



# USING RESULTS BASED ACCOUNTABILITY TO SHOW PROGRESS IN A LONG-TERM COMMUNITY PROJECT

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# USING RESULTS BASED ACCOUNTABILITY TO SHOW PROGRESS IN A LONG-TERM COMMUNITY PROJECT

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## ABSTRACT

Violence Free Communities<sup>1</sup> (VFC) is a small New Zealand community development organisation which for 18 years has been running events and campaigns primarily in West Auckland, designed to prevent violence and increase community capacity and resilience. This paper applies a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework to an evaluation of the VFC's Toddler Day Out (TDO) event run in West Auckland from 2004 to 2015, focusing on data from 2014. This event attracts up to 18,000 people each year, is focused on reducing child abuse and increasing participation in Early Childhood Education (ECE), and involves over 70 different agencies promoting services and offering resources to families with children aged under six. Evaluating the impact of such projects on a community is a challenging and potentially expensive task for a small community organisation. In this paper we argue that an RBA approach, using performance and population measures, justifies a large-scale research project investigating the promising, initial indicators of TDO's effectiveness in creating non-violent communities. The performance measures (n=351 adults) show that 29% of the children under the age of six in the West Auckland local board areas come to TDO each year and that about 64.8% are coming for the first time. Adult interviewees are very positive about the event, and outline what they intend to do with the information and support they receive. Return visitors describe what they did as a result of the previous year's TDO. Stallholders describe the benefits of collaboration. TDO uniquely resources positive parenting,

encourages service and community collaboration, and reaches a very high proportion of the parents of preschoolers in West Auckland. The population data for West Auckland shows, over the period 2010-2015: a major improvement in ECE participation; a huge drop in child abuse substantiation rates, with these sitting well below national levels and targets; and a substantial reduction in crime rates. We argue that further research is warranted to determine the extent to which TDO is responsible, at least in part, for the big drop in child abuse substantiations and crime rates in this area.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper applies a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework (Friedman, 2005) to an evaluation of a community event in Waitakere City: Toddler Day Out & The Great Parenting Fair (TDO), run by Violence Free Communities (VFC). TDO began in 2004 and has been running every year since, attracting up to 18,000 participants each time (Violence Free Waitakere, 2013a). We argue that an RBA approach, using performance and population measures, justifies a large-scale project investigating the promising, initial indicators of TDO's effectiveness in creating non-violent communities. Specifically, a persistent annual drop in child abuse substantiations and crime rates in Waitakere City over several years warrants investigation; TDO may be responsible, at least in part, for this positive community development.

RBA engages with population accountability and performance accountability. The former is concerned with measures relating to the health and wellbeing of a population in a specific geographical area, and the latter is concerned with measures relating to participant outcomes from an engagement with projects situated in said geographical area (Friedman, 2009). The 2010

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly Violence Free Waitakere, until August 2015



report on the Canadian Vibrant Communities' 'grand experiment' (Gamble, 2010), the goal of which was to reduce poverty in Canada, is an example of how RBA reporting works. The report includes population data that shows how one measure of poverty (percentage of Canadians with low incomes) has declined over the period of the report from 11.5% to 8.8%. On the performance accountability side, the report documents "322,698 poverty reducing benefits to 170,903 households in Canada" (p.7) involving 1695 organisations in 13 different communities, as well as a direct influence relating to "35 substantive government policy changes" (p.7) concerning poverty.

RBA is "successfully" used (Friedman, 2009, p.3) in many countries around the world and is part of the contracting framework used by all government agencies in New Zealand when procuring community services (New Zealand Government Procurement, 2014). It has been incorporated into the Ministry of Social Development's Community Investment Strategy (Ministry of Social Development, 2012) and the programme for community-led development approaches pioneered by the Department of Internal Affairs from 2012 (Toogood, 2015).

In spite of high profile national public anti-violence campaigns such as It's not OK (Ministry of Social Development, 2016) and the Strategies with Kids – Information for Parents (SKIP) campaigns (Ministry of Social Development, 2010), the evidence from population data that anything has really changed appears to be slim (Toogood, 2015). The most recent national statistics on child abuse notifications to Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) are described by Unicef New Zealand (2015, para 1) as "unacceptably high" and by the Minister of Social Welfare, Anne Tolley, as "appallingly high" (Tolley, 2015, para 2). Furthermore, even at the local community level, it is not clear that progress on child abuse has been made anywhere. McMaster's 2012 observation in relation to family violence programmes is still relevant in 2016: "the problem agencies face is [that], apart from anecdotal stories of success, very little robust evaluation of the effectiveness of intervention programmes has occurred within the New Zea-

land context" (p. 9). This is where RBA can help determine whether or not unique community initiatives such as TDO are actually having any impact and can provide the robust evaluation that is required.

The value of an RBA approach depends, in part, on whether population data is collected in a consistent and reliable manner. For example, child abuse notifications have, in fact, declined 12% (Tolley, 2015) from 2014 to 2015, but as Johnson (2016) has pointed out in the Salvation Army's 2016 "State of the Nation" review, CYFS have changed their criteria for notifications by raising the bar for notification of emotional abuse, by far the largest contributor to the measure, thus reducing the number of events that qualify for notification. Gulliver & Fanslow (2012), in their review of population measures in the family violence field, conclude that none are very reliable. This is true of a wide range of population data around abstract concepts like violence and poverty. Changes to the way population data are collected frequently interfere with the interpretation of the data. In Canada an alternative measure of low income (the LIM) indicated that 13.5% of the Canadian population were on low incomes in 2010, not 8.8% as indicated by the LICO measure (Statistics Canada, 2012), used by Gamble (2010) to show the impact of the Vibrant Communities project. More recent reports using a new methodology indicate that 13.8% of Canadians were on low incomes in 2012 (Grant, 2014).

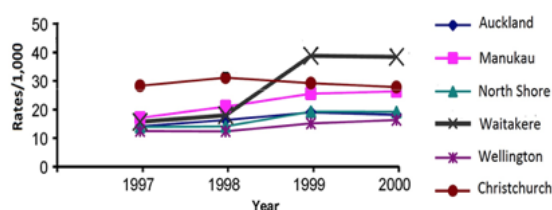
Internationally, despite the rise of RBA, there is a recognition that with respect to the assessment of the long-term impact of community development projects "our evaluation cupboards are mostly bare" (Fleming, Karasz, & Wysen, 2014, p. 361). Fleming, Karasz and Wysen's chapter appears in the US publication *What Counts? Harnessing Data for America's Communities* (Cytron et al., 2014). Wartell and Williams state in the foreword of this text: "There has never been an absence of appetite for transformative change in the world of community development. There has, however, been a dearth of data" (p. 1). In New Zealand the current focus on RBA (Ministry of Social Welfare, 2012), with its emphasis on the use of population meas-

ures, is an attempt by the Ministry of Social Development to gain long-term data on the effectiveness of community development projects. However, much of the funding for such projects is short-term and doesn't allow for evaluations even six months out from completion (Haigh & Hucker, 2014). Even where community developers are keen to use population measures, getting the right measure with sufficient sensitivity is a challenge. In an extensive and generally positive review of RBA training and implementation in Wales (Opinion Research Services, 2011), the authors concluded that "stakeholders are less confident about implementing population frameworks" (p.6) required for long-term evaluation of projects.

So it is with some caution that this beginning exploration of the success or otherwise of TDO draws on the use, at a district level, of three broad population measures – attendance of preschool children in a state-funded early childhood education service; child abuse statistics (notifications and substantiations of child abuse); and crime rates (violent and non-violent). However, in this research, the population measures are sufficiently stable and the size and duration over many years of the TDO event should be sufficient for trends in population data to be meaningful.

## BACKGROUND

**Figure 1:** Notifications of child abuse/1000 aged under 18, 1997-2000.



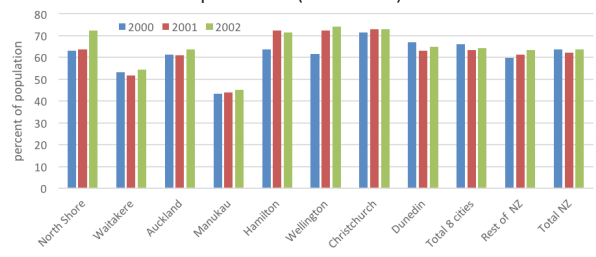
**Data Source:** Child Youth and Family Services (Waitakere City Council, 2002).

TDO began in response to data presented in a report to the Waitakere City Council (Waitakere City Council, 2002)<sup>2</sup> which identified the level of child abuse notifications to CYFS over the period 1997-2000 (see figure 1). Notifications in Waitakere City had gone from 16/1000

<sup>2</sup> Waitakere City was amalgamated into the new Auckland City in November 2010 (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011). In this report the area covered by Waitakere City is synonymous with the area described as West Auckland.

children under the age of 18 to 38.5/1000, a rate 38% higher than any other metropolitan centre in New Zealand and double that of the adjacent areas of Auckland City and North Shore City. Notification rates climbed nationally from 28/1000 in 2001/2002 to 126/1000 by 2009/2010 (Wynd, 2013a), so this became a national as well as a West Auckland concern.

**Figure 2:** Percentage of population aged under five years who attended state-funded pre-school (2000-2002).



**Data source:** Ministry of Education, percentages calculated using 2001 Census Data, (Reid et al., 2013)

A second issue of concern in 2002 was the very low early childhood education participation rate in Waitakere. Figure 2 presents the participation rates in state-funded early-childhood education from 2000-2002 (Reid et al., 2003), showing regional differences in participation. At 54.5% for Waitakere City in 2002, the percentage of under-fives in state-funded services was 10% lower than the New Zealand average; only Manukau at 45% was worse, with most metropolitan areas being around 20% better than Waitakere (ECE Taskforce Secretariat, 2010, p. 31). As studies have shown, a strong protective effect against child abuse results from engagement in early childhood education (Evans, Garner, & Honig, 2014; Reynolds & Robertson, 2003). It was therefore vital to have a strong representation at TDO from a wide range of early childhood education services including Kōhanga Reo (Māori ECE services), Pacific Island language nests and services that could meet the needs of a wide range of migrant groups (see VFC annual reports for more details: Violence Free Waitakere, 2012; Violence Free Waitakere, 2013b; Violence Free Communities, 2015a).

TDO was thus designed to address these concerns about child abuse and ECE participation in Waitakere City/West Auckland. It is a one-day carnival held in a large stadium, with over 100 stalls promoting services and resources that can help parents, particularly of preschoolers,



get the support they need to be good parents. TDO raises awareness, for families with under-six-year-olds, of the importance of group socialisation, pre-literacy skills, good health and a loving parental environment in these early years. It also links parents to the support services that can help them achieve these goals. To do this, VFC and the ECE group co-organising the event bring together early childhood education, social, health and community services to create an integrated, 'one-stop shop' where people can access the resources they need. In order to be effective, the event has to be culturally rich and great fun, so there are many activities for children: interactive and educational games; an entertainment stage presenting comedy acts, dance and cultural performing groups, interactive events and competitions; huge bouncy castles; and outside the stadium, safety displays, food stalls, fair rides and more information services (see figure 3)<sup>3</sup>.



Figure 3: Images from the 2014 Toddler Day Out & Great Parenting Fair.

In 2013, TDO attracted an estimated 18,000 people to the Waitakere Trusts Arena (Winther & Dyer, 2013) and each year from 2009 has attracted between 10,000 and 15,000 people (Dyer, Naidu, Cottrell, & Weir, 2009, 2010; Dyer & Winther, 2011, 2012; Winther & Dyer, 2013;


3 All photos above used with permission of VFC from their 2014 TDO annual report (Violence Free Waitakere, 2014a) and the photo spread used for the thank you message to contributors. All photos used with permission of participants.

Colmar Brunton, 2014; Violence Free Communities, 2015). In 2015, 75 education, social, health and community services involving over 230 volunteers ran information and/or fun activity centres, including sections ("villages") focused on the needs of specific cultures (Violence Free Communities, 2015). An additional team of 60 volunteers helped in the overall management of the event.

Because we are looking at gross population measures of change in a geographical area of around 200,000 people, we need to consider what else was happening over the period from 2004 to 2015 covered by this research, particularly from 2010 onwards. We have already mentioned the national It's Not OK anti-violence campaign begun in 2007 (Ministry of Social Development, 2016) and SKIP (Ministry of Social Development, 2010) Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents launched in 2004. In 2007, Waitakere City "celebrated becoming a [United Nations] City for Peace" (Waitakere – A City For Peace, 2007, para 1), dedicated to promoting a "culture of peace" (para 5) in its community. This involved support for organisations like VFC running violence-prevention initiatives.

TDO was not the only programme run by VFC over the period 2002-2015. VFC's vision is to "innovate for violence prevention through creating community resilience", and one of our key aims is "to produce model projects which successfully create community resilience and other effective alternatives to violence" (Violence Free Communities, 2015b, p. 1). All VFC programmes are aimed at creating better and stronger relationships between parents, carers and children, and between families, whanau and their communities. These programmes include Violence Free Begins With Me, Little Kauri, Banishing Bullying Together, the Promoting Great Parenting Network, Westie Dads in Action and Marvellous Mums<sup>4</sup> as well two major programmes *Our Amazing Place – Community Treasure Hunt* (Roberts, Geall, Howie, & Bridgman, 2013) and *Jade Speaks Up* (Dyer, 2014) which are used in many other New Zealand centres as well as West Auckland. These programmes have been used by thousands of adults and children in Waitākere over the past five years.

4 See 2013 VFW, 2015 VFC Annual Reports for details of all the above programmes; Violence Free Waitakere, 2013b; Violence Free Communities, 2015.



In addition to the work of VFC, there are many good NGO and state organisations in the West running strong family and child support, prevention, intervention and rehabilitation programmes as well as supporting national campaigns. However, though all of these inputs may influence rates of child abuse, ECE participation and crime, none of them are unique to West Auckland, while TDO stands out as an event of sufficient duration, difference and scale to suggest it may account for any positive changes in population data that cannot otherwise be accounted for.

## METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Three published data sets are used as measures of the short-term impact of TDO. The main measure is the independent 2014 Colmar Brunton evaluation of TDO, commissioned by Auckland Council, one of the major funders of TDO. The Colmar Brunton questionnaire had five rating questions: event satisfaction, promotion of the event, reasons for attending, support for the event and use of ECE services. It also included an overall satisfaction question; demographic questions on gender, age, ethnicity and location; questions about whether one was a first time attendee; whom one attended the event with; and what relationship one had to the children present. In addition it asked a number of qualitative questions, including two that explored the likely impact of TDO: “What one thing did you find most useful today?” and the impact one year out: “What changes have you made as a parent, if any, as a result of the information you received from last year’s event?” The questionnaires were given to participants on the day of the event or afterwards by phone or email. Participant selection was based on convenience sampling, i.e. on the availability of potential interviewees in this context. Generally interviewees were selected from people waiting in long queues for the rides or the bouncy castles, watching the entertainment or waiting for their child to have their face painted. The interviewers were from a wide range of cultures.

In other years VFC has administered its own evaluation questionnaires using similar ques-

tions. In this report we use the in-house data from 2010-2013 and 2015 (Dyer et al., 2009, 2010; Dyer & Winther, 2011, 2012; Winther & Dyer, 2013; Violence Free Waitakere, 2015) to get attendance and return rate values for 2010-2013 and 2015. In addition, because the Colmar Brunton (2014) research did not include a stakeholder questionnaire, we provide data from a small 2015 in-house questionnaire (Violence Free Communities, 2015) on the interest taken by interviewees in stakeholder services, the enquiries stakeholders receive after the event and their experience as participants.

We use chi-square analysis to show whether the TDO interviewees have the same cultural profile as the Waitakere populations, and a Margin of Error calculator (SurveyMonkey, 2015) to show to what extent the sample size affords reasonable confidence that the findings are representative of the attendees of the TDO event and of the under-six-year-old population of Waitakere. The estimation of the attendance numbers at TDO events used a mix of counts of numbers through the door and grid counts to arrive at a preliminary estimate, which was checked against attendance estimates made by Trusts Arena staff (who are very experienced in the estimating of crowd size at events held at the stadium). Because the event ran from 10 am to 3 pm, it was a free event with no ticket sales, and there was a mix of indoor and outdoor activities, estimates were rough and rounded to the nearest thousand.

### Population measures

The population data (child abuse rates, ECE participation rates and crime rates) were adjusted to fit the boundaries of what used to be Waitakere City. Trends over time, and particularly over the last five to six years, are examined with comparisons made between trends in Waitakere City/West Auckland and with other major Auckland regions (the former Auckland, North Shore and Manukau Cities, now Auckland Central, North Shore and South Auckland). Population rates for the various measures used are based on Statistics New Zealand’s 2015 Sub-national population estimates (RC, AU), by age and sex, at 30 June 2006-15 (2015 boundaries). Some data are excluded, such as 2015 child



abuse prevalence notifications (data no longer available online) and 2015 crime rates (changes in reporting criteria make comparisons with previous years challenging)<sup>5</sup>.

## RESULTS

### Performance Outcomes: Representativeness of the sample

**Table 1:** Comparison of the percentage cultural composition of the 2014 TDO interviewees and the Waitakere (West Auckland) population (2006 census) and combined population of the three West Auckland local boards (Whau, Waitākere Ranges, Henderson-Massey – 2013 census – Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

|                 | Toddlers Day Out 2014 | Waitakere 2006           | Whau, Waitākere Ranges, Henderson Massey 2013 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| European        | 58.8                  | 59                       | 43  |
| Māori           | 15.9                  | 13.1                     | 10  |
| Pacific Peoples | 19.5                  | 15.3                     | 17  |
| Asian           | 21.8                  | 16.1                     | 23  |
| Other           | 10                    | 9.8                      | 7   |
|                 |                       | $\chi^2=2.89$ , $p=0.58$ | $\chi^2=8.12$ , $p=0.08$                      |

Table 1 shows that the cultural composition of the 351 TDO interviewees in 2014 was not significantly different from the 2006 Waitakere population (Waitakere City, 2006 –  $p>0.05$ , chi-square) or from the 2013 combined population of three West Auckland local boards (Whau, Waitākere Ranges and Henderson-Massey – 2013 census, Statistics New Zealand, 2014,  $p>0.05$ , chi-square) which covers the vast majority of the old Waitakere City land area. Those 351 adult interviewees came with 546 children

(= an adult-to-child ratio of 1:1.56). Most adults came with another adult as well, so it is likely that the sample (assuming random selection) represents close to 9% of the 13,000 people that came ( $\pm 3\%$  margin of error  $p>0.05$ , SurveyMonkey, 2015).<sup>6</sup>

People came to TDO from 14 local boards and from outside of Auckland altogether, but 88% came from the three local boards that used to be part of Waitakere City. Eighty-two percent of the adults interviewed were parents, with another 10% being grandparents. Eighty-four percent of the children of the interviewees were under the age of six, which suggests that there were roughly 6654 ( $(13000/2.56)*1.56*0.84$ ) children under six and at TDO in 2014, of which 88% (5856) were from Whau, Waitākere Ranges or Henderson-Massey. This figure represents 28% of the 22,085 under-sixes living in those areas (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). The margin of error when drawing inferences from the sample to the general population is an acceptable  $\pm 5\%$ ,  $p<0.05$  (SurveyMonkey, 2015)<sup>7</sup>.

Potentially then, over the period of the preschool years, it is possible that every preschooler has attended TDO. The average return rate of attendees to TDO in the following year over the six years, 2010-2015, including the Colmar Brunton questionnaire, is 35.2% (16-54% range). The average attendance over this period has been over 13,000 annually, or 79,000 in total. This means that TDO is capturing a substantially new group of attendees on each iteration and over the past six years around 51,190 (64.8% of the total of 79,000) are coming for the first time. If 60.9% are under six years old, and 88% of these (over 27,451 different children) are from West Auckland, this would be over 100% of this under-six cohort (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Even if attendance estimates were a 100% overestimate, we would still predict that 60% of the

<sup>6</sup> The margin of error assumes a random selection process such that the demographic proportions in the sample ( $N=361$ ) match those of the population sampled ( $N=13000$ ). Our sample reflects the demographic of a population engaged with under-six-year-old children. 351 interviewees/13000 =  $\pm 6\%$  margin of error; 896 (interviewees and their children)/13000 =  $\pm 4\%$  margin of error; and 1150 approximately (interviewees, their partners and their children)/13000 represents a  $\pm 3\%$  margin of error,  $p<0.05$ .

<sup>7</sup> We have 351 adult interviewees representing 546 children, of which 458 approximately are under six and live in Whau, Waitākere Ranges or Henderson-Massey. Four hundred and fifty-eight as representative of a population of 22,084 children has a  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error,  $p<0.05$ .

<sup>5</sup> In 2015 the crime data measurement system was changed to better reflect the impact of crime on victims and to align with international measures (New Zealand Police, 2016). "The old and new statistics are not comparable" (p. 4). Although there are processes that can achieve a degree of comparability, they are beyond the scope of this report.

West Auckland under-sixes participated in TDO over this six-year period from 2010 to 2015.

## Performance Outcomes: Experience of TDO

**Table 2:** What the 351 interviewed TDO participants found was the ONE most useful thing from today. 'Predicted adult numbers affected' is an extrapolation from 351 interviewees to the 5181 adults estimated to have attended Toddler Day Out & Great Parenting Fair (Colmar Brunton, 2014). Margin of error is  $\pm 5\%$ .

| Information/<br>support area                | %<br>response | Predicted<br>adult numbers<br>affected |
|---|---------------|--|
| Having fun, great rides                     | 17.9%         | 841-929                                |
| Play activities, parenting resources        | 12.3%         | 574-635                                |
| Nothing, not sure, confused                 | 12.0%         | 561-620                                |
| No answer                                   | 12.0%         | 561-620                                |
| General information                         | 10.5%         | 494-546                                |
| Early childhood education services          | 8.5%          | 401-443                                |
| Safety in the home, in the car, first aid   | 6.6%          | 307-340                                |
| Health and dental health                    | 5.7%          | 267-295                                |
| Fire safety                                 | 3.1%          | 146-162                                |
| Healthy eating and nutrition                | 2.6%          | 120-133                                |
| Connection to families, cultures, community | 2.6%          | 120-133                                |
| Chance to give feedback                     | 2.0%          | 93-103                                 |
| Connection with farm animals                | 1.4%          | 67-74                                  |
| Ease of access                              | 1.4%          | 67-74                                  |
| The market/food stalls                      | 0.9%          | 40-44                                  |
| Dads, single parent support                 | 0.6%          | 27-30                                  |
| Total                                       | 100.0%        | 4685-5179                              |


The 2014 Colmar Brunton report shows that interviewees were generally very positive about the event, with 80% saying they would recommend it to a friend and 77% expecting to return next year. Further: 94% felt that the Auckland Council should support events like this; 87% felt that events like this make Auckland a great place to live; and 83% felt that events like this "make me proud to live in Auckland". The event has a clear feel-good factor, and it also translates into positive and potentially long-term behaviour change.

Few come to TDO with the expectation that they will learn useful things that in small ways will transform their lives (see table 2). More than 70% come "for fun" and "having a day out" that's "good for [their] children". It's a chance "to spend time with friends/family" and "it's free" say another 40%. When asked what "the one most useful thing" was that they got from TDO on the day, one participant retorted "I wasn't aware it was meant to be USEFUL! I thought it was meant to be fun." However, watching or participating in activities in which the children are having great fun may in itself be a useful learning experience for stressed parents.

Table 2 shows us what was "the one most useful thing" the 351 participants found on the day and extrapolates this to the roughly 4685 to 5179 adults that attended. Having fun doing the children's activities and going on the bouncy castles and carnival rides outside was "the most useful thing" for nearly a fifth of the adults, suggesting that between 841 and 929 adults went home that day feeling that they had given their children a good time.

Over 50% indicated that they had obtained useful information from the day. Twelve point three percent (representing 574-635 adults) had taken home ideas about child development, how to play with their children, how to manage difficult behaviour, and how to access community activities (sport, toy library, dance, gymnastics) and parent support and training. A further 9.7% (453-502 adults) found out about safety issues in the home or car, or about fire safety; 8.5% (401-443 adults) found out useful information





about early childhood education services; 8.3% (387-428 adults) got useful health, dental, nutrition or healthy eating information; and 10.5% (494-546 adults) generally valued the information they received on the day. Even the 0.6% (27-30 adults) who most valued the dads' or sole parents' information or support represents an important resource being fed back into the community, as does that of feeling a "connection to families, cultures, community" which was the most useful outcome for 2.6% (representing 120-133 adults) of the interviewees. One describes this connection: "Auckland seems to be incorporating these great commu-

nity events for every culture to bring us as a nation closer. I love it!"

These outcomes from the day of the event could be seen as transitory. More substantial are claims of actions taken by interviewees returning to TDO the following year. Data from 2014 suggests that there should be a high return rate to TDO – 77% say they will return. However, when the Colmar Brunton report asked participants "What changes have you made as a parent, if any, as a result of the information you received from last year's event?" only 56 (16%) of 351 interviewees indicated they had been before.

**Table 3:** What the 351 TDO participants interviewed in 2014 reported as changes they have made as a parent, if any, as a result of the information received from the 2013 event (Colmar Brunton, 2014). Fifty-six responses. 'Predicted numbers affected' is an extrapolation from 351 interviewees to the 6079 adults estimated to have attended Toddler Day Out and the Great Parenting Fair in 2013 (Winther & Dyer, 2013). The margin of error for 56 out of a population of 6079 is  $\pm 13\%$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

| Information/support area                                 | % response | Predicted numbers affected |
|--|------------|----------------------------|
| Play/sport activities, parenting resources               | 28.3%      | 1467-1950                  |
| Safety in the home and car                               | 16.7%      | 865-1151                   |
| Nothing, not sure, can't remember                        | 13.3%      | 689-916                    |
| No time to get info, didn't understand the question, fun | 10.0%      | 518-689                    |
| Joined playgroup or day care service                     | 6.7%       | 347-462                    |
| Health: immunisation, brushing teeth, asthma, first aid  | 6.7%       | 347-462                    |
| Healthy eating, recipes, cheap meals                     | 5.0%       | 259-344                    |
| Fire safety  | 5.0%       | 259-344                    |
| General information helpful for self and others          | 5.0%       | 259-344                    |
| Got more connected to/engaged with community             | 3.3%       | 171-227                    |
| Total  | 100.0%     | 5182-6890                  |

Table 3 shows that 77% of those who had attended the 2013 TDO, and returned one year later, could attest to changes they had made as parents and carers as result of that attendance. These included getting children engaged in sport, dance or swimming; being a more positive, engaged and informed parent or grandparent; enrolling in ECE services; addressing home, car, water and fire safety issues; making a range of health and nutrition changes; doing first aid; using information from the event for oneself or others; and becoming more engaged with one's community. Once again, if we extrapolate from the return interviewees back to the number of adults estimated to have attended TDO in 2013 (6079 – approximately one third of 18,000), the percentages in table 3 represent hundreds, and for some issues, thousands of people making positive changes in their lives. We do have to note, however, that the margin of error here is  $\pm 13\%$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and that people returning for more TDO experience may represent a different cohort from attendees in general.

While we have focused on the independent Colmar Brunton 2014 evaluation of TDO, the results from similar in-house VFC evaluations show very similar levels of participation, satisfaction and engagement with specific aspects of TDO. The VFC evaluations also show that the response to TDO is consistently very positive, that the information and activities presented on the day are highly valued, and that the participants are culturally representative of West Auckland communities.



In addition to the attendee questionnaires, a 2015 qualitative stallholder questionnaire was also very positive about TDO which, for most stallholders, is an annual event (Violence Free Waitakere, 2015b). They report on the interest taken in their services; the enquiries they receive after the event leading to use of their services (ranging from ECE services and parenting education through to free dentistry and dance or gym classes); as well as the collaboration and pleasure they experience as participants, and how that translates into their daily work of supporting families. The following quote from a stallholder provides an example of how this collaboration works:

“I saw lady who was really upset as her 15-year-

old daughter was pregnant and as they were a high needs family, they were unable to cope with more expense. Pregnancy Help, Parent Aid and many other organisations provided all the help they needed. She was overwhelmed with the support that was available.”

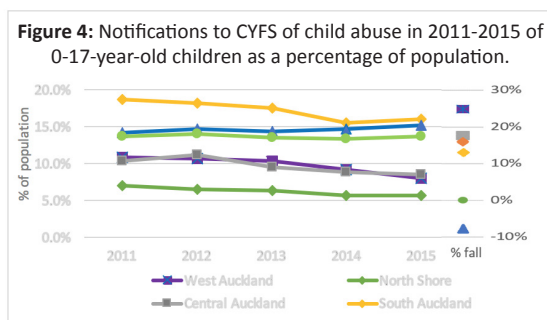
### Population outcomes

In summary, the performance data argues that coverage and outcomes of TDO define the event as one that could have significant influence on ECE participation and child abuse rates in West Auckland. In this section we explore whether those rates have changed in a positive direction from 2002 and whether those changes are exceptional and point to differences that require explanation.

**Table 4:** Change in participation in Early Childhood Education 2002-2015 and the relationship between participation and the average decile rating of schools (2015) in a local board area 2002, (ECE Taskforce Secretariat, 2010, Education Counts, 2016).

| City                  | % participation in state-funded ECE 2002 | Local Board       | % participation in ECE December 2015 | Average decile |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| North Shore/Waitakere | 72.4                                     | Upper Harbour     | 98.7                                 | 8.9            |
| North Shore           | 72.4                                     | Kaipātiki         | 97.1                                 | 7.6            |
| Auckland              | 63.6                                     | Waitematā         | 97.0                                 | 6.5            |
| Waitakere City        | 54.5                                     | Waitākere Ranges  | 97.5                                 | 6.6            |
|                       |  | Henderson-Massey  | 93.3                                 | 3.7            |
|                       |  | Whau              | 93.2                                 | 3.8            |
| Manukau               | 45.3                                     | Papakura          | 92.6                                 | 3.6            |
|                       |  | Ōtara-Papatoetoe  | 95.3                                 | 1.6            |
|                       |  | Manurewa          | 92.1                                 | 2.0            |
|                       |  | Māngere-Ōtahuhu   | 89.7                                 | 1.4            |
| New Zealand total     | 63.9                                     | New Zealand total | 98.7                                 | na             |

4 looks at participation rates in state-funded early childhood education, 2002 (ECE Taskforce Secretariat, 2010) to 2015 (Education Counts, 2016)<sup>8</sup>. By 2015 the gap between Waitākere and Manukau and other cities, and New Zealand as a whole had narrowed from 10-30% to 1-10%. However, table 4 demonstrates that levels of poverty as measured by school deciles (Ministry of Education, 2015)<sup>9</sup> are a powerful influence on ECE participation and the outcomes for the West Auckland boards that formed the old city of Waitākere, while much improved (40% better), are no better than the improvements that have occurred in Manukau (nearly 50% better). There is no unique feature of the West Auckland data that could suggest that TDO has provided a resource for change that may not be available elsewhere.



The data on child abuse tells a different story. In 2000, the rate of care and protection notifications to Child Youth and Family Services in Waitākere City was the highest in New Zealand (see figure 1 above), according to data provided by Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS). The rates of care and protection notifications to CYFS, at 3.85%, were around 50% higher than those for Manukau, and double those of the North Shore and Auckland. Rates were climbing across New Zealand and by 2010 the national rate of notifications was 12.6% (Wynd, 2013a). However, Wynd (2013b) shows that between 2008 and 2012 the rates of substantiated child abuse for Waitākere were falling, and although still relatively high were better than Manukau and some other parts of New Zealand.

8 The Ministry of Education changed the way they collected ECE data in 2014 and advised because of a data collection and definition change the 2014 data was not necessarily comparable to data from previous years. However, by December 2015 that advice had been removed. Alarmingly, the Henderson-Massey prior participation rate has dropped 1.8% from December 2013 to December 2015.

9 The correlation between average decile level and average prior participation in ECE was 0.90 in December 2015 (Education Counts, 2016).

Figure 4 gives population rates of notification of child abuse of children and young people for 2011-2015. These are incidence rates (Child Youth and Family Services, 2015a, Statistics New Zealand, 2015)<sup>10</sup>. The child and youth under-17 population was calculated for each aggregate of CYFS districts that approximated the old cities of Waitākere, North Shore, Auckland and Manukau<sup>11</sup>.

Figure 4 shows that overall New Zealand incidence notification rates of child abuse from CYFS have remained stable over the five years to 2015, and that rates have dropped in the greater Auckland region, with the largest percentage drop in notifications being 25% in West Auckland. Notifications increased by 7.5% for the rest of New Zealand. At 8.1%, the West Auckland rates are half those of South Auckland and well below the national average.

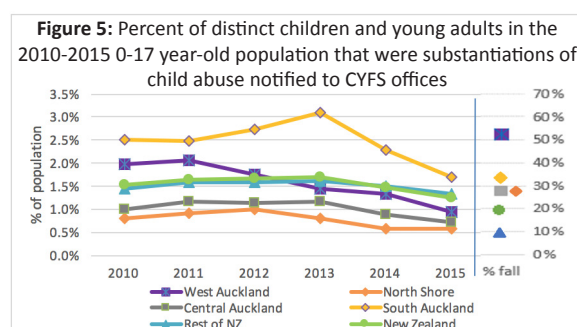


Figure 5 looks at the percentage of distinct children and young adults in 2010-2015 (the prevalence rate) that were substantiated cases of child abuse notified to CYFS offices (Child Youth and Family Services, 2015b; Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Figure 5 shows that substantiation rates have been falling in West Auckland almost every year since 2010, dropping by 52%, and much faster than other districts and New Zealand (an 18% drop) as a whole. This means that there were 676 fewer children suffering substantiated abuse in 2015 than there were in 2010. If West Auckland had made the same per-

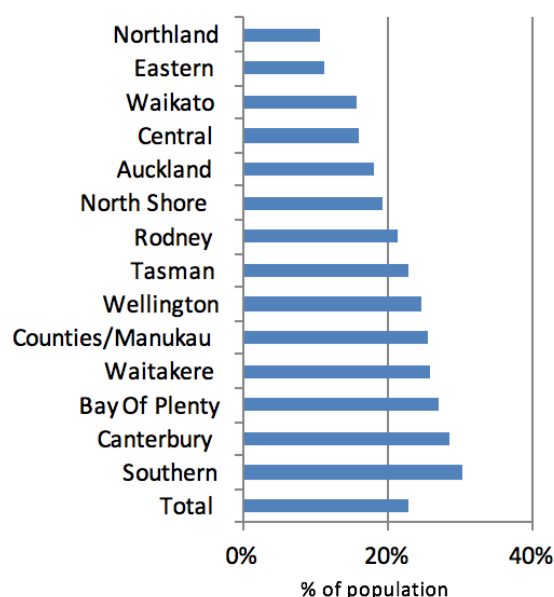
10 CYFS in 2016 are not including distinct children and young people (prevalence) data for notifications on their webpages reporting child abuse statistics. They are reporting distinct children and young people for substantiations.

11 The aggregations used in figures 4 and 5 were: West Auckland = Waitākere, Henderson-Massey, Whau and 14% of Upper Harbour; North Shore = 86% of Upper harbour, Rodney, Hibiscus and Bays, Kaipātiki and Devenport-Takapuna; Auckland = Waitemātā, Albert-Eden, Wai-keke, Puketāpapa, Ōrakei, Maungakeikei-Tāmaki; Manukau = Māngere-Ōtahuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa, Howick, Papakura, Franklin.

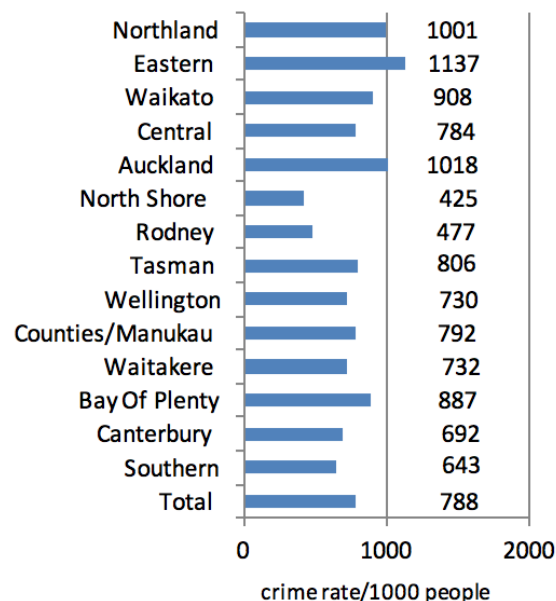




**Figure 6a:** % decrease in crime rates from 2010 to 2014.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 6b:** 2014 crime rates /10,000 population.<sup>12</sup>



cent progress as New Zealand as a whole, that would mean 436 extra cases of substantiated child abuse; if it had made the same progress as the rest of New Zealand excluding Auckland there would be 562 extra cases.

## DISCUSSION

This data on child abuse rates clearly suggests that something unique has been happening in West Auckland over the last six years that has shifted the way that parents respond to young children. Wynd (2013b) presents data showing that for CYFS's two West Auckland districts (Westgate and Waitakere), substantiations as a proportion of notifications have been falling almost every year since 2007. Combining data from figures 4 (notification incidence) and 5 (substantiation prevalence), shows that this trend continues for West Auckland, which has seen a 7.4% fall from 2011 to 2015 in the proportion of notifications that are substantiated. This is a much greater fall than for other Auckland regions (2.6% to 3.2%), the rest of New Zealand excluding Auckland (2.5%), or New Zealand overall (2.9%). This suggests we have a consistent pattern of positive reduction of child abuse in West Auckland over a nine-year period.

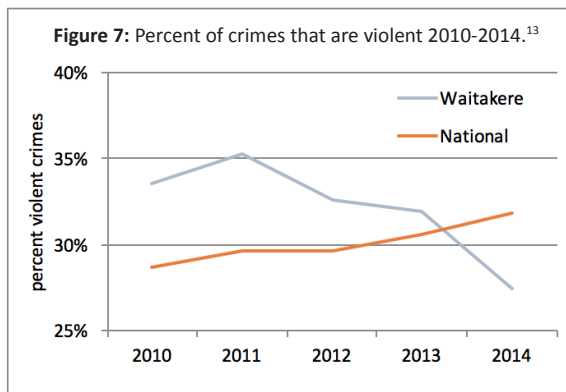
One of the clear consequences of child abuse

is the increased likelihood of victims becoming involved in criminal behaviour generally and violence in particular (Currie & Tekin, 2006; Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013; Division of Violence Prevention, 2014). Thus if child abuse rates drop we should expect to see a fall in crime rates, particularly for violent crime. Figures 6a and 6b show that the Waitakere police district, basically covering West Auckland, has had a 27% drop in crime rates over the five-year period from 2010 to 2014 (Police National Headquarters, 2011-2014).<sup>12</sup> That represents over 5000 fewer crimes in 2014 – just under 14 fewer crimes every day – than would have been expected from 2010 crime rates.

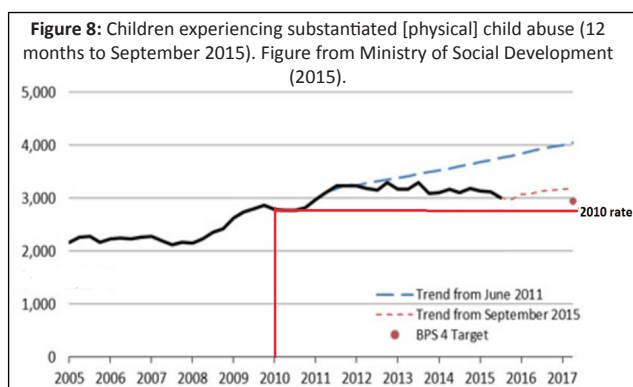
The overall rate of crime in West Auckland is 7% lower than the national average. West Auckland looks like one of the safer places in New Zealand to live, despite the impressions, and labels like 'murder capital' that media attached to the area following the recent spike of high profile attacks and killings in and around Henderson ("Communities moving on after spate of violence in 2014," 2014). On top of this, figure 7 shows that violent crimes<sup>13</sup> are declining as a percentage

<sup>12</sup> These figures are drawn from the national, regional and Waitematā district reports 2011-2014. The 2011 report contains the 2010 data as well.

<sup>13</sup> Violent crime is defined as homicide and related offences, acts intended to cause injury, sexual assault and related offences, dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons, abduction, harassment and other related offences against a person, robbery, extortion and related



of total crime in the Waitakere police district (down 6% since 2010), but are increasing nationally (up 3% – Police National Headquarters, 2011-2014). These trends, of changes in crime rates and child abuse substantiations that are better than the national, are not because West Auckland has become prosperous. If anything the 2013 Census data (Bridgman, 2014) suggests that it has become less so. While there are pockets of affluence, the decile ratings in table 4 show that more than three quarters of those living in West Auckland (i.e. Henderson-Massey and Whau local boards) are relatively poor. Something is buoying this community and while we have not necessarily proved that the work of VFC is a key factor, what has been demonstrated is the need for further research on this point, perhaps working backwards from population data.



Population data, particularly concerning child abuse, are central to any exploration of well-being in New Zealand. In 2011, using population data, the New Zealand Government's Open Government Partnership set five Better Public Service target areas for New Zealand, two of which, Supporting vulnerable children and Re-offences, unlawful entry with intent/burglary, and breaking and entering (Ministry of Justice, nd).

ducing crime, are highly relevant to this discussion (State Services Commission, 2016a). Reports on those target areas show that between 2010 and 2016 crime, violent crime, youth crime and re-offending rates have dropped consistently quarter by quarter between 15% and 45% and are likely to end up below their 2017 target set in 2010 (State Services Commission, 2016b). However, the target for supporting vulnerable children has the number of children suffering substantiated physical abuse rising by 5% from 2010 to 2017 (Ministry of Social Development, 2015). Some of MSD's projections suggest they will not reach the Better Public Service (BPS) target by 2017 (see figure 8).

Figure 8 shows that across New Zealand, the number of children experiencing substantiated physical abuse has risen from about 2750 in 2010 to 3000 in 2015. This is an 8.5% increase in substantiated child physical abuse prevalence and contrasts with the 18% decrease in overall substantiated child abuse prevalence nationally (2010-2015) shown in figure 5, and does give concern for the value of the overall measure (Johnson, 2016). However, if there was a 26.5% difference between the change in overall and physical abuse rates 2010-2015 nationally, in West Auckland – with a 52% drop in overall rates over the same period – it would be reasonable to expect a drop in physical abuse rates<sup>14</sup>.

If population data is to be used to drive positive social change, one would expect that government agencies would notice the differences between regions, and support and replicate the projects that were connected with success. After all, RBA is at the heart of the New Zealand Government's Better Public Service targets. Major resources are given to the projects whose success will be measured by population data. In relation to the Supporting vulnerable children target, the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 has been enacted (Children's Action Plan, 2015) and \$350 million has been allocated "for community-based social services [to] effectively support Government priorities" (Ministry of Social Development, 2015, para 7) including supporting vulnerable children.

<sup>14</sup> District-level data on emotional, sexual, physical and neglect categories of abuse are not currently available, but the Ministry of Social Development write that they are preparing this data for release shortly (personal communication, April 15, 2016).



RBA research is increasingly do-able. The government has created a new website, [www.data.gov.nz](http://www.data.gov.nz) (ICT.govt.nz, 2016), not only to support agencies to access published data but also to request unpublished data held by government agencies. In the future it should be possible for small agencies to access a wide range of annualised population data relating to micro-communities they are wanting to serve. This data will hopefully identify the strengths as well as the challenges of communities and help us understand what we can learn from communities, as well as what resources they need to flourish. Further research on the impact of projects such as TDO may be able to use micro-community data to track small annual shifts in events, health states, choices, behaviours, and access to and use of resources that accompany improvements in community wellbeing. Such information would be invaluable in supporting government/community targeting of effective strategies to actually reduce rates of child physical abuse, rather than just watching their increase.





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### Author Bios



**Elaine Dyer** has been active in violence prevention for the past 30 years, engaged in services and educational programmes such as Youthline and the Alternatives to Violence Project. Between 2001 and 2015, was CEO of Violence Free Waitakere. She has worked in many different settings, prisons to classrooms, corporate to community, in countries as diverse as Africa, Asia, Australia, Tonga, UK and USA. Her passion is for building resilient communities based on positive relationships.

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