

# Briefing

## Covid-19 Wellbeing Insights Paper for publication: *COVID-19 and safety in the home*

<b>Date due to MO:</b>	02/03/2023	<b>Action required by:</b>	09/03/2023
<b>Security level:</b>	UNCLASSIFIED	<b>Briefing number:</b>	BN2023-010
<b>To:</b>	Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Minister of Health		
<b>Copy to:</b>	Hon Peeni Henare, Associate Minister of Health (Māori Health) Hon Barbara Edmonds, Associate Minister of Health (Pacific Peoples) [REDACTED]		

## Contact for Telephone Discussion

Name	Position
Karen Orsborn	Chief Executive
Matthew Bloomer	Director Wellbeing System Leadership



## Minister's Office to Complete

- |  |                                    |   |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved            | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline   | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs change        | <input type="checkbox"/> Seen      | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's note | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |   |

Comment:

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<b>Security level:</b>	UNCLASSIFIED	<b>Date:</b>	2/03/2023
<b>To:</b>	Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Minister of Health		

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## Purpose

1. On 9 March, Te Hiringa Mahara intends to publish the attached papers on effect of the pandemic on safety in the home in Aotearoa.

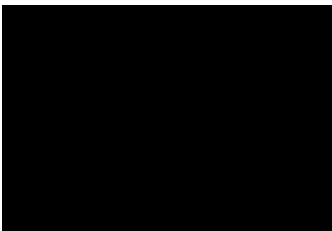
## Executive Summary

2. On 9 March, we will publish a summary and full version of *COVID-19 and safety in the home*, the fourth of eight COVID-19 insights reports.
3. In short, the pandemic and lockdowns led to an increase in violence and harm in the home, with some groups particularly impacted.
  - Being cut off from support networks and being trapped in unsafe situations saw violence and controlling behaviour change, increase, and grow more severe.
  - Women, children and young people, particular those who are Māori, or from the rainbow community, were particularly affected.
  - Digital technology allowed online violence and abuse to be brought directly into people's homes, but the digital divide made accessing help difficult for some.
  - Government and community responses were valuable, but more should be done to empower communities, provide a range of safe accessible supports, and monitor and research family and sexual violence.
4. A media release and a LinkedIn post will be made alongside publication. Te Hiringa Mahara will respond to any media interest, but no specific media appearances are planned. Both the summary and technical papers, and a high-level communications plan are attached, for your information. The media release, key messages, and a Q&A will be shared with your office before the publication date.
5. The findings of this report, as well as our previous COVID-19 Insights papers, will inform the fifth paper in the series, which we expect to publish on 14 March. That paper will outline what should be done to support wellbeing after a crisis, with the intent of providing timely and relevant advice following cyclone Gabrielle.

## Recommendations

We recommend you:

- |    |   |                 |
|----|---|-----------------|
| a) | <b>note</b> , on 9 March, subject to minor editing changes, Te Hiringa Mahara will publish the attached reports on <i>COVID-19 and safety in the home</i> | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| b) | <b>note</b> , on 14 March, we intend to publish a further report on <i>Supporting wellbeing after a crisis</i> , which you will be briefed on separately  | <b>Yes / No</b> |
| c) | <b>note</b> Te Hiringa Mahara intends to proactively release this briefing as part of our proactive release policy  | <b>Yes / No</b> |



Karen Orsborn  
**Chief Executive**  
Date: 2/03/2023

Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall  
**Minister of Health**  
Date:

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## Background

6. As outlined in previous briefings [BN2023-001 and our Briefing to the Incoming Minister refer], we have so far published the first three of eight insights reports to be produced as part of our Covid-19 Impacts Insights Programme.
7. The programme provides short, accessible, focused reports in an agile way. It cannot provide a comprehensive view of the impacts of Covid-19; it provides key insights on wellbeing areas or populations of focus.
8. This fourth report in the series provides a description of the impacts of pandemic on safety in the home in Aotearoa. It brings together published literature and the views of representatives from communities and other organisations and agencies.

## Summary of findings

9. During the 2020 national lockdown, reports of family violence increased dramatically, but it is likely that this is under-reported.
10. The increase is consistent with international research showing that gender-based violence, violence against women and children, sexual violence and interpersonal violence escalate and intensify during crises like a pandemic.
11. Some communities were at particular risk of harm, or faced barriers to accessing support, particularly women, young people, children, and disabled people. The risk was even higher for people in those communities who are also Māori, Pacific, and/or part of the rainbow community.
12. Digital technology allowed online violence and abuse to be brought directly into people's homes, but the digital divide made accessing help difficult for some. That digital divide tends to mirror social and economic inequality in Aotearoa.
13. The increased risk of family violence was recognised and acted upon from the start of the pandemic by the government and Māori and community organisations and initiatives.
14. Māori leadership in keeping people safe during COVID-19 was evident across a broad range of organisations, including Whānau Ora providers, women's refuges and Māori Wardens. Not all these service providers are funded to meet the needs of whānau with family violence issues, but they stepped up to provide support until specialist services could come in.

## Recommendations / Call for action

15. Keeping people safe requires a range of safe, accessible options:
  - Traditional models of connection were significantly disrupted, and the importance of ensuring equitable access to services and supports was reinforced. It is vital that future support be directed towards groups who experience inequity.
  - Online connectivity is an important way of keeping people safe and connected to support, but many communities struggled with access to both essential services and technology during the pandemic. Accessing help needs to be easier and safer.
16. Empowerment and involvement of communities in planning and management is key to supporting safety:
  - Community organisations are well placed to respond to changing needs, and empowering and involving communities in planning is key to preventing violence and reaching people safely and quickly.
  - Preventing an increase in violence during the next crisis will be aided by promoting respectful, non-violent relationships, and enabling communities to take a lead in changing social attitudes, behaviours and norms that support violence.
  - Disadvantaged communities, such as young people and rainbow communities, feel overlooked in times of crisis. In order to support safety, systems in place must enhance involvement of communities through both planning and decision-making processes.
17. Ongoing monitoring and research on the impact of the pandemic on people feeling safe will enable the development of better systems and resources:
  - Given the difficulties gaining meaningful statistics about family violence and sexual violence, engagement and check-ins with service providers and community organisations is critical for understanding trends and developments in safety risks for vulnerable populations.

## Attached outputs

### The Summary report

18. A short 4-page report, this paper outlines the highlights of the findings and focuses on the conclusions of our research.
19. The audience for this paper is the broader public, including stakeholders, to understand the effects of the pandemic, and make the case for appropriate action to mitigate these in the future.

### The Technical report

20. A full 25-page report, this paper provides the methodology, findings, and conclusions, with references. This paper is for anyone who wants to understand the analysis and findings in greater detail.

## Communications Plan

21. A high-level communications plan is attached for your information. Key points are:
  - A media release will support publication of the reports, and a LinkedIn post will be made alongside publication.
  - Te Hiringa Mahara will front any media interest.
  - No media appearances are planned, but Karen Orsborn, Chief Executive, will be the Te Hiringa Mahara spokesperson for any media interest.

## Next Steps

22. The media release, key messages, and a Q&A will be shared with your office before the publication date.
23. Subject to minor editorial changes, on 9 March, the Summary and Technical reports will be published to the Te Hiringa Mahara website, the media release will be sent to news media, and an announcement posted to LinkedIn.
24. On 14 March, we intend to publish a further paper on Supporting wellbeing after a crisis, which you will be briefed on separately. That paper will draw on the findings of all of the COVID-19 insights papers to date, as well as other available information. It will seek to provide insight into how the government and communities can support wellbeing in the wake of a crisis like cyclone Gabrielle – it will not evaluate the ongoing response.

**ENDS**