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CAREGIVER SUPPORT FOLLOWING THE DISCLOSURE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Annik Salome van Toledo

Abstract

Children who have been sexually abused generally have better outcomes if they receive support from their caregivers. However, in the literature to date there has been little focus on the needs of the caregivers supporting their child and the ways these can be addressed. In New Zealand, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) introduced a pilot programme in 2006 that aimed to support caregivers in their parenting following the disclosure of child sexual abuse (CSA) by providing education about CSA, assisting in management of their children, and teaching them coping skills. This thesis presents the findings of a programme evaluation carried out on the Parenting Support Pilot Programme implemented by ACC.

This evaluation is the first large-scale study that has investigated an individual caregiver intervention that provides more than just psychoeducation. The programme was evaluated using an action research framework that included a needs assessment, process evaluation, outcome evaluation, and feedback given to ACC both during and at the completion of the pilot. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used, with an emphasis on interview data from consumers of the programme. The needs assessment was conducted on 60 paper files supplied by ACC and confirmed that support for caregivers is indicated following the disclosure of CSA. The process evaluation consisted of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with two ACC managers, two ACC peer reviewers, 11 ACC counsellors, and 10 caregivers. This evaluation produced recommendations to improve awareness and access to the programme, and identified the need for more sessions than prescribed for some caregivers. Despite some ongoing programme delivery issues, the impact evaluation, conducted via 57 telephone interviews with caregivers, showed that the programme was beneficial for most caregivers and their children. Specifically, the programme increased caregivers’ understanding of the impact of CSA on their child, improved caregivers’ ability to help their children, and helped them manage their own responses to the sexual abuse disclosure.
- This thesis is dedicated to my family -
Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my participants for their time and willingness to contribute to this thesis. In particular, thanks must go to the caregivers who shared their stories during a particularly challenging time in their lives.

Over the course of this thesis, I have received help from many people who I would like to acknowledge here. Firstly, thank you to my supervisor Professor Fred Seymour for his support, motivation, and continued guidance throughout the course of this thesis. I also want to thank Dr Heather McDowell, my secondary supervisor, for her enthusiasm and support.

I would like to thank Dr Ian Lambie, Erana Cooper and Sharon Rickard in their help and guidance, particularly during the development of the project. Thanks must also go to Pikihuia Pomare for her assistance in conducting interviews, and Lucy Travaglia, Katie Palmer, and Lauren Callow for helping me transcribe them. Furthermore, I want to thank Robert Ross and again Lucy Travaglia for providing comments on my thesis in its final stages. I also want to acknowledge the assistance of Pantea Farvid in helping me get my head around qualitative analysis.

Thank you to the staff at ACC for their support of this research. I would particularly like to acknowledge the assistance and advice from Grant Pittams (Senior Research Analyst), Lynn Jenner (Researcher), Noeleen Hill (outgoing Project Manager), Claire Stewart (Evaluator), and Teri May (current Project Manager).

I have learnt much from the staff and students at the University of Auckland, and particularly want to thank those in the Department of Psychology and Clinical Psychology Programme. Your support and help has meant a lot to me over these years. To my friends within the department, thank you for your continued advice, support, humour, and time.

Thanks also go out to my family, for without their love and support I would not have had the opportunity to undertake, let alone finish this thesis. Also to my friends outside the University, thank you for your support and helping me to maintain a balanced life throughout this journey. In particular I want to give my deepest thanks to Simon for his support, love, and encouragement throughout this process.

I gratefully acknowledge the funding provided by the Accident Compensation Corporation, and the financial support I received from the University through the University of Auckland Doctoral Scholarship.
Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ ii
Dedication ................................................................................................................................... iii
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. iv
Table of Contents ..................................................................................................................... v
List of Tables and Figures ........................................................................................................ vii
Table of Appendices ................................................................................................................ ix

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Background ........................................................................................................................................ 1
Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse .............................................................................................. 2
Impact of Child Sexual Abuse on the Child .................................................................................. 4
Variables that Mediate the Impact of Child Sexual Abuse .......................................................... 6
Therapeutic Interventions for Children ......................................................................................... 13
Responses to CSA Disclosure in New Zealand ......................................................................... 15
Impact of Child Sexual Abuse on Caregivers ............................................................................. 16
Needs of the Caregivers ................................................................................................................ 18
Interventions for Caregivers ......................................................................................................... 21
Research Considerations ............................................................................................................. 28
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 30

CHAPTER TWO: PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION ...................................................................................................................... 31

The Programme ........................................................................................................................... 31
Pathway Through the Programme ............................................................................................... 33
Evaluation Development ............................................................................................................. 36
Formative Evaluation .................................................................................................................. 37

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ..................................................................................................................................... 39

Action Research .......................................................................................................................... 39
Programme Evaluation ............................................................................................................... 40
Sensitive Research ...................................................................................................................... 42
Methodological Considerations .................................................................................................. 44
Programme Evaluation Development ......................................................................................... 46
Participants ..................................................................................................................................... 47
Measures ....................................................................................................................................... 51
Procedure ..................................................................................................................................... 54
Data Analysis .............................................................................................................................. 57
# Table of Contents

## Chapter Four: Needs Assessment
- Needs of the Children ................................................................. 59
- Needs of the Caregivers .............................................................. 65
- Needs of the Family ................................................................. 71
- Analysis of Goals ........................................................................ 72
- Conclusion .................................................................................. 75

## Chapter Five: Process Evaluation
- Thematic Analysis of Interviews ................................................ 78
- Declining Participants ............................................................... 97
- Conclusion .................................................................................. 99

## Chapter Six: Impact Evaluation
- Analysis on the Likert Scale Questions .................................... 103
- Thematic Analysis of Interviews ................................................ 109
- Thematic Analysis of Achievement Summary Forms ................ 127
- Conclusion .................................................................................. 131

## Chapter Seven: Discussion
- Key Findings ............................................................................. 137
- Recommendations arising from Evaluation Findings ................ 140
- General Implications for Therapy with Families Following CSA Disclosure ................................................................. 142
- Cultural Appropriateness of the Programme ............................ 144
- Strengths and Limitations of the Research ............................... 145
- Future Research ......................................................................... 147
- Conclusions .............................................................................. 148

## Appendices
- References .................................................................................. 214
## List of Tables and Figures

| Table 1. | Description of intervention studies ................................................................. | 22 |
| Table 2. | Relationship and ethnicities of caregivers who participated in the impact evaluation ................................................................. | 51 |
| Table 3. | Codes used on quotes for identifying interview respondents other than ACC employees ................................................................. | 58 |
| Table 4. | How children were affected by the sexual abuse ................................................. | 60 |
| Table 5. | Caregiver support needed to help the child work through abuse effects ................ | 62 |
| Table 6. | Problems experienced by children at school .................................................... | 63 |
| Table 7. | The relationship of the alleged abuser to the child claimant .............................. | 64 |
| Table 8. | Location of the abuse occurrence for the claimants ............................................ | 65 |
| Table 9. | Difficulties experienced by caregivers .............................................................. | 66 |
| Table 10. | Strategies used by caregivers to deal with their child’s behaviour ............................. | 67 |
| Table 11. | How caregivers were coping with the family situation at the time of the Needs Assessment ................................................................. | 68 |
| Table 12. | Help needed by caregivers to provide support to their child ............................... | 69 |
| Table 13. | Places caregivers received support from ............................................................ | 70 |
| Table 14. | The number of claimants involved with different agencies outside ACC .................. | 70 |
| Table 15. | How the siblings were affected by the disclosure of sexual abuse ....................... | 72 |
| Table 16. | How the family members were affected by the disclosure of sexual abuse ............... | 72 |
| Table 17. | Goals identified by caregivers on the Needs Assessment forms ............................. | 74 |
| Table 18. | Additional goals identified in the Achievement Summary forms .......................... | 75 |
| Table 19. | Themes and sub-themes identified in the data relating to processes ...................... | 79 |
| Table 20. | Responses on telephone quantitative questions for those that participated in the initial impact evaluation interviews .......................... | 104 |
Table 21. Responses on telephone quantitative questions for those that participated in the follow-up impact evaluation interviews .......... 105

Table 22. Responses on telephone quantitative questions for participants .......... 107

Table 23. Comparison of Likert Scale question responses at initial and follow-up impact evaluation interviews for the 22 caregivers that participated in both interviews .................................................. 108

Table 24. Themes and sub-themes identified in the data relating to programme impacts ........................................................................................................ 110

Table 25. Ongoing difficulties experienced by caregivers at programme completion ........................................................................................................ 127

Table 26. Caregiver concerns for child following programme completion ....... 128

Table 27. Caregiver concerns for their children in the future ......................... 128

Table 28. Help caregivers need to provide to help child deal with sexual abuse after programme completion ................................................................. 129

Table 29. Problems for caregivers in providing their children with ongoing support ........................................................................................................ 130

Table 30. Changes seen in child and family .................................................... 130

Figure 1. Diagram of caregivers’ pathway through the programme .............. 33
# Table of Appendices

## APPENDIX A: Documents Provided By ACC

| A1: Information for Caregivers | 152 |
| A2: Information for Counsellors | 154 |
| A3: ACC45 Injury Claims Form | 155 |
| A4: Response and Consent Form | 156 |
| A5: Needs Assessment Form | 158 |
| A6: Achievement Summary Form | 166 |

## APPENDIX B: Manager Interviews – Face-to-face

| B1: Interview Schedule | 170 |
| B2: Participant Information Sheet | 171 |
| B3: Consent Form | 174 |

## APPENDIX C: Peer Reviewer Interviews – Face-to-face

| C1: Interview Schedule | 176 |
| C2: Participant Information Sheet | 177 |
| C3: Consent Form | 180 |

## APPENDIX D: Counsellor Interviews – Face-to-face

| D1: Interview Schedule | 182 |
| D2: Participant Information Sheet | 184 |
| D3: Consent Form | 187 |

## APPENDIX E: Caregiver Interviews – Face-to-face

| E1: Interview Schedule | 189 |
| E2: Participant Information Sheet | 191 |
| E3: Consent Form | 194 |

## APPENDIX F: Caregiver Interviews – Telephone Survey 1

| F1: Interview Schedule | 196 |
| F2: Cover Letter | 198 |
| F3: Participant Information Sheet | 199 |
| F4: Consent Form | 202 |

## APPENDIX G: Caregiver Interviews – Telephone Survey 2

| G1: Interview Schedule | 204 |
| G2: Cover Letter | 206 |
| G3: Participant Information Sheet | 207 |
| G4: Consent Form | 210 |

## APPENDIX H: Interim Recommendations from the Process Evaluation

211