

Big drop in family violence in Wairarapa

PIERS FULLER

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Wairarapa News

Police and community agencies in the Wairarapa are making real progress in the battle against domestic violence.

The number of incidents in region has almost halved since services refocused during the past year.

Police family violence co-ordinator and Family Safety Team supervisor, Glenn Taplin, said work with domestic violence in Wairarapa had got to the point where they seemed to be "going through the motions", so they employed an external contractor to re-examine what they were doing and bring a more co-ordinated approach.

Former head of national policing of family violence, Rob Veale, who is considered a leading expert on the subject, worked with Wairarapa police and all the relevant agencies that play a part in helping victims and offenders.

Mr Veale developed a strategic plan to get all the groups working more closely together to cast a wider net over as many affected families as possible.

Since the refocus during the past 12 months, the average number of domestic violence incidents has dropped from around 28 to 30 per week in Wairarapa to 14 to 18.

The new police-issued protection orders have also been a useful tool in "cooling down" volatile situations. Since July, police have had the power to order an individual to leave a domestic violence situation if police believe there is a likelihood of continued harm to one or more of the residents of the household.

Mr Taplin said there are a multitude of groups and individuals that play a role in tackling the causes of domestic violence.

He said the new approach was more community-owned rather than police-owned.

Police usually deal with the "sharp end" of offending, while a lot of lower level domestic violence never comes to their attention.

Everybody from health professionals such as GPs, addiction services, elderly care, Relationship Services, to specific organisations that target domestic abuse such as CYFS and Stopping Violence Services are now sharing information and co-ordinating their actions.

Stopping Violence Services Wairarapa manager, Jeremy Logan, says the "It's Not OK" message seems to be getting through and they are getting more and more men and woman self-referring.

"What we might be seeing now is a beginning in a change in attitudes. People are seeking help because they realise they don't want to live in violent family situations."