006; Bryman, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Management approval was sought and participants advised that the name of the organisation would be published. I felt that it would allow the reader to have a greater understanding of the research and the ability to gauge transferability, if the organisation was known to them. "Transferability allows for the possibility that information created and lessons learned in one context can have meaning and usefulness in another." (Rodwell, 1998, p.101). In addition to this, I wanted to be able to address insider research issues and therefore organisational anonymity would have been limited when I was identified as the writer. Due to the importance of anonymity, particularly of clients I decided however to not state the location and only the type and nature of the service, knowing that locally the site may be identified but further afield this would be less likely to occur. With being specific about the type and nature of the service, transferability could still be assessed by the reader.

Safety Issues: It was stated in both writing and verbally at the interview what would occur should any safety issues and/or practice issues be disclosed in the interview. This was noted on the consent form and information sheet (see Appendix C and D) and was stated again verbally before the interview began, so that the participants were well aware of it. Safety issues could potentially relate to a participant disclosing issues relating to the harm of an individual that had not been addressed. This could also have related to emotional distress of the participant and the need to breach confidentiality in order to ensure they received the support that they required. No safety issues arose in the course of the interviews and while practice issues were discussed these were not of a nature that required further discussion outside of the interview.

Consent: Consent was sought for audio-taping the interview (Bryman, 2012). If consent had not been granted written notes would have been used instead. All participants agreed to the audio-taping of the interviews.

Hierarchical Considerations: While I did not consider it to be an issue I needed to concede that the staff may potentially have seen a power imbalance due to my position in the agency. I am considered to be a senior clinician and I also have varied roles within the service which mean that I encounter staff in different

capacities. I consequently needed to work at ensuring there was a relaxed atmosphere and that it was clear to the participant that it was their choice to answer the questions that I put to them. By so doing it may have addressed any perceived power imbalance. I also dressed less formally than when I am at work and offered another interview room rather than my office for the interview so as to limit any role confusion that may have occurred.

This did not appear to be an issue at all throughout the interviews. Participants were all open and appeared relaxed, once the initial nervousness experienced by some in relation to the audio recording diminished. Defensiveness was identified in one interview however this related to embarrassment about recall as opposed to hierarchical issues. The defensiveness was addressed directly in the interview, dissipating any tension and the relaxed atmosphere returned. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to the varying ways in which participants may be harmed and recommend having an awareness of ethical issues that may arise.

*Impact on Staff***:** Prior to conducting the interviews I considered that staff may be concerned about their ability to be open, as management may need to be aware of which staff participate due to this occurring in their work hours. They may have concerns that if they identify factors within the service that did not assist in the notification process that they may be disadvantaged within the work place. If this was an issue I planned to reiterate that the thesis will not identify the workers by name. I also thought that I would seek to reassure them that the outcome of the research may be to highlight issues which were both helpful and unhelpful. That this research may then assist practice to change if required to enhance the likelihood of a continued client-worker relationship and supported workers. However this was not raised as an issue by any participant and it was not evident that it was an issue as they did not hesitate to state issues they had in the case discussions. Miles and Huberman (1994), recommended being aware of the potential benefits and costs to the participants of the research.

Debriefing: A field journal was utilised as a reflection tool to debrief and assist me to avoid becoming overloaded and potentially carry any issues through in

subsequent interviews with participants. The field journal debriefing was a useful process in order to move from one interview to the next.

The topic of child abuse is unpleasant and it was important therefore to ensure that I managed this for myself and my participants and to limit the impact of this on my research. A debriefing process was offered at the end of the interview so that the participants did not leave feeling burdened by the information that they shared. While no participant felt that debriefing was necessary, discussion continued after recording was completed that naturally shifted away from the interview specifics.

Padgett (2008), identified debriefing as potentially necessary for both participants and researchers. She recommended debriefing to help to manage any concerns or emotional issues arising as a result of the interview.

BIAS

As I work within the service I needed to ensure that I reflected often on how I was addressing this bias. As an insider I was concerned I may be inclined to be protective and want to portray the service in a positive way (Weis & Fine, 2000) and I was aware that I would need to be careful to counter this should the results indicate an alternative view.

Field notes were utilised to help challenge any non-identified bias. I noted when I felt surprised and then examined why I had this response and whether it was derived from a bias. What I found instead was that I tended to experience surprise with the outcomes of some of the notifications and that this was not driven by bias but driven by a child safety perspective.

I hold no financial interests in relation to the research except in the sense that my paid employment occurs in the service where the participants also work. A scholarship was received from the Otago University in order to complete this work.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The reality of research methodology is that it is ultimately flawed and the researcher needs to be aware of the flaws and by acknowledging them reduce the potential limiting effect. Research can never be perfect but as research on a particular subject grows it broadens our understanding.

Participants: Participants were staff at a Family Works site. The strength of using the same work place is that the policies and procedures in relation to notification are the same for all participants. In addition, all staff are required to have a level of training regarding care and protection issues and therefore this limits the issues with reference to this. In the review of the research these differences are often referred to and therefore this study will allow a closing of this gap. Focusing on workers experience from this shared environment allows the study to be more focused in terms of outcome rather than findings being diluted due to differences.

The limitation is that it has the potential to be more difficult to assess transferability. I believe however that as Family Works is a non-government social services agency it shares many commonalities with other NGO social services and this is why the organisation belongs to Social Service Providers Aotearoa Inc.(SSPA). In addition, I would attempt to "… provide sufficient rich detail that a reader can assess the extent to which the conclusions drawn in one setting can transfer to another" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p.160).

The fact that I work within the service is both a strength and a limitation in the sense that I have the knowledge of systems and did not need to spend much time being oriented and related well to the participants due to this shared understanding. The limitation relates to the fact that this will be a potential bias and I needed to work hard to challenge my perspective so that this did not influence the outcome.

I was concerned that there may have been limitations in terms of cultural diversity as the work force is predominantly NZ European however this was not an issue due to the varied ethnicity of my participants. Of the ten participants, four identified themselves as either NZ European, pakeha or as a New Zealander. There

are limitations in terms of gender as there are limited males on staff however this is representative of the social service community where there are limited males in these helping professions. As respondents will be "self-selected they may not be representative" (Steinberg, Levine, & Doueck, 1997, p.118) of the work force as those who choose not to, may do so due to practice issues.

It is a limitation that this research is not seeking to hear from clients who experienced the service. As the outcomes of notification on the client-worker relationship will speak to this to some degree I chose to focus on the worker's viewpoint in order to gain the in-depth perspective on this.

Data Collection: A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data for this study. The strength of this form of data collection is the potential depth and richness of the information and the opportunity to learn more with this more open style of interviewing. The limitation of this is that it relies on self-report where the participant may be inclined to respond in a socially desirable way (Bryman, 2012).

Setting: As interviews were conducted in the work place it was a potential limitation as it could appear to be work related rather than research related. As stated above I worked at ensuring there was a relaxed atmosphere. In addition I utilised a study room rather than an interview room or office, where the participants were accepting of this. Two participants chose a room that they felt more comfortable in, which was not the study room.

By identifying the strengths and limitations of this research I hoped to reduce the impacts of these.

CONCLUSION

This is an overview of the methodology used in this research focused on the impact of notification of child abuse on the client-worker relationship. The methodology chosen reflects what I consider fits with the topic being researched and was best suited to draw out the necessary information.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter begins with a description of the notifications that the participants referred to in their interviews and the impact on the client-worker relationship. The findings from the data analysis are then detailed. The template analysis (see Appendix I), gives the overview of the themes that are focused on in the results.

NOTIFICATION DETAILS

Table 2 is important information regarding the impact of notification on the client-worker relationship. The table shows the type of abuse the notification relates to in order to give context to the reason for concern. Participants identified that how they found out about the abuse they were notifying and whether the client was engaged were significant factors regarding whether the client-worker relationship remained intact.

Table 2 shows that the participants referred to 24 notifications and that only six clients from 5 notifications exited due to the notification being made. For one of the exited clients they did not exit from the service but chose instead to work with another worker. In one instance it was the parent that disengaged while the young person who was the client, continued to be involved with the service.

Table 2 also shows the wide range of notification issues and what evidence the notification was based on. According to the participants' view of clients' engagement, the vast majority of clients were engaged with their worker and the support that was occurring. Gauging the importance of prior engagement it is noted in Table 2, that while some clients who disengaged following notification were engaged in the relationship prior to the notification, others were not. Participants identified that if clients were engaged in the relationship prior to the notification then it was often possible to work through the issues and continue to provide support and intervention. This highlights the participants' view that while prior engagement is a significant factor in helping to maintain the client-worker relationship following notification, it is not a guarantee that it will remain intact. In one instance when the participant reported that the client was guarded and not engaged in the relationship, disengagement did not occur following notification.

TABLE 2: NOTIFICATION DETAILS AND CLIENT-WORKER RELATIONSHIP

Participant	Evidence	Type of Notification	Relationship	Relationship after Notification
1	Observation and information from others	Emotional abuse and neglect	Not engaged.	Stayed involved until shifted away
1	Observation and information from others	Neglect	Engaged	Stayed involved
2	Observation and information from others	Neglect	Engaged	Exit due to notification
2	Information from family	Domestic violence	Engaged	Stayed involved
2	Disclosure	Emotional abuse	Engaged	Stayed involved
2	Observations and information from family	Sexualised behaviour query sexual abuse	Engaged	Stayed involved
3	Disclosure	Physical Abuse	Engaged	Stayed involved
4	Observation	Neglect	Engaged	Stayed involved
4	Observation	Neglect	Engaged	Stayed involved
4	Disclosure	Neglect, emotional abuse, Unable to parent - alcohol and mental health issues	Engaged	Stayed involved
5	Disclosure	Physical abuse	Engaged (child)	Parent exited and child withdrawn
6	Disclosure	Domestic violence	Engaged	Stayed involved
6	Observation and information from others	Neglect and safety issues	Engaged	Asked for another worker and put in complaint
6	Disclosure	Safety Assessment	Engaged	Stayed involved
6	Notification (not stated)	Not stated	Not stated	Stayed involved
6	Notification (not stated)	Not stated	Not stated	Stayed involved
6	Notification (not stated)	Not stated	Not stated	Stayed involved
7	Information from family	Abuse (not specified)	Engaged	Only wanted help with abuse then exited. Not related to notification.
7	Information from family	Sexually inappropriate behaviour	Mother tenuous, child not engaged	Effected relationship and then mother disengaged.
8	Information from family	Risk due to previous child being removed -unable to care	Engaged	Stayed involved
8	Information from family	Domestic violence	Engaged	Stayed involved
9	Information from client	Domestic violence	Engaged client (child) Mother - good	Client stayed involved mother disengaged (not because of notification).
9	Observation and information from client	Relationship breakdown	Engaged	Client stayed involved
10	Observation/information	Safety Assessment	Engaged	Client stayed involved

While the engagement of the client is considered to be significant it is not an absolute as this shows that without prior engagement a client may still maintain the client-worker relationship despite the notification being made. There are often other factors that are significant to the client in their situation that may lead to a different outcome. In this instance the client wanted to remain involved in order to maintain an understanding of what was occurring, as the worker was linked in with others significant to the situation.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The research explored the impact of notification of child abuse on the client-worker relationship. Participants identified in relation to the impact on the client-worker relationship that there was an emotional impact for all involved when a notification is made and how this could negatively affect the client-worker relationship. Participants also noted that notification could potentially be stressful for all involved and clients could respond in anger to the notification therefore resulting in the worker needing to utilise skills to assist the client to remain engaged and move forward. Some participants commented that clients could feel relief that the notification is made and that Family Works would continue to provide support and that this could in fact strengthen the client-worker relationship. It was noted that the power dynamic between the worker and the client was heightened at the time of notification due to the need for the worker to take a clear stance regarding the safety issues. The notification and the identified safety issues presented a challenge that needed to be navigated through. It could result in disengagement or withdrawal from the service, ending the client-worker relationship, however participants' accounts showed that it was more likely that the relationship would be maintained following notification. While the notification may lead to a change of focus for the client-worker relationship, as the client is supported to work through the abuse or neglect issues, it can continue to be an effective working relationship.

The research questions focused on whether there were factors or strategies that assisted maintenance of the client-worker relationship following notification and whether there were factors that threatened the relationship at that time. The first

section of the final template (see Appendix I) related to factors or strategies that help or threaten the client-worker relationship following notification of child abuse or neglect. There were five overall themes

1. Relationship (client-worker)
2. Transparency
3. Support
4. Notification
5. Child, Youth and Family

While the majority of clients remained involved in the service following notification, participants spoke about how they used strategies to work through the notification with their clients. Transparency with the client throughout the working relationship and during the notification process was identified as a potentially useful strategy. Ongoing support for the client was another main strategy that participants identified. The type of relationship workers had with their client could indicate how notification would impact on that relationship. In relation to the notification participants spoke about how this was done as potentially having a positive impact on the client-worker relationship. How Child, Youth and Family responded to receiving the notification and how they then processed it, were factors that also had the potential to impact on the client-worker relationship.

RELATIONSHIP (CLIENT-WORKER)

Five themes were identified by participants as either helpful or threatening to the client-worker relationship following notification. These were in relation to engagement, prior involvement, intervention is not effective, investigation halts or ends involvement and complicated by number of services involved.

ENGAGEMENT:

Three aspects of engagement were considered to be significant:

1. That the client was engaged, not engaged or ambivalent about the client-worker relationship prior to the notification.

2. If the client had been working with the practitioner long-term and the worker knew the client well.
3. If there was a positive focus.

1. Client was engaged, not engaged or ambivalent.

Participants talked about clients being engaged meaning that they were open with the worker, they felt connected with their worker and were committed to attending appointments. If the client was engaged in the relationship participants considered it to be more likely that the client would continue to be engaged despite the notification being made. Participants made reference to the need to work at engaging with the client from the first meeting with them.

> *" the engagement ... worked hard on right at the start"* Participant 4.

> *" ... the engagement ... is so crucial."* Participant 4.

A factor identified that threatens the client-worker relationship in the event that a notification is made by the worker is when the client is not engaged in the client-worker relationship or is ambivalent. Participants considered it less likely that the client would stay involved with the service following notification as the client had a tentative link with the support being offered. Ambivalence was identified as a client sometimes being engaged and then disengaging at other times.

> *"... some days she was quite responsive and other days she um certainly would forget appointments or um you'd call out and she'd just be too busy, she wouldn't um engage she'd just keep doing what she was doing um so it was tenuous I suppose,"* Participant 7.

While it might not be clear what was causing this ambivalence some suggestions were that the client may have issues with trusting others or the client did not cope well with change or being challenged. This applied to one family a participant was working with that disengaged following a notification being made.

2. Long-term client and knowing the client.

Although this engaging process begins at the start of the working relationship, it was noted that being engaged for a long period of time with a client was a factor that made it more likely a notification would not lead to the client disengaging.

With a long term client the worker would be more likely to know the client in the sense of being able to understand what was occurring in their lives.

> *"... that was engagement, that was knowing your client from a great day being able to function and know all these things or talk about problems to absolute inability and obviously something's going on."* Participant 4.

This knowledge then enabled the worker to focus with the client on what was happening and challenge and support them regarding the issues of concern.

3. Positive focus.

It was identified that in working with a client notifiable issues may arise but that positive parenting can also be evident at these times.

> *"... it was pretty transparent that it (*the notification) *needed to take place because a lack of parenting um in the sense that there was alcohol involvement and all sorts of things happening um. And like it is too, he had great bouts of wonderful parenting of his son but could not sustain it."* Participant 4.

It was recommended that the positive is identified for the parent so that the whole focus is not on the negative. This highlights the fact that engaging with the client is a process that occurs throughout the client-worker relationship even when a notification is being made.

> *"Um, she felt like everyone just saw her as a bad mother, ah, so I at that point tried to get her to acknowledge the strengths that I'd seen over time and all the good things that I'd seen her doing as well."* Participant 6.

PRIOR INVOLVEMENT:

Prior involvement with Family Works was potentially a positive factor as the client was then in a knowledgeable position in relation to the policies and processes. If the client had prior involvement with the particular worker as well, then this was helpful as a relationship had previously been established.

Prior involvement with Child, Youth and Family could also be positive as the client was then aware of the process and what would occur following a notification.

> *"... it didn't actually have any negative impact on the relationship and partly this is because she came with knowledge about that..."* Participant 3

The five participants who raised this theme, also suggested that with the knowledge of the Child, Youth and Family process, the client anticipated that a notification would need to be made. With this knowledge of Child, Youth and Family, it was considered helpful that even though the worker made the notification, the client was receiving their support through this.

It was an interesting finding that prior involvement with Child, Youth and Family could potentially be a positive factor as it is conceivable that it could be viewed negatively by the client. It may be that knowledge of Child, Youth and Family based on prior involvement and therefore reality was helpful rather than if the knowledge of the service was based on the often negative focus of media reports.

INEFFECTIVE CLIENT-WORKER RELATIONSHIP:

If the client-worker relationship was not effective then making a notification was likely to result in the client withdrawing from the service. There were three ways in which this ineffectiveness would be demonstrated by the client.

1. Client dismissive.

That the client did not agree with the worker's perspective and was therefore dismissive of what the worker was saying.

2. Client lacks insight, minimises or lacks motivation to change.

The client lacked insight into what was occurring and was unable to gain this insight when the worker talked this through with them. This lack of insight might occur through the client minimising what was happening. Alternatively it may be that the client was aware of the issues but lacked the motivation to make changes.

> *" And sort of praising her, every time I was seeing good stuff um and kept trying to put that in but yeah it just, I don't think she was ready to make the changes or was even aware that she needed to,"* Participant 6.

3. Power imbalance highlighted.

In a worker relationship with a client, the practitioner is aware of the power imbalance but works hard through the engagement process to minimise this for the client to be empowered and receive the support that they need. Through the process of making a notification it was recognised that the power imbalance can be highlighted. This was not just in relation to the worker and client but also in relation to the worker having no autonomy about making the notification.

> *"... I was saying look I have to do this. It was just sort of going through the motions but it's not actually going through the motions for a family"* Participant 10

INVESTIGATION HALTS/ENDS INVOLVEMENT:

In some cases making a notification halted the relationship for a period of time or it ended the relationship. This happened in three ways.

1. Client contact was halted.

Two participants raised the fact that following a notification client contact was halted. For one participant this occurred when another agency made a notification and Child, Youth and Family removed the children from the home and therefore work with this family was halted. A parent continued to receive support and it was anticipated that work with the family could resume once the children were returned home. The other participant spoke of the fact that Family Works deemed that it was inappropriate to continue to work with the client while the investigation was in progress.

> *"The reasoning around that why I wouldn't see the client, was that somebody else was going to become involved um around and asking him questions and so for me not to."* Participant 2.

In this situation the client was a child and therapeutic contact was halted but the worker offered to support the parent and child with the Child, Youth and Family involvement if they wanted this to happen. This support was not required and the relationship resumed once the investigation was completed.

2. Focus on the notification issues was halted.

One participant spoke of an instance where the focus on the notification issues was halted but the client-worker relationship continued.

> *"It had an effect on the relationship in that once the notification was made and due to the nature of it had to leave space for Child, Youth and Family to do their work around it. So you couldn't go to that conversation."* Participant 10.

In this situation the practitioner was working with both the parent and the young person. This work sometimes occurred with the parent and young person together and sometimes individually with the worker. The practitioner noted that focus on the notified incident could not occur while Child, Youth and Family completed their investigation; however support continued and included working with the parent on how to ensure safety in the home.

3. Client withdrew or was withdrawn from the service.

Following the notification some participants said that the client withdrew from the service.

> *"And the outcome of that – the woman went beserk, withdrew …"* Participant 5.

Six clients withdrew from the service, one disengaged with the worker but remained involved in the service and a further nineteen clients remained involved with the worker and service. In the case of the client being a child sometimes the parent withdrew the child following the notification and the child was not given the opportunity for closure in their work with the social worker or family/whanau worker. In one case a participant talked about how a notification made by another service ultimately led to the client ending involvement with Family Works. Another participant talked about how a client continued to stay involved but withdrew in their level of engagement with the worker. The client became less open and therefore the relationship had limited effectiveness.

THE EFFECT OF NUMEROUS SERVICES INVOLVEMENT:

The final theme that was considered to affect the client-worker relationship following notification related to other agency involvement. The relationship could become complicated by the number of other services involved. This could occur where the collaboration between agencies was not effective and therefore it may be overwhelming for the client to have a number of agencies involved.

> *"... it got complicated with the amount of services involvement."* Participant 3

> *" ... there was no sort of sense that we're working together..."* Participant 3

This occurred in a situation where another agency made the notification and then Child, Youth and Family were involved and another agency was introduced. The family were being supported by a number of agencies and these had been working together but when the notification occurred and further agencies became involved they did not collaborate with the others. As the family were not okay about the notification they withdrew from all the services they were working with prior to the notification.

While this was only referred to by one participant it serves to highlight the importance of consultation and collaboration between the agencies working with a family. This collaboration ensures that everyone is working with the family in a consistent and supportive way. It becomes confusing for all parties and potentially overwhelming for the family where agencies do not effectively work together.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency was referred to by all participants as being a strategy that was significant to an effective client-worker relationship. Being transparent referred to being honest and open with the client and is elemental in engagement with the client and establishing a working relationship.

It was largely considered to be helpful if the worker had been transparent with the client throughout their working relationship if they then proceeded with making a notification. Transparency throughout the client-worker relationship was referred to in five ways in relation to notification.

INFLUENCES THROUGHOUT THE CLIENT-WORKER RELATIONSHIP:

1. Regarding agency policy.

Participants made reference to the agency policy relating to confidentiality that is shared with the client. Every client who enters the service through the intake process is given the Family Works written policy regarding the limits of confidentiality and this is explained verbally to them before they sign a form noting that they have understood this. The limits of confidentiality include that where there are any issues regarding safety it is the policy of the service to report these to the appropriate authority.

Participants referred to the importance of making this policy clear again when the client is allocated following the intake process and the new worker meets them for the first time. By being transparent about this policy, it means there are no surprises for the client should a notification need to be made in the future.

> *"I think what helps is at the start of the relationship being honest about that privacy and confidentiality and that and what it means to be concerned and what I'm going to do."* Participant 1.

2. Regarding any concerns.

Participants recommended being transparent about any concerns throughout the client-worker relationship. They advocated for being open rather than noting issues and only referring directly to them when a notification is made. It was stated that by being transparent the worker was able to hear the views of the client regarding the issues and then support the client to bring about the necessary changes.

> *"Yeah just having that transparency and honesty yeah and having those tough conversations because I think that's what also happens that you see concerning things and it would be easier to not confront them."* Participant 1.

By being open with the client there should be no surprises for them if issues lead to a notification being made.

3. That notification required.

Participants also recommended being transparent with the client if information they have shared or the worker has observed issues that would require a notification being made. This was suggested in two ways. Some workers would follow the process of consulting with their supervisor in the first instance to establish whether a notification needed to be made before informing the client of this. Other workers recommended stating to the client

> *"... that would ordinarily be something that would require a notification to CYF."* Participant 2.

Then the worker would consult their supervisor and confirm the outcome to the client.

4. Detail of notification.

In talking with the client about making a notification participants recommended that the specifics of the notification are shared with the client.

> *"So I went to the family and told the mother that I was putting notification through and I talked through what the concerns were..."* Participant 1.

In addition to this it was suggested that the process followed by Child, Youth and Family once they receive a notification be shared with the client so they can have an understanding of what will occur.

5. Not always safe to be transparent when notify.

Two participants commented that in some situations it is not always safe to be transparent when the worker makes a notification. One participant had been advised not to inform the parent of the notification due to concern about the safety of the child should their disclosure and the subsequent notification be shared with the offending parent. The other participant referred to a family he was working with and their angry response when another agency made a notification. This participant considered that it would not have been safe for the worker to be transparent about this due to the response. In that case the other agency worker

had not been transparent presumably for their own safety. The participant acknowledged the need for this

> *"I would have had to do it anonymously, which I knew would be tricky because then I would potentially have to lie to them".* Participant 3.

The participant commented that being dishonest is not conducive to a good working relationship with clients.

APPROACH MATTERS:

A further aspect to transparency was the importance of the approach by the worker to the client regarding the issues of concern. Six participants focused on how the matter was phrased being the important aspect.

> *"… I think also because of the way I explained it… just giving her the facts of what she'd already given me…"* Participant 1.

There was also reference to the medium used. Some thought that it was helpful to conduct these discussions about notification with the client face to face and that it was not a conversation that could be had over the telephone.

> *"… phone calls don't work, texts don't work, you have to actually sit down with them to show them that you're not just this person backstabbing them 'cause that's the feeling that backstabbing feeling and working through it with them."* Participant 1.

Others however spoke about how they would give the client the choice, if it was more comfortable to occur face to face or whether they preferred over the telephone.

SUPPORT

The support offered to the client alongside the notification that is made was considered to be significant by the participants as enabling the client-worker relationship to continue. There were two aspects of support that were important:

1. Continued Support
2. Others Support

CONTINUED SUPPORT:

Continued support related to the worker offering continued support to the client. Three themes were raised in relation this support.

1. Feedback and support.

References were made to the importance of supporting the client with ensuring that they understood the Child, Youth and Family investigation process, that they were provided with feedback on this investigation as it progressed, and that they understood the outcome of the investigation.

> *"And then before I'm doing a notification, I will say to them look this is what I am doing but also talking through what it is and what happens with CYFS. Because if you say notification, some families do just panic and think they're going to take my kids away…"* Participant 1.

Where appropriate it was seen as vital that the client was offered continued support through the service.

> *" … she was, mostly relieved she was going to get support and help and didn't seem too bothered at all about going to CYF."* Participant 3.

The consistency of this support was deemed important for the client to work through the notification and continue the client-worker relationship. Notification and openness about the issues of concern, was an opportunity to be supported to bring about change and safety for the child.

2. Advocacy.

Assisting clients to link in with other services if appropriate and advocating for clients with other services was also considered to be important to some participants. For example, if an aspect of the notification related to mental health issues then linking the client into the mental health service was seen as important.

> *"I made a referral to maternal mental health because she sounded like she was getting a bit depressed."* Participant 1.

Advocating for the client with Child, Youth and Family could then occur if the client was engaged with the mental health service to bring about change in relation to the notified issues.

3. Notification secondary.

For some clients the notification was seen as secondary to gaining support from the worker. For the worker notification was also considered to be secondary to assisting the family.

> *"… the first thing is to talk about how you're going to help the people involved … what help is anyone at risk and how do you keep them safe but also how do you help everybody involved deal with the situation… Notification then is secondary to sorting that out…"* Participant 3.

OTHERS SUPPORT:

Others support had two themes that related to it.

1. Other colleagues.

Participants reported that other colleagues also working with the client assisted in a number of ways to help the client-worker relationship to continue following notification. This sometimes worked well when the client was receiving wrap around support. That the client was receiving different services within the agency and therefore being supported for their specific needs. This sometimes worked well when one worker focused on addressing the concerning issues and the other worker focused on being there for the client. While both workers took responsibility for the notification and the client was clear about that, the workers generally chose the different roles to ensure the client felt well supported. At times having another worker involved allowed the client to be clear on what was required as the workers communicated in different ways.

There were various ways in which another worker might be involved with the client. This could occur when another service within Family Works was involved. There might also be co-working occurring where a worker is new to the service or is a student with the service. At times students have placements at the service and can work for up to three months in order to satisfy the requirements of their

programme of study. Co-working may also happen where the issues within the family are complex and/or different parts of the family need support at different times.

2. Other agencies.

Other agencies supporting the client can also help with the client remaining engaged following notification. Where there was a good liaison between services then this can work well for the client to ensure that they receive a wrap around service that caters to their specific needs. This liaison can ensure the client is receiving consistent support and advocacy and/or a consistent message about concerns and about what is needing to change.

> *"… I would see the child for counselling… And so the father, the stepmother, the child and his lawyer worked very closely with what happened in these sessions. And his lawyer worked extremely hard with the Courts …"* Participant 5.

HELPFUL AND THREATENING ASPECTS OF NOTIFICATION

There were different aspects related to notification that could help or threaten the client-worker relationship following notification.

1. Others
2. Type of Evidence
3. Client is/is not perpetrator
4. Safety Assessment
5. Client is/is not accepting of notification

OTHERS:

This related to others being supported or encouraged to notify as it was deemed more appropriate than the worker making the notification.

1. Encourage/support client to notify.

It could be considered more appropriate for the client to make the notification themselves in many circumstances. Participants considered that a client could feel empowered when they made the notification themselves as they were bringing

about change and supporting their child to be safe. In other situations the client could be taking responsibility for their actions by making that notification themselves. One participant noted that it had been a therapeutic process for the client to make that notification themselves:

> *"… he needed to be the one who rescued his son or saved his son. Or did something because that had gone for him, it felt like he wasn't able to protect his son and he needed to be able to do that."* Participant 5.

If the worker had not witnessed the notifiable issue then it could be more appropriate for the client to make the notification as they would have the necessary detail. While a worker might encourage the client to notify themselves and offer them support to do this, the client does not always agree and therefore the worker is obligated to make the notification. The worker would make it clear to the client that a notification had to be made and if the client chose not to do it then the worker would have to do so.

The worker's role when the client chooses to notify is to support the client/family in the process of making the notification. The worker identified that when this occurred it was an easier process as the client could make a telephone call to notify whereas the process for the worker (see Appendix J, for a partial copy of the process) involved considerably more than this. It was also noted that the client needs to be encouraged to notify because when the worker makes the notification then it can become something that is being done to the client and therefore the natural power imbalance between client and worker is accentuated.

> *"It becomes, it becomes my interpretation of the issues, and my responsibility and my action and all that does is, is isolates the family from a process that is all about them. I, I don't see that as a useful way to go."* Participant 5.

2. Encourage those with concerns to notify.

As above there are times where it would be more appropriate for others to notify rather than the worker. This could include other family members, others known to the family or other professionals working with the family. While the worker would encourage the other person to do so, if they chose not to then the worker would in

most situations need to make the notification themselves. This could be another agency with concerns or another family member who is not a client of the service.

> *"… encouraged them to make their own notification as well. Which they did while we were sitting there."* Participant 1.

Where another person makes the notification, it may still be necessary for the worker to make their own notification if they have additional notifiable information. If another person makes a notification and the worker is not in a position where they need to do so, then it can help the client-worker relationship that they are available to support the client when this occurs.

TYPE OF EVIDENCE:

It is potentially more likely that the client-worker relationship will remain intact if the worker has observed the notifiable issue or if the parent or child discloses about the abuse, as it is substantiated. Where the parent has been open about abuse occurring then the worker would discuss with the client how a notification would need to be made and decisions would then be made about who would do this. In the case where the worker observes the abuse and then discusses the need for notification, they have clear examples to share and work through with the client.

It is less helpful for the client-worker relationship where the worker receives the information second-hand (for example, from another family member or person known to the client). The worker would need to talk with the client about the incident/issue and the client may be defensive and choose not to be open about it.

> *"… discussed what I'd been told, given permission by the other agency to question her around this stuff. Um and she said oh you know, he bangs his head on the tables and things like that but there were, it didn't make sense,…"* Participant 6.

This can occur where the person who shared the information with the worker chooses to notify themselves or if they choose not to and the worker is obligated to follow this up.

WHETHER THE CLIENT IS THE PERPETRATOR:

Participants spoke of the difference of working with a client who was the perpetrator and was understanding of the need for notification versus the client who was the perpetrator but was not understanding of the need for notification. Some clients were open about the abuse they had committed and wanted to have assistance to manage with this and bring about change. These clients were expecting that a notification would be made and in some cases were encouraged to make the notification themselves. Participants spoke of some clients who did not understand the need for notification for a variety of reasons including that they did not believe that there were issues or that there were issues but they were not at a level that required notification. The difficulties working with the clients who did not identify the issues or the severity of the issues was that movement towards change could not occur as an open exploration of the issues and commitment to change was not present.

> *"Whereas before the notification she was able to justify and say oh yeah no, my daughter's doing this but actually hold on what about what you're doing. She was probably more open to that fact actually, yeah."*
> Participant 9.

In addition, the difficulties could relate to the emotional response of the client to the worker stating that a notification needed to be made.

SAFETY ASSESSMENT:

Two participants referred to a Safety Assessment mandate. This was relevant to one programme in the service:

> *"… if we know that there's been a Protection Order, um CYFS have been involved and a child's been uplifted in the past we are mandated as an agency to do this."* Participant 6.

This is a type of notification, where the worker is mandated to advise Child, Youth and Family and request a Safety Assessment. The participants who had made requests for safety assessments spoke of this being a type of notification that was more likely to leave the client-worker relationship intact as it was based on a policy rather than actual concerns.

> *"So when I explained to her that it was a policy thing and that I um I didn't have any concerns and I would absolutely support her through the whole process … I think she felt more comfortable because we'd built a good relationship beforehand."* Participant 10.

Child, Youth and Family end their involvement with families where there have been care and protection issues when the children are deemed to be safe and cared for. This mandated policy was put in place with one programme in the service where often it is vulnerable families that access the service. Child, Youth and Family are therefore in a position to check the current situation for the children with the benefit of looking at the historical abuse information to ensure there were no aspects of this occurring again.

CLIENT IS ACCEPTING OF NOTIFICATION:

The client-worker relationship was more likely to remain intact when the client was accepting of the notification. There were different reasons identified by the participants for the client accepting the notification.

1. Client also concerned/understanding.

The client was accepting of the notification because they were also concerned about the safety and well being of the child or young person.

> *"… pleased that the notification went in because they thought that it warranted that…"* Participant 2.

Alternatively the client was accepting of the notification because they understood why it needed to be done. This did not necessarily mean that the client agreed that the notification had to be made however that they understood why the worker was making it.

2. Removes them from having to do it.

The client was accepting of the notification being made by the worker as it meant that they did not have to make it themselves. Participants talked about clients having different reasons for not wanting to make the notification themselves but that they felt concerned about the child or young person's safety and therefore wanted a notification to be made.

> *"… he wasn't keen because um of abuse that he stated that he constantly received from mum, didn't want to jeopardise their relationship any further but was happy for Family Works to make a notification."* Participant 7.

3. CYF already involved.

The client was accepting of the notification being made as Child, Youth and Family were already involved

> *"… she didn't seem to mind because CYFS were already involved."* Participant 1.

This may have been because the client was aware of how Child, Youth and Family would respond as they were already involved or they felt that it would not change anything.

4. Client did not accept wrong doing.

The client was accepting of the notification being made as they identified the issue was managed or they attributed blame to another person and they did not believe that they had done anything wrong.

> *"… she was happy for it to go to CYF um because she thought the child was the problem."* Participant 2.

The participant noted that the client continued to think this way despite the worker being transparent about the concerns and the detail of the notification.

One participant talked of a client having an angry response when Child, Youth and Family followed up the notification and had concerns about how she was managing:

> *"… she kicked off completely and that was a trigger point, was CYFS giving her that this is, this is the bottom line. Your children … can not live here."* Participant 4.

While this potentially could have resulted in the client withdrawing, she continued to stay involved with the service.

It would not always be the case that a client would be accepting of a notification if they did not acknowledge responsibility. One participant referred to a notification

being made by another agency and the client responding emotively as they did not accept wrongdoing.

> *"Experienced as betrayal especially if they weren't prepared to acknowledge any wrong doing."* Participant 3.

CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY

As stated previously Child, Youth and Family are the government agency responsible for providing care and protection to the nation's children and additional to this provide the structure to manage with youth offending. There were five themes related to the service of Child, Youth and Family.

COMMUNICATION:

Where communication was occurring between the service and Child, Youth and Family due to the fact that they were already involved, was identified as a factor that helped the client-worker relationship to remain intact. This communication occurred with the knowledge of the client and was considered to be helpful to the client-worker relationship as it was less formal than a notification process:

> *"… not gone through as an actual notification probably just some information being fed through with emails, just like that was happening when I was working the case."* Participant 4.

INITIAL RESPONSE:

The initial response from Child, Youth and Family could potentially be a helpful factor in maintaining the client-worker relationship. As one participant noted:

> *" We got a reasonably good response here, within a week the social worker was on it…"* Participant 3.

It would reinforce the decision to make a notification when Child, Youth and Family responded promptly and well. Although, where the response from Child, Youth and Family was not done well it may have also been positive for the client-worker relationship as the worker's practice was appreciated.

> *"At the end of it he said to me, right you go back and put in a notification… And even the client who was with me, she couldn't believe*

> *that we had sat there all that time, he gathered all the information and he still made me go back and do it."* Participant 8.

Here the participant was describing that she and the client had gone into the Child, Youth and Family office and notified in person. The participant spoke about this being an involved process due to the issues of concern. The client and worker were both surprised that the Child, Youth and Family social worker then advised the Family Works practitioner to go back to the office and submit a written notification, despite having shared all the detail verbally. The client had appreciated the work of the Family Works practitioner despite the unprofessional Child, Youth and Family response.

SUPPORT NOTIFICATION:

Where Child, Youth and Family support the notification, it is reinforcing the message to the client about the concerns and the need for change and this consistency can be helpful for the client-worker relationship:

> *"… it was almost a collaborative piece of work with CYFS."* Participant 4.

OUTCOME:

The outcome of the Child, Youth and Family investigation could potentially impact on the client-worker relationship particularly where it was considered to be in the best interests of the child.

1. No further action (NFA).

Where the outcome of the Child, Youth and Family investigation was NFA (no further action) this could be positive for the client-worker relationship where this was in the best interests of the child.

> *'"And probably because Child, Youth and Family knew that we were there was not much that they would do…. Except refer back to us but they already knew they were with us so that's a piece of paper work they probably saved themselves."* Participant 3.

One participant noted that the Child, Youth and Family outcome had not been in the best interests of the child and yet the client was pleased that the worker had heard and understood her concerns:

> *"… in terms of our relationship I guess it actually um improved it, confirmed to her that she was being listened to. Previous to that she thought no-one was listening, no-one was taking her seriously um but the outcome was such that again her concerns were dismissed and trivialised."* Participant 2.

2. Positive/Effective.

Where the outcome was effective and a positive one in terms of being in the best interests of the child this was likely to impact positively on the client-worker relationship.

> *"… the outcome was brilliant….this child got his life back… that was the best notification I've ever made".* Participant 5.

In this situation, the father and the child were both involved in the service and the notification related to the other parent and abuse that was occurring.

DELAYS IN CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY PROCESS:

Delays in the Child, Youth and Family investigation could impact negatively on the client-worker relationship as the stress of this continued or the focus of the work was affected:

> *"… all this up and down with this case because you were waiting on an FGC process to um take place."* Participant 4.

TEMPLATE – SECOND SECTION

The second section of the template (see Appendix I) related to factors or strategies that affect the worker when making a notification of child abuse or neglect. While there was no direct impact on the client, participants identified things that affected them in their work and could consequently impact their relationship with the client. There were four overall themes:

1. Support
2. Notification
3. Child, Youth and Family
4. Practice

As noted previously three of these themes are the same as for the first section but vary due to the impact being in relation to the worker rather than directly on the client.

SUPPORT

This related to the worker being supported by organisations and included different aspects of this.

1. Supervisor/Management/Peer.

Nine of the ten participants spoke about the support that they received from either their supervisor/team leaders, managers or from their peers. As noted previously, the process of notification in the service is for the practitioner to consult with their team leader and then meet with their manager and their team leader and any other workers involved to discuss whether notification is necessary (see Appendix J).

> *"I did feel really well supported by the organisation um, by my supervisor, by the manager ... "* Participant 2.

> *"... that did impact on me and I talked to my team leader a lot about it..."* Participant 9.

Peer support may occur through co-working with the client, or with the practitioner seeking out a colleague to discuss the notification with or by receiving support from a worker in the same office space.

2. Policies/Procedures.

Participants spoke of the agency policies and procedures and how these were helpful to understand how they were to proceed. The process of making a notification in the agency was specifically referred to by six participants. There were both positive and negative comments about the agency process.

> *"Um it, well to be honest probably the stressful part of it was writing up the notification and getting it checked by everyone here. (laughter)."* Participant 10

> *"No can't say I found those ones stressful um obviously when there's a timeframeness about it, if you're going to make a notification there's an*

> *expectation it's done now. Um so you have to make it fit with what else you're doing."* Participant 7.

> *"Um but the notification process itself in terms of consulting with the client, um consulting with the work place, putting in the notification, being in contact with CYF and all that, that was all um yeah that was all I guess helpful."* Participant 2.

In addition, it was noted that the policies were useful in order to be clear with the client about what a worker had to do if there were safety issues raised in the course of their work within the agency.

> *"But then it's like no actually have to do this. And probably what helps is policies, 'cause you can always go back to the policies and go look this is actually our obligation and I see that the children aren't safe or whatever it is I can talk to it, yeah."* Participant 9.

3. Back up.

Four participants considered the support they received from the agency as 'back up'. The worker therefore felt that they were not doing the notification on their own and that they were supported in their position and would receive 'back up' if things did not go well with the clients.

> *"... it means it's not a unilateral decision then. It's, it's um, in consultation and then whatever the outcome is with Child, Youth and Family well it's something that this agency is felt needs to be progresses so um you're doing it as a representative I guess of the agency...".* Participant 7.

4. Other agency liaison support.

The support of other agencies also working with the family was noted by three participants. They found it helpful when other agencies assisted them in this process through discussions with the client or as co-worker discussions.

> *"I had support in the liaison work that I did with um the other workers involved."* Participant 2.

> *"The CYFS worker, the family/whanau worker spoke to him and I spoke to my client."* Participant 1.

NOTIFICATION

There were seven aspects of making a notification that were identified as being helpful or difficult for the worker.

1. Worker factors – experience, knowledge and conviction.

Eight participants referred to their conviction, their experience and/or their level of knowledge of abuse as being helpful in making a notification.

> *"... going through the facts and my passion for children being safe. I couldn't, I can't live with knowing that children are in an unsafe place."* Participant 1.

> *"Um if you've got an incident for a child where, where there's safety and um care is, is seriously compromised I think it absolutely needs to happen as soon as possible and be um responded to as soon as possible."* Participant 7.

> *" I mean you have to have a baseline knowledge of abuse in general..."* Participant 4.

2. Child, Youth and Family support.

One participant noted how it had been helpful that Child, Youth and Family supported the making of the notification. This was a situation where the worker had been in regular contact with Child, Youth and Family in relation to the client.

> *"I did feel really well supported ... and also by Child, Youth and Family. Actually I had um meetings with the worker that um that came on and um they were really yeah they were really supportive, they also had concerns um it was helpful".* *Participant 2.*

3. Stressful impact of abuse on the worker.

Reference to the stressful nature of working in families where a notification was required to be made due to child abuse or neglect was made by three participants. It was acknowledged that this could be difficult for the worker due to their feelings about what had occurred for the child.

> *"I think the outcome for that was devastating and actually um that whole case is a devastating case.... I mean they all are."* Participant 2.

> *"You know that took a really long time and to know that child or young person was in that situation for so long it was really um stressful."* Participant 2.

4. Conflicting obligation.

One participant spoke about the conflicting obligation that they felt about making a notification. They spoke of the relationship with their client and breaking the trust by notifying but that the safety of the child had to be a priority.

> *"...I felt like it was like oh like am I breaking their trust but then it was like, hold on a minute no I've got an obligation to these children..."* Participant 9.

5. Client complaint.

For one participant it had been very difficult when the client subsequently made a complaint to the agency following the notification being made. The participant talked about how the complaint appeared to be an emotional response to the notification as it was not factually correct but how this had been more difficult to manage as the worker did not get to talk this through with the client as they had chosen to take their complaint to management level. The participant while speaking about the difficulty of managing with this complaint had also felt that it brought an opportunity for further learning and that this had been positive.

> *"I 'cause of course when someone puts a complaint about you, you go oh um how dare you and because the things in the complaint weren't truthful um I was very angry and I had to work my way through that stuff ah and did. You know, it's been probably the best thing I could've ever gone through, seriously... Ah, it's made my practice better, it's given me more awareness of um I think um situations like this and how other people might react..."* Participant 6.

6. Other agency.

Where it would have been more appropriate for other agencies to notify and yet they had chosen not to do so, resulting in the participant having to make the notification, was raised as particularly difficult for the worker.

> *"... frustrating because um yeah because I guess I had the perspective that the notification could have better come from someone who had more knowledge and background around the situation."* Participant 2.

In this case it seemed that the other agency agreed with the notification being made but had concerns about their working relationship with the client if they were to make the notification.

> *"... it was more like oh, their relationship with the client I think and maintaining their relationship with the client."* Participant 2.

CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY

Participants talked about two aspects of difficulty in working with Child, Youth and Family. Where the safety issue that had been notified was not resolved through Child, Youth and Family involvement:

> *"It* (the safety of the child) *was continually compromised from my perspective."* Participant 2.

Where it was frustrating to work with Child, Youth and Family:

> *"..., Child, Youth and Family had just picked up the phone called me said you know, we had the allegation made, this is what's being declared I could tell them where we're at. And I would say to them what I thought needed to happen to keep the children safe."* Participant 3.

> *"So notification is a tool and it's something... I wish I had more faith in the fact that one notification..., would have the kind of impact that we want it to have... I have a sense as a worker that multiple notifications are necessary to get things moving."* Participation 5.

> *"They are saying CYFS do it WINZ do it, it was just going backwards and forwards, and I was like, this is like being, and meanwhile she's got nowhere to stay tonight."* Participant 9.

PRACTICE

Further practice issues were raised by three participants. They spoke about how reflecting on how you are responding to the issues with your client is important.

> *" ..., yeah it did impact on me because when I thought about what I was like when I was 16 and it probably pushed a few buttons for me. Because I was thinking I was really independent at that age."* Participant 9.

It was noted further by one participant that each time a notification is made is an opportunity to learn from it and assist future practice.

> *"Um and to be open, be open to learning from it, rather than look at all the negative stuff, be open to what you can learn from every, every single one, because it will be so different from the last one."* Participant 6.

In addition it was suggested by another participant that the worker needs to take responsibility to learn more.

> *"And it's your own responsibility too. If you want to enhance your practice you have to read up of where some of our um abuse cases like James Whakaruru[1] um you know all of our children on that big long list that we have. You have to actually know like the inquiries and all of those bits and pieces of what came out of it because that's what makes you a better social worker."* Participant 4.

The participant is referring to the inquiries that occur following the death of a child as a result of abuse. As an outcome of the inquiries, recommendations are made with a view to prevent further child deaths from abuse.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that when a worker makes a notification the impact of this on the client-worker relationship is not pre-determined. Participants talked about strategies and factors that can assist the client-worker relationship to remain intact. They were clear however that there were no guarantees that utilising these strategies or having the factors present would result in the client continuing to remain involved with the service. Of significant importance was how engaged the client was in the relationship and in the intervention work that was occurring prior to the notification and how open the worker had been with the client throughout their involvement. How the worker approached the matter with the client was also significant and it was recommended that the worker continue to highlight any positives that were occurring in the home and not focus solely on the issues of concern. Additional factors related to whether other supports were involved and whether the client accepted that a notification was required. How Child, Youth and Family responded to the notification also impacted on the ongoing nature of the client-worker relationship. Assistance and support for the worker were also likely to impinge on the client-worker relationship. Workers

[1] See Office of the Commissioner for Children (2000) *Final Report on the Investigation into the Death of James Whakaruru.*

needed to ensure that their practice was informed and that they continued to reflect on their experiences and extend themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The discussion focuses on the key findings from this research regarding the impact of notification on the client-worker relationship and relates them to relevant literature. As with any research there are limitations in this study and these will be discussed.

Participants were clear that making a notification did impact on the client-worker relationship. In some instances there was a negative impact to the extent that the client withdrew or was withdrawn from the service. In other situations the client was negative about the notification and the worker had to utilise skills to engage the client to ease through the tension on the relationship. It was not always a negative impact however and the majority of clients did not exit the service. In some situations there was a positive impact and the client-worker relationship was strengthened as a result.

Participants identified five main strategies or factors that then facilitated the client-worker relationship to continue following notification. Factors in the relationship which were helpful were if the client was engaged, if there was prior service involvement, if service involvement was effective, if interagency collaboration was occurring and if the impact of the investigation on the ongoing level of support being offered to the client was limited. Transparency was highlighted as being an important strategy for a positive working relationship. The support offered to the client throughout the notification and following on from this was another strategy that could assist to maintain the working relationship. How the client responded to the notification was seen as significant and who reported it. The response from Child, Youth and Family was discussed as a potential impacting factor.

It was also highlighted that how the workers themselves were affected through the notification process could impact on the client-worker relationship. While the factors identified did not have a direct impact on the client, it was through this effect on the worker that the relationship could be impacted.

Table 3, shows a summary of the factors and strategies that may help to maintain the client-worker relationship following making a notification to Child, Youth and Family regarding child abuse or neglect.

TABLE 3. MAKING A NOTIFICATION: Things that may help to keep the client-worker relationship intact:

1. ENGAGEMENT
- Work on engagement with your client from the beginning.
- Work with your client to identify their goals and help them to feel hope and achieve success, as this makes it more likely that they will be engaged in the intervention.

* If there are any safety issues, then goals MUST also be set for these.

2. TRANSPARENCY
- Be open, honest and transparent with your client from the beginning. Be transparent about policies in the service particularly regarding confidentiality limitations when there are safety issues.
- Be transparent throughout the client-worker relationship and particularly regarding any issues or concerns when they arise. Be clear with the client when a notification needs to be made (as long as it is safe and appropriate to do so).

* Approach matters – be transparent in ways that suit the client's preferences regarding how they process information, what the best medium is for them, what their cultural needs are etc...

3. NOTIFICATION
- Assist the client to understand the notification and investigation process through Child, Youth and Family. Be specific regarding the details so that the client has a clear understanding. Enquire about client prior experience of notification to know what information they need.

4. CLIENT SUPPORT
- With the client, identify how you will continue to support them following notification – include a safety plan and focus on specified goals to continue to make progress.

5. CHILD, YOUTH and FAMILY
- Work with Child, Youth and Family so you are informed and able to provide support and feedback to the client.
- Work with Child, Youth and Family for the best interests of the child and family to be identified.

6. WORKER SUPPORT
- Ensure you, as the worker, receive organisational support particularly through quality supervision.
- Ensure that you are clear regarding your beliefs about the abuse concerns in the case consultation regarding notification.
- Reflect on all aspects of your work and particularly on your decision-making processes in relation to safety aspects.
- Keep updated in your knowledge regarding child abuse.

The literature that supports the practice framework as outlined in Table 3 is contained in this chapter. This chapter looks specifically at the literature in relation to the engagement and relational factors, the use of transparency as a useful strategy, the support of clients and how the type of evidence used to make the notification can impact on the client-worker relationship. Further focus on the literature relates to the findings from the second part of the template, on how the worker is supported within this process and the interface between social service agencies and Child, Youth and Family.

While research shows that some professionals express concern that their client/patient will disengage following notification (Alvarez et al., 2004; Harper & Irvine, 1985; Jones et al., 2008; Levine & Doueck, 1995), this research confirms results from Harper and Irvine (1985), that this is not always the outcome. Harper and Irvine (1985) reviewed case files from a psychosomatic unit for children, on the work that occurred with the parents to bring about change with their children. They found that disengagement following notification was unlikely to occur if it "is done in the context of ongoing treatment" (p.554). In fact they felt that it was a useful part of the clinical intervention. Watson and Levine (1989), and Levine and Doueck (1995), in their research on the therapeutic alliance and therapeutic impasse, also found that the client-worker relationship can continue following notification and in some cases can also benefit the working relationship.

While participants shared information on factors or strategies that may affect the client-worker relationship following notification, it is clear that there is no specific formula that would guarantee that the relationship would remain intact. The strategies or factors identified by the participants as helpful to ensure an ongoing client-worker relationship are also helpful in general practice.

CLIENT-WORKER RELATIONSHIP

For the relationship key issues were the level of client engagement in both the initial connection with the worker but also in terms of the support and intervention that were occurring. If the client was not engaged or ambivalent, notification would potentially impact negatively on the client-worker relationship.

In the client-worker relationship engagement is the process whereby the relationship is established (Yatchmenoff, 2005). Once the client feels engaged in the relationship they will be more inclined to work through their issues and to be engaged in the change process (Howe, 2008). Yatchmenoff (2005) identified five aspects of engagement in a study relating to child protection work. Receptivity was one aspect and this related to the client being open to the need for change and willing to be supported in making this change. Expectancy was another dimension of engagement and was linked to the client belief that the agency involvement would be of assistance and benefit them and their family. Investment was the third aspect and was a focus on the client's commitment to the process and this was identified by the level of participation and responsibility shown by the client in goal identification and initiating seeking help. The fourth dimension of engagement related to the working relationship and was characterised by "reciprocity ... and good communication" (Yatchmenoff, 2005, p.87). The final aspect of engagement related to when a client was not engaged due to their belief that the practitioner was not working to benefit them and that their input was a negative influence.

In this study, participants indicated that if the client was engaged then the relationship was more likely to be maintained following notification. This referred to engagement in the relationship and also in the change process. A client can be engaged in the relationship, meaning that they are responsive to the worker, open and communicative with them. When a client is also engaged in the intervention, they will be available for contact with the practitioner and following through with the work toward the identified goals. Progress can be readily identified if the client is engaged in the change process.

It was noted by participants that it was important to work on engaging with the client from the first meeting with them. By establishing a connection with them the relationship could be formed and the client could be supported to set some goals and begin working toward change. If there is not a good working relationship established from the outset then it is likely that the outcomes will not be positive (Horvath & Greenberg, 1994). Saint-Jacques, Drapeau, Lessard, & Beaudoin (2006) identified that encouraging parental involvement in a child

protection service begins when the worker first meets with them. They noted that for there to be successful outcomes there needs to be parental participation. For parents to feel able to participate, they need to feel a connection and this connection will only occur if they feel accepted by the worker (Saint-Jacques et al., 2006). This would also apply in a social service agency. It is indicated in research related to parents involved with child protection agencies that they are more willing to engage when workers are transparent and actively listen to them (Healy, Darlington, & Feeney, 2011). When parents feel that workers are being judgemental they are less willing to participate in decision-making (Healy et al., 2011). Child protection workers identified that clients needed to understand what they needed to change and be prepared to actively follow through with this in order for them to be involved and participating in the decision-making happening in the child protection service (Darlington, Healy, & Feeney, 2010). The child protection workers acknowledged that building a working relationship with clients is difficult when they are legally required rather than voluntarily involved with the service and the statutory agency wields significant power (Darlington et al., 2010). When the worker in an NGO needs to make a notification this can change how the client feels able to relate to the worker due to similar issues of power and lack of choice. It is recognised that worker attitudes, communication skills, transparency and understanding aid relationship building (Spratt & Callan, 2004) and that good relationships can lead to positive outcomes for children in the child protection system (Maiter, Palmer, & Manji, 2006). A good client-worker relationship where the client is engaged can help with continued service involvement following making a notification. These findings from other research were borne out in this study, where similarly, practitioners felt being transparent and the fact that the client was engaged assisted in maintaining the relationship through the difficult process of notification to statutory services.

In terms of the effectiveness of the client-worker relationship, participants referred to a client's readiness to change and how this can also affect their reaction to notification. One participant referred to a client who was engaged in terms of the relationship and was happy to meet with the worker and focus on the issues but who was not at the stage whereby she recognised her part in the

problem. At times clients do not acknowledge their role in the issues and by working things through with the practitioner they may move onto the stage where they acknowledge the change that is required and are motivated to work on it (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). This link between the client-worker relationship and motivation is also identified in brief therapy, where the client-worker relationship would be viewed as a "complainant relationship" (Turnell & Edwards, 1999, p.40) when the client does not accept responsibility for the issues or feels helpless to change despite complaining and agreeing with the worker that there is a problem. If the client is lacking in motivation the worker needs to reflect on what they can do to strengthen the relationship and how they can present the information to assist the client's motivation (Turnell & Edwards, 1999). This research on a client's stage of readiness was found in my study to have impacted on the client-worker relationship following notification. Where the client was not ready to change due to either being dismissive of the issues or lacking the insight or motivation to make changes was more likely to result in a client withdrawing from the service following notification.

A strengths-based approach can assist a client with motivation to change, because success is empowering (Sanders & Munford, 2010). Strengths-based practice can be used with other theories and models and is essentially about the supportive relationship the worker has with the client. Change occurs through the client-worker relationship where it is supportive, strong and the client is engaged (Sanders & Munford, 2010). In the work that occurs using strengths-based principles, the focus is on positives that are occurring in the family in addition to directly addressing any concerns that are present (Sanders & Munford, 2010). If the worker keeps a positive attitude and identifies expectations that are appropriate for the individual this can help the client to maintain hope that they can make changes (Saint-Jacques et al., 2006). Participants in this research drew on strengths concepts in their work, and these assisted them in maintaining their relationship with the client. For example, they noted how important it is to continue to highlight what is going well even when the worker is also having to address concerns. It is important that the worker is careful not to minimise the

concerning issues, however, it is possible to engage with the client but also be transparent regarding issues or concerns (Turnell & Edwards, 1999).

It was identified in this research that being engaged can potentially allow the notification to be part of the therapeutic process whereby the client takes control to bring an end to abuse that is occurring. This recognition of the therapeutic propensity of care and protection investigations has been identified by Turnell and Edwards (1999), in their Signs of Safety (SoS) approach. This approach was developed to combine risk assessment, with a strengths focus and to highlight the importance of the worker relationship with the family. SoS identifies principles for practice that relate to this focus and aim to identify what the concerns are and how to move forward with the family to ensure that it is safe (Turnell & Edwards, 1999).

One participant noted that the face to face contact was the forum to share with the client the details of the notification being made. This is supported by Turnell and Edwards (1999) when they refer to the interview being the vehicle for change.

Engagement and the working relationship are pivotal in the success of interventions (Dore & Alexander, 1996). Being aware of the engagement or gaining specific feedback from the client regarding the relationship can be a positive exercise for the client and worker and can help to strengthen the relationship (Young & Poulin, 1998).

Engagement in the relationship and the intervention may help the client-worker relationship to remain intact following a notification, however this will not always be the case as the client may feel betrayed by the worker taking this action. Being transparent with the client about agency policy regarding child safety and any issues of concern that had arisen may further assist the client-worker relationship to remain intact, as do the use of strengths-based approaches such as including a focus on what the client is doing well.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency was the second theme identified and participants noted that how this was approached with the client was important. Transparency is being open

and honest with the client and was highlighted as significant by participants. This is important from the beginning of the client-worker relationship and considered to be part of the engagement process. By being open about the policies of the agency; particularly in terms of confidentiality and its limits where there are safety concerns; the client is made aware from the outset of the worker's and the agency's regard for child safety. Participants noted that being transparent throughout the relationship about any issues of concern was also important so that clients were aware and could work towards making the necessary change to ensure the ongoing safety of their child. If subsequently in the relationship safety issues need to be addressed, the agency policy can then be referred to again. Fylan (2011) also emphasised the need for transparency with clients regarding abuse issues. It was also noted that transparency needed to occur in a skilled way utilising empathy in order for it to assist the client-worker relationship (Fylan, 2011). The approach used by Fylan (2011) stressed respectful transparency in order for the family to be aware of the process and build the client-worker relationship to bring about change.

Jones, Pickett, Oates, and Barbor (1987) urged honesty stating that it enhances a client-worker relationship and being dishonest could result in termination. It is necessary to consider that in being transparent regarding the notification with the parent/client it is imperative that the worker appraise carefully whether the safety of the child would be compromised. If there is any doubt about this a participant noted that it was organisational policy that the worker should not be open about the notification and should put the safety of the child first. A notification would need to proceed without informing the parent if the child would be put at risk should the parent be made aware of what was occurring. This was discussed by a participant in the context of this being an organisational decision and was difficult to implement as a worker, due to this not sitting well with social work principles of openness and being trustworthy in the working relationship. The conflicting ethical imperatives of openness and honesty with protection of the child were highlighted here especially where the decision not to tell and the assessment of the risk to the child were not clear cut. The important consideration seemed to be that the safety of the child should be discussed in the context of

making a notification and that transparency should be utilised whenever it is appropriate taking safety into account.

Gardner (2000) found when describing the evaluation of St. Luke's model of practice, that being upfront about the issues but also being clear about when the client can share making decisions and when the decision has already been made by the agency is important when being transparent. The worker needs to be transparent when there are limits to client decision-making such as when there are agency bottom lines about what needs to occur to ensure the safety of the child (Gardner, 2000). Sharing the knowledge, being transparent with clients enables them to have more power and control in relation to their situation (Gardner, 2000). Being transparent allows the client to be aware of the boundaries more clearly and be active in decision-making (Gardner, 2000). Use of power occurs in a child protection capacity and must be utilised bearing in mind the relationship with the parents but also managing risk for the child in the family (Keddell, 2011). Where the worker is transparent with the family, it is a sharing of power and by families being more involved in decision-making it is an opportunity for them "to restore a sense of control over their lives" (Gardner, 2000, p.180).

This view of transparency is also supported by Turnell and Edwards (1999) when they refer to a statutory agency working with clients. They also state that transparency is crucial from the beginning through to the end of working with clients (Turnell & Edwards, 1999).

The client-worker relationship can feel contradictory at times particularly when focusing on child safety issues while at the same time offering support to the client (Walsh, 2006). The worker needs to assist the client to feel empowered and yet challenge them when there are any issues of concern. The worker needs to be non-judgemental with their client and yet be specific and clear when safety issues arise that are not acceptable.

One participant noted that knowing your client was pivotal to being transparent. They noted that you had time to know how your client tended to process information, whether they needed more or less detail, visual information or verbal information, supports present or 1-1 engagement and any cultural considerations

etc..., then the worker could tailor the information to the client's preferences. Participants noted that how they approached the matter with their clients was important. Being transparent and challenging the client regarding difficult issues requires skill and sensitivity (Forrester, Kershaw, Moss, & Hughes, 2008). When the practitioner is sensitive and expresses empathy the client is consequently more open and less resistant (Forrester et al., 2008). With the use of empathy while still addressing the concerning issues, the client may feel that the practitioner is sharing the power and wanting to work with them to bring about change. Workers who challenged clients about safety issues in an empathic way were able to maintain relationships with their clients (Forrester et al., 2008). This caring approach allows the client to feel supported throughout the process.

SUPPORT

The third theme related to support and had two sub-themes. Firstly that the focus with the client needed to be on their support needs at the time the notification was occurring. Secondly, on what supports the worker needed through the notification process. On the first issue, it was noted that information about the process and feedback about what was happening needed to be given to the client to ensure that they understood the involvement from Child, Youth and Family. Advocating for the client in relation to other identified support needs was also recommended. This could be in relation to identified budgeting needs, mental or physical health needs, alcohol and drug support etc...

Continued support and advocacy for the client following the notification were recommended by the participants as important to ensure the client-worker relationship remained intact and that the client's needs were being met. Stress is decreased when people have the necessary supports (Howe, 2008). Relationships have the potential to raise or decrease stress depending on their level of caring and supportiveness (Howe, 2008). Clients are positive about help that is supportive to them (Howe, 2008). The conceptual framework (see Figure 1, p.21) that was referred to in the literature review in relation to stress and support (Howe, 2008), have been supported in the findings of this study. Notification is a stressful and emotive time for all parties involved and that continued support for

the client through the relationship with the worker, is important to assist them to manage at that time. For support from the worker to be effective it is dependent on the client being engaged in the client-worker relationship and the intervention. The worker must therefore work on the engagement with their client from the beginning which includes the need for transparency and empathy. This should also include a focus on client strengths to help them identify the skills they have that they can use so they can manage with the perceived stress.

Featherstone (2006) notes the role of family support can be state driven and urges consideration of the why and not the what, in assessing it. Featherstone (2006) notes that support needs to be goal driven and workers need to reflect on what drives their input to setting the goals with the client. Turnell and Edwards (1999) in their SoS approach, are clear where there are agency driven goals it is important to also identify with the client goals they wish to work on, even if they are not related to the child protection focus. There are varying types of support that can be offered depending on what the situation is and the needs of the family. Emotional support for clients is a key focus of social work as it helps clients to then stay connected with others. By assisting clients to express emotion and regulate feelings this will improve their wellbeing and help them stay connected with others in their communities (Howe, 2008). My findings show that if the client continues to receive support they have hope that the situation can change and therefore remain engaged despite the notification being made. Psychological support is provided to focus on the presenting issues and work through how to manage and address these. Practical support can be required in a variety of ways as practicalities can be an overwhelming barrier to progress if they are not resolved. Assisting a family to access a parenting programme with crèche options so that their child is cared for while they attend the training is one example of a practical issue that may present for a family. Motivational and encouraging support is also important for clients as making change can be difficult as it requires energy in order to maintain consistency. Support needs to be provided to ensure that the client remains engaged and their identified needs are addressed.

In the situation where an abusive incident had occurred and a family sought support themselves to manage through this, the notification was considered to be

secondary to the support being sought by the client to bring about change in their family situation. The focus needs to continue to be on identifying what is working well and the positives that already exist in the family (Turnell & Edwards, 1999) to establish goals of safety and provide responsive support specific to the overall needs of the family rather than simply a reactive response to the specific incident. This study highlights the importance of the worker being a change agent while providing family support and that child protection is important but not the sole focus when notifications are necessary.

In the second part of the template that focused on the effect of notification on the worker (see Appendix I), support was identified as a significant theme for the worker as well as the client. How the worker was supported within the organisation including having policies and procedures in place, was significant to how the process of notification went for the worker and how they then worked with the client. This finding is supported by Ferguson (2005) who identified "The more that workers are cared for, nurtured and protected the more they will be able to provide this for the children they serve." (p.794). While this quote pertains to statutory social workers, the sentiment also applies to workers in NGO social services. Participants spoke about the importance for them of being supported by the management systems in place at Family Works. For social workers to work effectively they need to be supported in supervision to combine "... emotionally informed, thoughtful thinking as well as the more prevalent practical and procedural thinking..." (Ruch, 2007, p. 375). Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998) found that a positive organisational climate for workers can lead to more successful client outcomes. Participants also talked about being supported by their colleagues and how useful this was in the work that they do. Collegial support can occur in structured ways such as team meetings, peer supervision or co-working. It can also occur in unstructured or informal ways as colleagues can be available for emotional off-loading or consultation as a sounding board in the moment being available due to proximity when practitioners most require it.

NOTIFICATION

A further theme in relation to the impact of notification on the client-worker relationship was the effect of supporting the parent/client to make the notification where possible, rather than the worker doing it. This was considered to be a potentially empowering process by the practitioners interviewed, and had occurred for five of the research participants. How the client responded to the notification also impacted on the client-worker relationship and could affect it in a positive or negative way.

Participants felt that it was helpful to support their parental or family/whanau caregiver clients to make the notification themselves. The primary reason was as an empowering exercise for the client. "Control empowers" (Howe, 2008, p.185), was the assumption, so by being in control of making the notification, it was hoped that the client will feel empowered. While this is a choice for the parental figure, the alternative is that the worker will have to make the notification themselves. Thus, while it is a limited choice, it is still an opportunity for empowerment. The parental figure still has to make this decision about whether they notify and has to think this through in terms of how they feel about it and what they think this will achieve, which is potentially empowering. In addition, the parental figure or client is being active rather than passive when they make the notification, it is not something being done to them. If the parental figure feels they don't have control over what is happening in their lives then allowing them an aspect of this can be empowering however limited it is.

In this study when the client was encouraged to make the notification, this related to abuse to the child that either they had committed or sometimes the perpetrator was someone else. Encouraging clients to be part of the notification process was considered by Jones et al. (1987) to be fair to the client and allowed for transparency. Levine and Doueck (1995) referred to self-reporting, when the client had committed the abuse, and while noting validation and empowering aspects also had a caution. They commented that if an offender self-reports then this amounts to a confession and may more likely lead to prosecution. Levine and

Doueck (1995) suggest that if the therapist notified then there is no confession by the client and it may not proceed to prosecution.

When notifications are being made, how the suspected abuse or neglect is identified is significant. If the child or parent client discloses the abuse or neglect themselves, then it is more likely to be a situation where they are in control of the information and empowered to bring about change. They will be more likely to continue to be engaged in the client-worker relationship in this situation, particularly where they agree with notification as the course of action required. With suspected abuse or neglect it is often the case that the symptoms or information that leads to the suspicion is not a matter of identifying from a checklist (Buckley, 1999). Participants referred to the fact that when they are in a position to know from observations made or from the disclosure of the client then this can be addressed in a direct and clear way with the client and the need for notification can be discussed.

The second part of the template focused on the impact on the worker of the notification process. It was noted that making a notification is stressful for the worker particularly due to their concern about the abuse or neglect that was happening to the child. Organisational support as mentioned in the previous section, is helpful for the worker to manage with this stress. Worker conviction that a notification needed to be made was considered to be helpful in terms of working with the client. This certainty for the worker helped them when relating to the client as they were able to be very clear with them. Participants also commented on how their experience with dealing with issues of abuse and their level of knowledge relating to abuse matters were all factors that impacted on how they were able to manage with their client and for themselves when a notification needed to be made. Being knowledgeable and understanding about abuse indicators and issues is pivotal in making notifications (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Flaherty, Jones, & Sege, 2004; Sege et al., 2011) and in this study, led to a decrease in worker stress as it enabled them to have confidence that a notification needed to be made.

Dingwall, Eekelaar, and Murray (1983) provide a thorough examination of the decision-making issues when evaluating whether mistreatment has occurred at an abusive level and by whom. They explore a number of issues relating to the quandary including "natural love" (p.87), "cultural relativism" (p.82), "bureaucratic framing" (p.40) and the "rule of optimism" (p.89). They caution the need for reflection on how decisions are being made to ensure that the issue is thoroughly explored rather than the values of the worker dictating the lens in which the situation is viewed. For example, when referring to cultural relativism, if a worker is not aware they may be coming to conclusions based on the idea that what has occurred may be culturally appropriate and if they are from another culture they may feel that they are not in the position to accurately assess this. By reflecting critically and through supervision, the clear pathway to decision-making can be transparent and assessed. Goddard and Carew (1993) highlight reflection as being key for a worker to understand themselves and to ensure active awareness of bias. The combination of knowledge regarding abuse and reflecting on decision-making are essential when making a notification.

KNOWLEDGE USED IN PRACTICE:

Social workers practice is influenced by experiential knowledge (Goddard & Carew, 1993). Where social workers have utilised a tool, theory or strategy that has been successful they are more likely to repeat this practice (Goddard & Carew, 1993). Experiential knowledge used by social workers can be learned from practical experience, their own background and from the training they have utilised in practice (Fook, 2000; Goddard & Carew, 1993). Workers utilise knowledge that they have received in training and from research to evaluate transferability and where possible the generalisability of what they have learnt to the environment and community they work within. Over time practitioners develop expertise which is "... characterised by an ability to work in complex situations of competing interests, and to prioritise factors in ways which allow clear action" (Fook, 2000, p.113). Context is pivotal to the expert practitioner who focuses on having an understanding of the particular issues at hand for the client and to explore these with the client, so together they can resolve the issues (Fook, 2000).

Social workers use, and mediate, numerous ethical concepts and types of knowledge in their practice and this was highlighted in the current study. Social workers utilise moral reasoning with colleagues and managers to decide on the validity of risk in the presented circumstances and what action should occur (Buckley, 2000). A further way in which social workers utilise knowledge in practice is how they interpret the facts as they are presented to them and "actively construct client problems and behaviours" (Keddell, 2011, p. 1264). Kriz and Skivenes (2014) found that although workers felt that the law and policy guided them in their work, they encountered dilemmas when there were organisational barriers or funding restrictions limiting the implementation and then social workers needed to incorporate their own principles and policy in order to fulfil the social work role. It is important for social workers to be reflective in their practice and be aware of the knowledge and theory they are utilising to guide their practice.

A reference was also made by a participant about the conflicting obligations felt by the worker when making a notification. The conflicting ethical principles of the child's best interest, the child's right to live with their family and the family's right to autonomy converge when abuse concerns are identified. Feng, Chen, Fetzer, Feng and Lin (2012) referred to the varied aspects of ethical conflict when making a notification including being the helper versus creating distress. Feng et al. (2012) also spoke of the conflict of reporting when outcomes could potentially challenge cultural beliefs, particularly regarding the importance of family. They recommended providing ongoing support in addition to notifying and including focus on the parental needs as well as the child's needs. As ethical dilemmas can result in uncertainty Feng et al. (2012) also suggested support for the worker in order to make the necessary decision. Like the participants in this study, Feng et al. (2012) also commented on the stressful nature of notifying. The findings regarding the importance of providing ongoing support to the family throughout the notification and receiving support as a worker as indicated by Feng et al. (2012) were also supported in this study.

STATUTORY INTERVENTION:

There are a multitude of valid parenting methods and beliefs and not one specific 'right' way to parent and the state only becomes involved in families lives when there are concerns regarding abuse and neglect (Skivenes, 2010). This is changing in New Zealand where the use of Children's Teams and a focus on vulnerable children means that intervention might occur "early, before they come to harm" (Ministry of Social Development, 2014). When abuse has been identified, the primary concern is about managing the risk for the child should they remain in the current care arrangement where abuse has occurred. In working with families where abuse has been identified practitioners need to be careful that their focus does not centre on the deficits within the parenting to the exclusion of the strengths that are present and without offering the necessary support to bring about change (Keddell, 2012). Practitioners can react to the risk without considering whether the potential is there for protective factors to be enhanced and extended with the appropriate education, support and intervention. In this study it was noted by participants that it matters how they approach things with their clients and reflecting on the positive parenting practices with the client was necessary while still addressing the risk factors.

WORKING WITH CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY

The final theme in the first part of the findings was the effect of interaction with the statutory service, Child, Youth and Family, noting both positive and negative aspects. This related to communication, the response to the notification and also to the outcome and the effect of this on the client. It was noted that there could be positive outcomes in terms of what the client was wanting to see happen being realised. Delays from Child, Youth and Family had a negative effect on the ongoing relationship between the NGO worker and the client as it had the potential to interrupt the focus of the ongoing family support work.

How the statutory child protection agency communicated with the client and the worker were important factors in terms of impacting on the client-worker relationship. Turnell and Edwards (1999) highlighted the importance of statutory

workers “building co-operation among all involved” (p.84), including both family and organisations, as they felt that this further protected the child.

In some cases, delays in the investigation and ongoing Child, Youth and Family response impacted on the work that was occurring with the family and could cause frustration. It is acknowledged that working as a social worker at Child, Youth and Family is a stressful role with invariably high caseloads. This recognition is acknowledged in academic literature relating to many countries, including New Zealand (Atwool, 2010; Connolly & Doolan, 2007; Darlington, Healy, & Feeney, 2010; Ferguson, 2005; Howe, 2010; Turnell & Edwards, 1999). The Workload and Casework Review (2014) prepared by the Office of the Chief Social Worker regarding Child, Youth and Family, stated that over half of care and protection social workers surveyed in the review, had caseloads that were higher than the recommended average. Further to this the care and protection social workers surveyed in this review stated that they had difficulty completing their work due to the high number of clients on their caseload The reality is that if workers are not supported in their work then the effort they can put into their work and building positive relationships with their clients is limited. This pertains to both statutory and NGO organisations. While recognising the issues for the Child, Youth and Family worker, these delays did cause frustration and impact on the client-worker relationship.

Difficulties with working with Child, Youth and Family were noted in this study and how this was frustrating and impacted negatively on the worker. Participants referred to issues at times in working with Child, Youth and Family including frustrations with communication and practice. Of particular concern as noted by one participant, was when the safety issue that had given rise to the notification being made was not resolved by Child, Youth and Family intervention. Bryant and Baldwin (2010) commented in their research that participants had similar frustrations and concerns in relation to the statutory agency. Participants in this study felt that the child protection service did not manage with the workload they had due to low staffing and high caseloads. They expressed frustrations with communication and the working relationship with the child protection workers.

Some participants felt that the intervention from the statutory agency was a negative for the family and did not assist them (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010).

Due to the increased interface between Child, Youth and Family and the NGO sector, there can be issues with clarity at times. The Office of the Chief Social Worker, Workload and Casework Review (2014) stated that there was a lack of direct communication between Child, Youth and Family and other agencies. The review also noted that there was limited collaboration with the expectation that Child, Youth and Family would manage once a notification had occurred, rather than consulting about how to work for the best interests of the family. This lack of clarity over the interface between Child, Youth and Family and NGO impacts on the work with clients. For clients they can at times be unclear and see the social service agency as serving a statutory function due to the reporting back to Child, Youth and Family. Clients can be concerned as they feel that they are not voluntarily involved with the social service agency, as they have been advised by Child, Youth and Family that it is a requirement that they are receiving support from that NGO service. Workers can become concerned that Child, Youth and Family are not consulting appropriately when there is NGO involvement. When a practitioner makes a notification there is an expectation on their behalf that Child, Youth and Family will fully investigate and put measures in place to ensure that the necessary support is provided and that safety issues no longer pose a risk. When Child, Youth and Family decide that the notification warrants no further action from them, the practitioner can lose faith and trust with the system believing that the client/family has not been well served. The over-riding concern for the practitioner is that the abuse issues have not been resolved and may well continue. In the Children's Workforce: Workforce Development report (2012), prepared by the Centre for Social Research and Development, it was noted that trust and respect were required for inter-agency relationships to be effective. It was also noted that being clear about the varying roles and responsibilities was important. Having an understanding about how child protection will be focused on also helped to allow multiple agencies to work well together.

The frequent changes to how Child, Youth and Family relate and contract to the NGO sector can make it difficult for workers in both sectors to be clear about the

interface. This may be set to change again with the New Zealand Productivity Commission (2014) seeking feedback regarding an inquiry into social services. The Productivity Commission states that it is focusing on social services being more effective and aims to improve how government agencies contract those services. In order to do this the commission is seeking feedback to how contracting is working currently and how effective social services are for clients within this current contracting model.

Levine and Doueck (1995) commented on both the positives and negatives of working with the statutory child protection agency and outcomes for children within that system. They also noted that invariably family problems are wide ranging and require a much wider social welfare response than just child protection. They comment on the lack of resourcing in the statutory system and indicate that it is therefore no surprise that there are issues in dealing with the statutory child protection system.

Having a positive response from Child, Youth and Family in relation to the notification was identified by participants as helpful. Participants referred to workers being helpful and recognising the notification urgency. There were positive references also indicated by practitioners in their work with individual Child, Youth and Family social workers.

REFLECTION IN PRACTICE

The final theme of my findings recommended the worker reflect on practice in order to learn from experience. It was also noted that it was the worker's responsibility to keep themselves up to date and informed in relation to their work. Reflection in practice and ongoing learning were two points made by participants regarding what will help to keep the relationship intact following notification. Through reflection a worker can gain insight into what worked well and where changes need to be made. The reference to learning related to looking at reflection on a macro level, in terms of reading the reviews that are written in relation to child deaths due to abuse in New Zealand. Howe (2010) and Ruch (2006) commented on reflective practice being necessary in child protective practice. For example, Howe (2010) states that critical reflection needs to occur

within good client-worker relationships for them to be effective. Critical reflection is when the worker not only reflects on the processes or issues at hand for the client but does so critically, exploring what other conditions are involved at an environmental and contextual level. Critical reflection needs to occur both within the clinical supervision relationship and within the client-worker relationship where it is modelled for the parent so they too can utilise this practice in their parenting (Howe, 2010). The worker will be more responsive to the client if they have utilised reflective thinking to understand the client's perspective. It follows that the parent may be more responsive to the child if they also utilise reflective thinking to understand the child's perspective. By beginning the process in supervision the workers anxiety with managing in child safety and demanding cases can be contained. When the worker then utilises reflective practice with the parent this also allows their feelings of anxiety relating to the situation to be contained so they can focus on understanding the perspective and needs of the child. Containment of the emotions related to the situation helps to facilitate reflective practice (Howe, 2010; Ruch, 2007).

The findings in my research are supported in other literature on the subject however, often referring to different types of services, such as the health sector or statutory child protection. It was important that this research focused on a NGO in order to broaden the research.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This research was conducted in order to have more research specific to New Zealand and close the gaps from previous research in relation to the impact of notification of child abuse or neglect on the client-worker relationship. By interviewing workers from the same organisation with a clear child abuse reporting policy and where workers are knowledgeable regarding child abuse it is possible to have some clarity regarding what occurs in practice. There were a range of situations in the research but many focused on statutory, education or health settings and many related to paper based type exercises.

This research could be extended by seeking client views and by seeking participants from further locations throughout New Zealand. I chose to work with

participants from the same service in order for the focus to be on the outcomes rather than being diluted by the differences between sites. If the focus of future research was on other NGO social service agencies and several studies about different sites then this would relate well to this research.

As I utilised convenience sampling and effectively participants self-selected, it may be that workers responded to my request having experienced positive notification situations. It may be that the findings are affected as a result and should be viewed bearing this in mind.

"One of the limitations inherent in qualitative research is the inability to generalize from a small sample to the general population." (Bundy-Fazioli, Briar-Lawson & Hardiman, 2009, p.1454). However with the use of detailed descriptions relating to the setting, conditions and the findings the reader may gauge the transferability of these findings to other environments (Rodwell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bundy-Fazioli, Briar-Lawson, & Hardiman, 2009). "Transferability allows for the possibility that information created and lessons learnt in one context can having meaning and usefulness in another." (Rodwell, 1998, p.101).

While this research could be extended it provides useful insight into the impact of notification on the client-worker relationship. This research shows that keeping children safe does not have to come at the expense of the support they are receiving.

In conclusion, while notifying can result in an emotive response from the client that leads to exiting the service it is more likely that the client-worker relationship will remain intact. In many instances the worker will need to be sensitive and understanding of the client perspective to work through maintaining engagement with the client following notification. There are times when notifying can strengthen the working relationship. The participants identified strategies and factors that could affect the client-worker relationship when making a notification of suspected or identified child abuse or neglect. The client's engagement in the relationship with the worker and in relation to the intervention was considered to be a significant factor in the client-worker relationship remaining intact following a notification. How open and transparent the worker was throughout the clients

involvement with the service was a significant strategy that assisted with relationship maintenance following notification. When the worker identified what ongoing support and advocacy was required by the client and offered to continue to provide this following the notification this also assisted the client-worker relationship to be maintained. While workers may need to make the notification to Child, Youth and Family it was recommended where appropriate that the parental figure involved with the service be supported to make that contact with the statutory service. It was considered to be empowering and conducive to the intervention process if the client was supported to make the notification themselves. The response from Child, Youth and Family could impact on how the client-worker relationship functioned depending on whether they were able to process the notification and investigation in a timely way and if they communicated well with the client and the worker. Strategies that the worker could utilise outside of the relationship that would indirectly affect the relationship were also identified. The main strategies were ensuring that workers received the necessary support in order to work through the notification decision and throughout the process, being knowledgeable and extending this knowledge relating to abuse. The main themes from the data are supported in the literature. Reflecting on other research shows the practice strategies are supported as helpful skills to utilise.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This qualitative constructivist research used semi-structured interviewing to examine the perceptions of ten front-line workers at Family Works, an NGO. Family Works provides a number of stable organisational contextual factors for this study. It has a clear reporting policy relating to child abuse, all workers have knowledge relating to child abuse and all workers are expected to belong to a professional body. This allowed for a focus on the direct relationship issues in the study rather than being contaminated by other influential factors that may arise from differing organisational contexts. In addition the research was done in order to have a New Zealand, NGO social service perspective. Using thematic analysis a template was established that represents significant themes in the views of the participants. Due to the depth of the detail shared in this research the reader is in a position, bearing in mind their own environment and perspective, to assess transferability of the findings.

This research focused on what the impact of notification of child abuse or neglect to Child, Youth and Family was on the client-NGO worker relationship, and whether there were any strategies or factors that assisted the client-worker relationship to be maintained or threatened the relationship when notification occurred.

Findings from this research have implications for practice however, there is no formula that, if followed, would definitely lead to the client-worker relationship being maintained following notification. While a notification may need to be made in the future when working with a family, it may not be evident until some time after their initial contact with the service. This research highlights that workers should focus on the engagement with their clients from the beginning and throughout the ongoing support, which is an important part of the work in a social service agency. Following notification an engaged client is more likely to remain involved with the service. Regardless of the outcome of the notification this is important as the client then continues to receive the support that they need and which may help to ensure the ongoing safety of the child. It was also found by this research that when the notification needs to be made or at other times when

concerns are addressed, it is important to balance that with also focusing on the positives in the family so that they begin to see a way through resolving the issues. When reflecting on the positives, this can be done without minimising the abuse or concerns about what is happening within the family.

Another important finding of this research was that transparency throughout the client-worker relationship is good practice. This referred to the agency policy regarding the limits of confidentiality when it related to safety concerns and the need for this to be discussed by the worker with the client when first meeting with them. This should occur with any family members involved with the service. It was noted then in the future if a notification needed to be made this policy could be reiterated and the client reminded of the agency position. It was recommended that transparency occur when any issues arose of a concerning nature, at the time rather than leaving it until it develops further. While practitioners should bear this in mind, transparency should always be utilised only when safety has been assessed. A practitioner needs to assess their own safety before proceeding particularly with a potentially violent client (parent). In addition the safety of the child needs to be assessed by the practitioner before notification details are shared with the parent or child. The worker needs to be transparent in a sensitive way with empathy and understanding the communication needs of the client. The practitioner needs to ensure they are supported in their work through supervision so that they have the opportunity to reflect on their emotion and do not present the information to clients in a blunt or emotive way.

Levine and Doueck (1995) found that current or past contact with the statutory child protection service may lead a client to expect a notification to be made. They suggested that the client would stay involved with the NGO following notification due to concern that this may impact on the statutory investigation if they don't. This study confirmed the finding that having prior contact with Child, Youth and Family was a factor that could help to maintain the client-worker relationship following notification. The suggestion in this study was that having prior knowledge and understanding of how Child, Youth and Family operated was helpful to clients. This meant for some clients that having had the prior involvement they had already anticipated that Child, Youth and Family would be

required again, before the Family Works practitioner had even raised it with them. The surprise finding in this study was that, for some of these clients they had engaged with Family Works as they wanted support in relation to the notifiable issues despite knowing that a notification would need to be made. It may have been helpful for clients to have had a practical understanding of how Child, Youth and Family work rather than negative reports that they had heard from others. This highlights another finding that it was important to be clear with the client about the Child, Youth and Family process and provide feedback to the client throughout the process as well. By giving concrete details it helps to alleviate stress for the family.

The importance of clear agency policies and procedures in place in relation to notification was highlighted although it was recommended where possible to encourage and support the parent/caregiver to notify regarding their situation. It was considered to potentially be an empowering process for the parent/caregiver.

Participants talked about the importance of the support that they received from the organisation, including management, supervisors and peers. It helped in particular to have the opportunity to discuss and explore the notification decision.

It was also noted that self-reflection is invaluable learning for the worker and that it is the practitioner's responsibility to continue to extend their learning particularly as it relates to child safety. While there are a variety of ways to update learning, it was highlighted that reading the inquiry documents relating to child deaths as a result of abuse is particularly important.

New Zealand would benefit from further research particularly in relation to NGO social services and work in relation to notification and child safety. This research has shown that notification does not often lead to termination of the client-worker relationship. There are things that the worker can do to assist the client-worker relationship to be maintained following notification of child abuse and neglect.

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APPENDIX A: s14 Children Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989.

s14 Definition of child or young person in need of care or protection

(1) A child or young person is in need of care or protection within the meaning of this Part if—

(a) the child or young person is being, or is likely to be, harmed (whether physically or emotionally or sexually),ill-treated, abused, or seriously deprived; or

(b) the child's or young person's development or physical or mental or emotional well-being is being, or is likely to be, impaired or neglected, and that impairment or neglect is, or is likely to be, serious and avoidable; or

(c) serious differences exist between the child or young person and the parents or guardians or other persons having the care of the child or young person to such an extent that the physical or mental or emotional well-being of the child or young person is being seriously impaired; or

(d) the child or young person has behaved, or is behaving, in a manner that—
(i) is, or is likely to be, harmful to the physical or mental or emotional well-being of the child or young person or to others; and
(ii) the child's or young person's parents or guardians, or the persons having the care of the child or young person, are unable or unwilling to control; or

(e) in the case of a child of or over the age of 10 years and under 14 years, the child has committed an offence or offences the number, nature, or magnitude of which is such as to give serious concern for the well-being of the child; or

(f) the parents or guardians or other persons having the care of the child or young person are unwilling or unable to care for the child or young person; or

(g) the parents or guardians or other persons having the care of the child or young person have abandoned the child or young person; or

(h) serious differences exist between a parent, guardian, or other person having the care of the child or young person and any other parent, guardian, or other person having the care of the child or young person to such an extent that the physical or mental or emotional well-being of the child or young person is being seriously impaired; or

(i) the ability of the child or young person to form a significant psychological attachment to the person or persons having the care of the child or young person is being, or is likely to be, seriously impaired because of the number of occasions on which the child or young person has been in the care or charge of a person (not being a person specified in subsection (2)) for the purposes of maintaining the child or young person apart from the child's or young person's parents or guardians.

APPENDIX B: Management Approval.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL:

I am completing my thesis in order to gain my Masters in Social Welfare. I am seeking your consent to complete this research.

TOPIC: **The Impact of Notification on the Client-Worker Relationship.**

This project aims to research the impact of notification of suspected or actual child abuse (including neglect) on the client-worker relationship. There will be a particular focus on identifying any factors that assisted the relationship to remain intact during the notification process and following on from this.

PARTICIPANTS:
Participants will be sought from Family Works workers who have experienced making a notification of suspected or actual child abuse (including neglect) to either Child, Youth and Family or the Police.

Participants will be self-selected. Participants will sign a consent form before they begin the interview. The interview will be no longer than 1 hour duration. The participant may be required to answer questions following the interview if the researcher needs any aspect of the interview clarified. This follow up would be for no longer than 1 hour.

Participants will be asked not to identify the client(s) by name throughout the interview so that I will not know at anytime who the client(s) are.

Participants will consent to the following: If any concerns arise in the course of the interview relating to practice issues these will be discussed in the interview and if required and the participant consents these will be discussed with the participant's supervisor and/or management. If these concerns relate to safety issues for any person this will be discussed in the interview (if appropriate) and the participant's supervisor and/or management will automatically be informed.

SECONDARY DATA:
Computer and paper based records regarding notifications made by workers at Family Works.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:
Due to this research Family Works may potentially improve client retention following notification or improve support for the worker in relation to the notification process.

DETAILS:

Interview:

1. Interview self-selected staff as participants in my research.
2. Interview staff in their work time as part of their work hours.
3. Interview staff on Family Works premises using Family Works interview rooms when these are available.
4. Utilise the information in a non-identifying format in my thesis.

Secondary Data:

5. Look at computer and paper-based records relating to notifications of suspected or actual child abuse (including neglect) made – for the purposes of identifying the number of notifications made by Family Works and what type of abuse (actual or suspected) these related to.
6. Utilise the information in a non-identifying format in my thesis.

Family Works [redacted] :

7. Identify the Service name in my thesis.

Storage of Information:

8. Store the data and information from my research in my lockable file cabinet. Personal identifying information (audio-tapes) will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage (at the University or at Family Works as dictated by the University) for five years, after which they will be destroyed. This is according to University guidelines.

Publication:

9. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library, Dunedin, New Zealand and in the Family Works Library, [redacted], New Zealand. Every attempt will be made to preserve the participants' anonymity.

We understand and consent to the research proposal as stated above:

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[redacted]

Manager Date

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[redacted]

Director Date

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[redacted]

Chief Executive Date

APPENDIX C: Participant Consent Form.

Date:_____

The Impact of Notification on the Client-Worker Relationship.

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without disadvantage;

3. I consent to the interview being audio-taped;

4. Personal identifying information (audio-tapes) will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;

5. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes a focus on the impact of notification of suspected or actual child abuse (including neglect) on the client-worker relationship and particularly queries about any factors that assisted the relationship to remain intact (if it did remain intact) during the notification process and following on from this. If the client-worker relationship did not remain intact questions will relate to factors that impacted on this outcome. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops.
   In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind;

6. I will not mention clients' names or other names relating to the notification or identify the client or other persons relating to the notification to the researcher. I will refer to them by pseudonyms or by their roles (brother, sister, mother…);

7. I am aware that my anonymity will be retained in the thesis but that the Agency will be identified. I am aware that management may need to be informed about my participation as I will be completing this interview in my work hours.

8. If during the interview I become upset recalling the details I am able to ask to take a break until I am ready to continue the interview. I may withdraw from

the project without any disadvantage of any kind if I feel unable to continue;

9. If any concerns arise in the course of the interview relating to practice issues these will be discussed in the interview and if required and I consent, these will be discussed with my supervisor and/or management. If these concerns relate to safety issues for any person this will be discussed in the interview (if appropriate) and my supervisor and/or management will automatically be informed;

10. I will receive a small token of appreciation for helping with this project;

11. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library, Dunedin, New Zealand and in the Family Works Library, [redacted], New Zealand. Every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity;

I agree to take part in this project.

---------- ----------

(Signature of participant) (Date)

APPENDIX D: Participant Information Sheet.

Date:_____

The Impact of Notification on the Client-Worker Relationship.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for taking the time to read about this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and thank you for considering this request.

What is the Aim of the project?
This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for the Masters in Social Welfare.

This project aims to research the impact of notification of suspected or actual child abuse (including neglect) on the client-worker relationship. There will be a particular focus on identifying any factors that assisted the relationship to remain intact during the notification process and following on from this. If the relationship did not remain intact, factors relating to this will be explored.

What Type of Participants are being sought?
Participants will be sought from Family Works workers who have experienced making a notification of suspected or actual child abuse (including neglect) to either Child, Youth and Family or the Police.

What will Participants be Asked to do?
Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to complete an interview of no longer than one hour duration.

There will be the opportunity for the participant to add to the information they have given if they wish to do so following the interview.

The researcher may seek clarification following the interview if this is required when the interview is being transcribed.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?
You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
Your anonymity will be retained in the thesis but the Agency will be identified. Management may need to be informed about your participation as you will be completing this interview in your work hours.

If any concerns arise in the course of the interview relating to practice issues these will be discussed in the interview and if required and you consent, these will be discussed with your supervisor and/or management. If these concerns relate to safety issues for

any person these will be discussed in the interview (if appropriate) and your supervisor and/or management will automatically be informed.

Please contact me via email if you have any questions about this project or if you choose to participate. Once again thank you for considering this request.

Monica Hannan
Researcher

APPENDIX E: Otago University Ethics Committee Approval Letter.



13/060

Academic Services
Manager, Academic Committees, Mr Gary Witte

22 February 2013

Ms E Keddell
Department of Sociology, Gender and Social Work

Dear Ms Keddell,

I am writing to let you know that, at its recent meeting, the Ethics Committee considered your proposal entitled "**The Impact of Notification on the Client-Worker Relationship**".

As a result of that consideration, the current status of your proposal is:- **Approved**

For your future reference, the Ethics Committee's reference code for this project is:- **13/060**.

The comments and views expressed by the Ethics Committee concerning your proposal are as follows:-

While approving the application, the Committee would be grateful if you would respond to the following:

The Committee would be grateful if you could clarify what is intended by the gift of a "notepad".

The Committee commends you and the student researcher on your thorough and thoughtful consideration of the issues and potential problems to work through when undertaking this research. The Committee suggests that to mitigate any conflict with the student researcher's colleagues, participants could be sought from outside the geographical area she works in. The Committee would welcome your comment and view on this suggestion.

Please provide the Committee with copies of the updated documents, if changes have been necessary.

Approval is for up to three years from the date of this letter. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, re-approval must be requested. If the nature, consent, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise me in writing.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Gary Witte
Manager, Academic Committees
Tel: 479 8256
Email: gary.witte@otago.ac.nz

c.c. Professor H R Campbell Head Department of Sociology, Gender and Social Work

APPENDIX F: **Interview Schedule**.

Demographics of the participant:
- gender (I will note gender)
- What is your ethnicity?
- What is your age?
- What is your main qualification?
- How many years experience have you had at Family Works?
- How many years experience have you had in your profession?

1. **Think of a time (or times) when you have made a notification regarding suspected or actual child abuse. Can you give me some background about the case and then tell me about the notification?**

Depending on the information that is shared, I will query:
- When did the notification occur?
- How did you identify the abuse?
- What type of abuse did you make the notification about?
- Was the perpetrator known to the family? What was the perpetrator's relationship to your client?
- What involvement did the perpetrator have with the service?
- Had the family had previous CYF involvement?

2. **Information seeking in terms of the client-worker relationship.**

Depending on the information that is shared, I will query:
- How long had the family been involved in the service and how long were you involved at the time of the notification?
- How would you describe the relationship you had with your client prior to making the notification?
- How would you describe the relationship you had with your client during the notification process?
- How would you describe the relationship you had with your client after the notification investigation was completed?
- How did you feel about making the notification? (if stress – what helped you to manage that?)
- What was your experience of the notification process?
- What is your relationship like with Child, Youth and Family? Impact?

3. **Identifying constructive/damaging aspects.**

Depending on the information that is shared, I will query:
- Can you identify any factors that assisted the client-worker relationship to remain intact during the notification process and following on from this?
- If the client-worker relationship did not remain intact – Can you identify factors that threatened the client-worker relationship during the notification process?
- Considering not just this case we have been discussing, but all cases you have made a notification in, what factors do you think generally help or hinder the maintenance of the client-worker relationship throughout this process?

ENDING: What advice would you give other workers about making a notification?
- Debrief process will be offered at the end of interview.

APPENDIX G: INITIAL TEMPLATE

STRATEGIES THAT HELP

Encourage client to notify
Feedback and support
Link into other services
TRANSPARENCY - that concerned
- that notification required
- detail of notification – including examples
- re agency policy re child safety - when first meet
- again at notification

FACTORS THAT HELP

Client okay about notification - also concerned
- removes them from having to do it
Relationship (client-worker) - engaged
Not notifying re client
Other agencies support notification

FACTORS THAT THREATEN

Investigation halts client contact
Relationship (client-worker) - not effective (challenging behaviour but client dismissive)

HELPS WORKER

Organisational support - supervisor support
- management support
- co-work with colleague (with client consent)
- other agency liaison support
CYF support notification
Worker conviction that notification required

DIFFICULTIES FOR WORKER

Notification stressful - concern for young person
Appropriateness? – other agency should have notified
Safety issue

APPENDIX H: SIXTH TEMPLATE

STRATEGIES THAT HELP

Encourage / support client to notify
Feedback and support
Offer Continued Support - notification secondary
Link into other Services
Approach Matters
TRANSPARENCY - that concerned
- that notification required
- detail of notification – including examples
- re agency policy re child safety - when first meet
- again at notification

FACTORS THAT HELP

Client okay/understanding about notification - also concerned
- removes them from having to do it

Client seeking support
Relationship (client-worker) - engaged
- long-term client

Relationship (client-worker) – engagement important - to know your client
- include positives focus.

Not notifying re client
Type of evidence of abuse - self-disclosure (includes parental disclosure)
- observed

Prior involvement - with Family Works - knew policy
- client has prior knowledge of CYF process
- client has prior social work involvement.
- worker prior knowledge of family

Communication of issues with CYF
CYF outcome - NFA
- positive/effective

Good initial response from CYF
CYF support notification
Other agencies - support notification
- positive collaboration
- encourage and support them to notify

Other colleagues support notification

FACTORS THAT THREATEN

Investigation halts - client contact
- focus on that issue

Ended involvement - Client withdraws (parent/YP)/ Client withdrawn (child)

Relationship (client-worker) - not effective - challenging behaviour but client dismissive
- lack insight/minimises and/or lack motivation to change
- client not engaged

Client angry with notification – did not accept wrong doing
- made complaint

Delays in ongoing process with CYF
TRANSPARENCY – not always safe to be transparent re making notification
Other agency made notification which impacted on client-worker relationship.

HELPS WORKER

Organisational support - back up for worker
- supervisor support
- management support
- co-work with colleague (with client consent)
- other agency liaison support
- guided by agency policies and procedures

CYF support notification
Worker conviction that notification required
Worker experience of notifications
Worker knowledge of abuse
Worker responsibility to learn more
Self-reflection

DIFFICULTIES FOR WORKER

Notification stressful - concern for YP/child
Safety Issue
Worker frustration with CYF
Managing complaint re notification stressful – complaint not justified.

APPENDIX I: Template

FACTORS/STRATEGIES THAT EFFECT THE CLIENT-WORKER RELATIONSHIP FOLLOWING NOTIFICATION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT.

1. **RELATIONSHIP (CLIENT-WORKER)**	1. Engagement	1. Engaged, not engaged, ambivalent 2. Long-term client and know your client 3. Include positive focus
	2. Prior involvement	1. With FW - knew policy/knew worker/worker knew family 2. With CYF – knew process
	3. Not effective	1. Client dismissive 2. Client lacks insight/minimises or lacks motivation to change 3. Power imbalance highlighted
	4. Investigation halts/ends involvement	1. Client contact 2. Focus on that issue 3. Client withdraws/withdrawn
	5. Complicated by number of services involved.	
2. **TRANSPARENCY**	1. Throughout the relationship (client-worker)	1. Regarding agency policy 2. That concerned 3. That notification required 4. Detail of notification 5. Not always safe to be transparent when notify
	2. Approach matters	

3. **SUPPORT**	1. Continued support	1. Feedback and support 2. Advocacy 3. Notification secondary
	2. Others support	1. Other colleagues 2. Other agencies
4. **NOTIFICATION**	1. Others	1. Encourage/support client to notify 2. Encourage those with concerns to notify
	2. Type of evidence	1. Self-disclosure/parental disclosure 2. Observed
	3. Client is/is not perpetrator	
	4. Safety Assessment	
	5. Client is accepting of notification	1. Client also concerned/is understanding 2. Removes them from having to do it. 3. CYF already involved 4. Client did not accept wrong doing
5. **CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY**	1. Communication	
	2. Initial response	
	3. Support notification	
	4. Outcome	1. NFA 2. Positive/effective
	5. Delays in Child, Youth and Family process	

FACTORS/STRATEGIES THAT ARE HELPFUL OR DIFFICULT FOR THE WORKER WHEN MAKING A NOTIFICATION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT.

6. SUPPORT	1. Organisational support	1. Supervisor/management/peer 2. Policies/procedures 3. Back up 4. Other agency liaison support
7. NOTIFICATION	1. Worker	1. Conviction/experience/knowledge 2. Child, Youth and Family support 3. Stressful 4. Conflicting obligation 5. Client complaint 6. Other agency
8. CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY	1. Safety issue 2. Worker frustration	
9. PRACTICE	1. Self-reflection 2. Self-learning	

APPENDIX J: Agency Notification Policy/Procedure (partial copy).

Type: **Policy/Procedure (partial copy)**	Title: **Dealing with reported or suspected abuse**
Location: **Family Works Operational Manual**	Issued: Updated: 16 August 2012

CONSIDERING AND/OR MAKING CARE & PROTECTION NOTIFICATIONS

Actual cases of abuse with evidence of abuse occuring

Where there is evidence that a child or young person has been abused, a notification will be made. This will include where abuse has occurred for an adult in a parenting role.

1. The notification will be made in writing on the Child, Youth and Family notification template.

2. All information must be clearly stated, e.g. dates, factual descriptions of incidents, full names and details of all referred to in the notification and the use of quote marks when quoting others, etc.

- The staff member will meet with their Team Leader in the first instance to draw together all necessary information (case consult). The information will be written up as a record for the file by the staff member and/or their Team Leader and for those involved in the situation to work from. There will then be a meeting with the Manager, Team Leader, staff member and any other necessary people to discuss the notification. Any further information will again be written up for the file and for those working with the situation.

- After this consultation has occurred, the staff member and Team Leader will write up the notification and the Manager will peruse it prior to it being sent.

Suspected Abuse

- The staff member will meet with their Team Leader to discuss their concerns (case consult) and clarify what should happen. Discussion around the following questions will occur and outcomes noted to assist in deciding if a notification should be made.
  - "What is the likelihood of danger/harm based on past, present or future issues/circumstances?"
  - "What is the immediate risk to the child/young person?"
  - "Are there any protective factors?"
  - "What are the needs of the child/young person or parent?"
  - "Any complicating factors?"
  - "Any grey areas or unknowns?"
  - "What impact on the situation would making a notification have?"

- ”What has Family Works, other agencies and /or family done to address the issues, and why is this no longer sufficient?”
- “Is there anything else that could be done prior to a notification being made?”
- “Are the care and protection concerns enough to make a notification?”
- “What is required to do our best to ensure safety?”

- Notes from the case consultation will be written up by the staff member and/or the Team Leader for the file and for those involved in the situation to work from.

  If it appears a notification is /or may be necessary, there will be a further case consultation involving the Manager where all information will be shared for a final decision to be made. Any further notes from this meeting will be written up again for the file and for those working with the situation.

  1. The notification will be made in writing on the Child, Youth and Family notification template.
  2. All information must be clearly stated, e.g. dates, factual descriptions of incidents, full names and details of all referred to in the notification and the use of quote marks when quoting others, etc.

If it is decided not to make a notification at this time, the situation will continue to be closely monitored by the Team Leader with the staff member until concerns are resolved. Staff will make specific entries in case notes regarding this, as will Team Leaders in their Supervision notes.

The Team Leader will keep their Manager informed of progress in their own supervision sessions.

In cases of both actual and suspected abuse

- Consultation will occur as soon as it is known there is/or may be abuse. Staff will make themselves available even if other commitments need to be rescheduled. All agency staff involved with the family will attend the case consult including the Team Leaders and Managers where applicable. Also, staff from other agencies outside Family Works may be invited to attend if applicable. The Family Works staff member who raised the initial care and protection concern will be responsible for identifying others who need to be invited and also to inform them of any updates or outcomes as they become available.

- At times we will be advised by other agencies that they are considering or going to make a notification due to their own care and protection concerns. At these times we may discuss information relevant to the concerns they may have or concerns we may have to assist in clarifying if there are indeed care and protection concerns significant enough to either notify or to work in other ways together to assist the family. It is

the Family Works staff member's responsibility to obtain an update regarding the outcome as to whether a notification has been made or not. Once known the worker will then need to decide if they need to take any further action themselves if for example the other agency worker decided not to notify. Notifications will be of agency standards regarding written communication.

- Necessary resources will also be made available as a priority, e.g. cars, electronic whiteboards, etc.

- If a Team Leader is not available, the staff member will approach the Manager of the area they work in. If that Manager is unavailable, then the other Manager. In the absence of both Managers, the Director. Contact telephone numbers;



- **All efforts will be made to locate the appropriate staff member before others are consulted.** In the absence of all listed, consultation will then occur with the Chief Executive. Contact information: telephone [redacted] If you are unable to reach him on either number, contact his PA, [redacted] and she will assist in locating him.

- If the appropriate Team Leader is available but the Manager of the area is not, then the above will still apply.
- The Manager may consult with CYF Practice Leader prior to a final decision being made to notify to assist with decision making. The Manager may delegate this task to a Team Leader if necessary.
- Consultation is a normal process in relation to professional practice for Family Works and occurs at all levels where we need to consider statutory intervention in the lives of children/young people and their families and for possible legal proceedings.
- If there have been multiple notifications for a family, these will be attached. It will be noted clearly at the beginning and end of each new notification that others are attached and the dates of these notifications.
- Notifications for known abuse will be made the same day.
- Notifications regarding suspected abuse will be made according to the risk level agreed by those involved.
- Deciding whether to notify or not is the responsibility of the staff involved in the situation after careful consideration at case consultation.
- If there is a disagreement that can not be resolved, the Director will be asked to assist with an outcome. However, all possible measures will be taken to resolve the issue first.
- When a notification is made, Family Works will continue to work with the family and establish a Safety Plan wherever possible. Using the "Safety Plan" template.

- Safety Plans will be signed off by the Team Leader and a copy will be forwarded to the Manager of the area for sign off.
- All notifications and outcomes will be filed on the Notifications File held by Senior Management and a copy on the client's file. It is the responsibility of the Family Works staff member who raised the care and protection issue – in most cases this will be a case worker, to ensure that an outcome to the notification is forwarded to senior management for filing with the notification held on the Notifications' File. A copy will also be filed on the client's file. The worker will also keep track of the progress of the follow up on the notification to ensure this occurs in a timely fashion based on the type of concerns. If action is not occurring in a reasonable time frame and/or they have not received a written outcome from CY&F they will in the first instance follow up with CY&F and then if they are not successful in receiving suitable information they will inform their Team Leader who will discuss with the Manager of that area what action will need to be taken at the management level.
- Where a notification is made, the case will be closely monitored by the Team Leader with the staff member until resolved. Staff will make specific entries in their case notes, as will Team Leaders in their Supervision notes. The Team Leader will keep their Manager informed of progress in their own Supervision sessions.
- Staff safety must also be considered in the situation and if necessary a safety plan put in place for the staff member. This would include input by the staff member, Team Leader, Manager and if necessary the Director. Where necessary other staff may need to be advised of the elements of the safety plan. Communication of this will form part of the documented plan which will be kept on the staff member's file with their Team Leader and Manager. The staff member and any other staff necessary will also receive a copy.
- Those supervising staff through the process will arrange an opportunity to debrief, if this is required by a staff member.