**Survivor Experiences Service**

Insights Report

(July 2023 – 29 February 2024)

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# Executive Summary

The Survivor Experiences Service (the Service, Service or SES) has gathered valuable insights to guide the development of a Survivor-centric redress system. Whilst some time has been dedicated to setting up the Service’s solid foundations, the insights gathered over eight months emphasize the importance of inclusivity, accessibility, and tailored support in assisting Survivors of state and faith-based abuse.

A key theme highlighted is the need to expand the definition of 'Survivor' to include not only direct victims but also families, communities, and observers of abuse. Recognizing these broader impacts is essential for a comprehensive redress system that addresses the full scope of harm caused.

Barriers to engagement, such as distrust of government agencies and accessibility issues, must be addressed to facilitate Survivor participation. Humanizing interactions, providing accessible information, and streamlining processes are crucial steps in fostering trust and overcoming obstacles to engagement.

Redress should go beyond financial compensation and encompass various forms based on Survivor feedback. Reducing turnaround times and minimizing re-traumatization through repetitive storytelling are imperative for an effective redress system that meets diverse Survivor needs.

Processes for Survivors with impairments require careful attention to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. Tailored approaches and proactive measures are necessary to address diverse communication needs and accessibility barriers effectively.

The Service has engaged with Survivors different ethnicities, genders, cultures, and ages, striving to acknowledge all experiences with state and faith-based abuse. Recognizing that some cohorts of society are often underrepresented in services like this, the Service has placed an emphasis on four priority cohorts. Engagement with these priority cohorts present unique challenges that require nuanced strategies. Building trust through cultural understanding, addressing diverse communication needs, and navigating historical discrimination are key aspects in fostering meaningful participation within these communities.

In conclusion, the insights gathered by the Survivor Experiences Service underscore the importance of a Survivor-centered approach in designing a redress system that prioritizes healing and justice for all Survivors of abuse. By addressing key themes, challenges, and engaging with priority cohorts effectively, the new redress system can provide meaningful support to Survivors and their communities. Ongoing efforts in cultural competency, community consultation, and proactive engagement are vital for creating a Survivor-focused redress system that meets the diverse needs of Survivors effectively.

# Introduction

The new and independent redress system to be set up after the closure of the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry must be created around the needs of Survivors to ensure the entire system is accessible for Survivors to engage with and effective at achieving appropriate forms of redress. If the new redress system cannot be accessible to Survivors or effective at delivering appropriate redress, it could fail in its intended purpose as an acknowledgment of the harm and trauma people have experienced. It also risks retraumatising Survivors and negatively impacting their wellbeing.

The Survivor Experiences Service is in a unique position to influence a new redress system for Survivors who have experienced state and faith-based abuse. Through engaging directly with individual Survivors, their communities and whānau, and with other organisations set up to serve Survivors, the Service is regularly exposed to important insights that are critical to the creation of a new Survivor-led redress system. Through the collation and analysis of these insights on a quarterly basis, and the regular sharing of this information with relevant stakeholders, such as the Crown Response Unit and Ministers, the Service hopes to contribute a Survivor-focused perspective to the creation of the new redress system.

At the time of writing, the Survivor Experiences Service has been active for eight months from July 2023 until 2024. This time reflects the set-up phase of the Service and the beginnings of transition into a ‘business as usual’ (BAU) programme. Over that time, there have been undeniable themes to the insights that have been drawn from the data and feedback we have gathered from Survivors and staff and what has been gathered during our engagements. The insights are split into two sections. Section One covers broad themes that have commonly been found by different teams across the Service. Section Two focuses on the insights that relate to findings from some of the Service’s priority cohorts.

**Methodology and Statistics**

The collection of insights for this report involves data collection from all four teams within the Service since June 2023.

The four teams are:

* Engagement and Communications,
* Contact and Support,
* Private Sessions, and
* Planning and Reporting.

Each share the focus of engaging with our priority cohorts, which have been set by the Cabinet Paper released in May 2023. These cohorts are, in no order:

* Māori,
* Pasifika,
* Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and others, Mahu, Vaka sa lewa lewa, Palopa, Fa’afafine, Akava’ine, Fakaleiti, and Fakafifine, as well as Takatāpui (LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui),
* Deaf and disabled.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The Engagement and Communications team interacts with NGOs (non-government organisations), organisations familiar with the experiences of Survivors, and community groups. Through face-to-face engagements and relationship-building efforts, they gather insights on the challenges faced by these groups and the specific needs of the Survivors they serve. These are compiled in the reporting of personal reflections from the engagement once the event is over.

As of 29 February 2024, the Engagement and Communications team has spoken to and engaged with a wide range of community leaders and groups, organisations and NGOs. In the month of February 2024 alone, 27 engagements were held with groups ranging from women’s prisons to disability advisory networks and local councils.

The Contact and Support team plays a crucial role in gathering insights through conversations with Survivors. Whilst the focus of the Contact and Support team is to support Survivors through the process of registering with the Service, these conversations are Survivor-led and often cover much wider-ranging topics than registration. This Survivor-led approach allows for natural conversations that touch on various aspects of the Survivor's journey, such as their struggles with gaining redress and engaging with government agencies.

Until 29 February 2024, the Contact and Support team have registered 120 Survivors. These registrations have taken place across 304 incoming calls to the Service’s contact line and 797 outgoing calls from the Contact and Support team to Survivors. Additionally, 86 emails threads and 19 text conversations have occurred. Insights from Survivors have spanned the range of the contact methods the Contact and Support centre have at their disposal. Of the 120 Survivors that registered with the Service, the number of Survivors that represent our priority cohorts is as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Survivors that have been fully registered with the Service[[2]](#footnote-3) | **Māori** | **Pasifika** | **LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui** | **Deaf** | **Disability** |
| **50/120** | **6/120** | **2/120** | **2/120** | **11/120** |

Once a Survivor has registered with the Service, they can then book a Private Session if this is something that they would like to do. There are clear disparities between the number of Survivors coming forward from each priority cohort. Section Two of the report covers some of the challenges the Service has faced in reaching all our priority communities.

The Private Sessions team facilitates sessions between Survivors, wellbeing support staff, and kaitakawaenga, where any experience a Survivor wishes to share can be openly and safely expressed. The specific content of these sessions is private to the Survivor and the support staff in room at the time. As such, specific content and details of the session are not shared and will not be shared in insight reporting. Broad themes have been collated from these conversations in a way that focuses on safety and security of the information shared so as not to reveal any details about a Survivor’s identity or private life. Like the Contact and Support team, conversations in private sessions are mainly Survivor-led which can lead to common themes of barriers to engagement and support needed from redress systems.

As of 29 February, the Private Sessions team has facilitated 44 private sessions for 43 Survivors since July 2023. Not all Survivors seen represent one of the Service’s priority cohorts but of those seen, the numbers by priority cohort are as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Registered survivors who have had a Private Session[[3]](#footnote-4) | **Māori** | **Pasifika** | **LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui** | **Deaf** | **Disability** |
| **19** | **4** | **2** | **1** | **6** |

Survivors are required to complete registration with the Service before proceeding to a Private Session. However, even after registering, not all survivors who register proceed to a Private Session directly. As a result, although there may be a higher number of registered survivors, this does not necessarily correspond to an equivalent number of survivors attending private sessions with the Service. The Service has methods in place to try and contact registered Survivors to attend a Private Sessions, if they would find it healing, up to three times after their registration. The Service is extremely conscious of finding the balance between doing everything possible to assist a Survivor to attend a session and overwhelming Survivors with contact.

Lastly, the Planning and Reporting team consolidates these insights from across the organization into a report format. This involves analysing data, identifying patterns and themes, and synthesizing the information gathered from different teams to provide a comprehensive view of the Survivor experiences and the organization's responses.

By utilizing a multi-team approach and engaging with Survivors, support networks, and community groups, the Survivor Experiences Service ensures a robust methodology for collecting diverse insights that not only inform and influence its operations and services but creates a list of insights that can be utilised to influence the new redress system.

Whilst the Survivor Experiences Service was established in June 2023 with the mission to support Survivors of state and faith-based abuse, it took time for all teams within the Service to be fully set up and operational.

This is shown through the table below which depicts how Survivor registrations have grown over time. Initial registrations were high at 38 registrations for the first month as some Survivor contact details was transferred to the Service from the Abuse in Care – Royal Commission of Inquiry. These Survivors were contacted and given the choice to register with the Service. A dip in registrations completed can be seen from August through to December. The low registration numbers from August – November reflect the setting-up phase of the Service. A natural dip in registrations is to be expected close to the holiday period in December as Survivors and the public take time to be amongst friends and family. The rising numbers in January and February reflect a Service that had moved out of the ‘set-up’ phase and into BAU operations that saw Service kaimahi out engaging with Survivors, taking steps to raise the profile of the Service throughout New Zealand, and a unified front to support all Survivors through the Service.

# SECTION ONE – Common themes from engagement and feedback

## Broad Scope: The definition of ‘Survivor’

Over the course of the Survivor Experiences Service, interacting with Survivors of State and faith-based institutions, the group of Survivors that we have encountered has been much wider than those that were directly at the hands of State and faith-based institutions. They can be people that were adjacent to the abuse but that have suffered similar consequences such as trauma and general ongoing life disruption as a result. Due to this, it should be the obligation of a new redress system to seriously consider the definition of a ‘Survivor’ and who that includes. Other groups affected can be:

#### Families and communities of the Survivor/s

It is not a new discovery that the whānau and communities of Survivors can be deeply impacted by their loved one’s experiences with abuse. Whether the abuses suffered are openly expressed by the Survivor or not, the effects of the abuse on the Survivor can be wide ranging and long lasting which in turn impacts families. While families may not directly experience abuse through State or faith-based care, they often bear the brunt of its effects and are typically the ones who remain steadfast when other forms of support diminish or are not present.

It is a common sentiment for family to hold immense value and significance in communities, playing a central role in shaping individuals' identities and providing a strong support network. The concept of family can often extend beyond immediate relatives to include extended family members, ancestors, and even future generations. The Service has found this sentiment to be particularly strong in Māori and Pasifika communities that often prioritize collective well-being over individual success, with strong intergenerational ties fostering a sense of belonging and cultural continuity. Due to this, abuse in care can disrupt the fabric of whānau for a long time after the initial abuses occur. For that reason and based on the feedback the Service has gathered from Survivors not only from Māori and Pasifika groups but across the board, any type of redress that seeks to ameliorate the experiences of Survivors cannot do so without the inclusion of redress for the families and communities of Survivors. A new redress system should explore potential forms of redress that could be extended to families and communities in acknowledgment of their enduring hardships.

#### Observers of abuse

Observers of abuse refers to those who worked at state and faith-based institutions during the time when abuse has occurred. The observers could range from staff members of the Institutions who witnessed something to health personnel who noticed signs of abuse at the facilities but felt they could not speak up at the time. It is undoubtedly a tough line to walk between abuser and observer of abuse, especially in the eyes of a Survivor. Whilst the Survivor Experiences Service has not actively engaged in listening to an observer of abuse, it has internally recognised that being an observer of abuse could bring significant trauma to someone’s life. In the case of the Survivor Experiences Service, it has been decided that we will listen to the story from someone that has observed abuses should they approach us. We are here to listen and to enable people to get things off their chest in a safe environment so this would fall under our remit. However, for a new redress system, it is another example of a consideration that could be considered as to what the parameters around a Survivor are and whether there is scope to widen the definition.

#### Those that have not recognised they have been abused

There are many reasons as to why Survivors of abuse may not realise that the treatment they received in state or faith-based care facilities was abusive. A common reason that the Survivor Experiences Service has heard from Survivors is that abuse forms such as emotional or psychological are much harder for Survivors to recognise as abuse due to the lack of ‘physical representation’ of that abuse. Emotional and psychological abuse, such a neglect, may not leave a ‘scar’ in the same way that physical and sexual abuses can, but they can leave a Survivor with similar negative effects of the abuse, causing disruption to their life. In the experience of the Service, this is particularly present in the disabled /impaired community. Feedback has shown that many in the disabled/impaired community who may have been abused have been neglected to a stage that they have lost communication and thus are very limited to what they can communicate, and it is likely they wouldn't have enough communication to talk about the abuse. Having experts and well-known community members for their cohorts reaching into different communities about our Service, we can receive feedback like this. Whilst we have not found a solution to how we could support a Survivor like this, it is something we are actively working on.

##

## Broad Scope: Barriers to engagement

The promise of redress is not enough to get Survivors to engage with the system. Re-engaging with the State that was complicit in their abuse, despite the potential of redress, can be a barrier to their engagement. This has been a constant theme coming out from our engagements and from Survivor feedback. To address this feedback, the Survivor Experiences Service has incorporated processes and methods that aim to make Survivors feel less interrogated, more at ease and generally more supported when dealing with us. So far, the majority of feedback we have received on these processes and methods has been positive. The Service recognises that building up trust and confidence with Survivors over time is critical to building a Service and a redress system that removes barriers, not creates more. However, building up that trust and confidence takes the time needed, not necessarily the time given, meaning that the operational end-date for the Service set in June 2025 can sometimes be at odds with the Service’s ability to ensure Survivors of what can be provided for them after that end date.

#### Getting engagement right is critical

Whether a Survivor has been through State or faith-based care, has attempted to get redress or has been through the prison system, we have found that it is a common feeling for Survivors to be made to feel like a number, over a human being.

When interacting with government agencies, this feeling can start with the rigorous and long process of self-identification which can often remove the human aspect of the interaction. Recognising that the first engagement with Survivors is critical to ensuring Survivors we can support them through their journey, the Survivor Experiences Service has found that focusing on the human interaction during their first call is paramount to collecting their data.

Whilst some data collection is necessary for operational purposes, through the analysis of feedback from Survivors and reviewing our processes, we have been able to significantly reduce the size of mandatory data to be collected during initial interactions with Survivors. Furthermore, given the feedback ‘being made to feel like a number’ we do not assign Survivors with an identification number at any point during their journey with the Survivor Experiences Service. These changes to the process have not only enabled our staff to focus solely on the health and safety of the Survivor during initial engagements but enabled staff to tailor interactions to each Survivor.

#### Availability and accessibility of information

We recognise that most Survivors that have engaged with the Survivor Experiences Service have had negative interactions with other government-based agencies in the past. A theme heard in the stories of Survivors that have attempted redress is the lost and hopeless feeling of trying to navigate government processes and documents. Calling one agency only to be redirected to another or multiple others and inaccessibility of documents are common pieces of feedback. It can be confusing and overwhelming. Whilst it is something the team at SES are still working on, we are taking every opportunity to ensure that everything a Survivor may need is on our website and is in accessible formats for all. This includes documents in multiple languages, large text documents, easy screen-read, and Braille documents. Most recently, we have added the complaints process to our private sessions pack for Survivors for more direct access. It includes detail on how to get in touch with us in multiple ways to suit each Survivor.

This has only highlighted how important it will be for a future redress system to focus on how available and accessible their information is. Accessible materials are not something that can be created when a Survivor with needs approaches a new redress system. It is something that must be deliberately created and supported throughout. The Service has engaged with multiple external community members and experts to understand how to best support Survivors that have disabilities. It would be in the best interest of the new redress system to do something similar. The Service recognises that there is much more work to be done here. Accessible formatting is just one of the first steps to ensuring all Survivors have direct and impinged access to the systems and Services available for them.

#### Survivor trust and confidence

The years of distrust and suspicion of the government that Survivors often feel due to their experiences is a barrier found at every stage of the Service. To assist Survivors who want to share with us takes time and consistency in building Survivor or Survivor group’s trust and confidence in the Service often from the ground up. Establishing and nurturing this trust and confidence among Survivors has been a central objective for the Survivor Experiences Service since its inception. We have prioritized building rapport and credibility at every stage of engagement. Survivors, especially those with negative encounters related to state-based abuse, that have been compounded by other instances of negative encounters with statebased agencies in their personal lives, present additional layers of complexity to the ability to engage freely about the Survivor Experiences Service. It requires time, consistency, and transparent communication to address effectively. The Service confronts these challenges head-on by adopting a Survivor-led and Survivor-focused approach, maintaining transparency about our support capabilities, setting clear boundaries, and managing expectations openly in our interactions with Survivors. However, certain factors present challenges in this endeavour:

**Operational end-date for the Service**

The looming operational end-date of the Service, initially established as an interim listening service, has raised concerns among Survivors regarding the continuity and safety of the support we provide. The Service acknowledges these concerns and strives to address them within the parameters of our operations.

##### Uncertainty around the new Redress System

While the Survivor Experiences Service does not have insights into the upcoming redress system, our engagements with Survivors are not merely promotional pitches for our services. We aim to create a safe space for Survivors to share their stories, respecting their autonomy and providing information without making promises beyond our remit.

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## Broad Scope: Support for Survivors

There is no singular way that all Survivors need to be supported by the Survivor Experiences Service nor a new redress system. However, common themes that have emerged from Survivor and community feedback are:

#### Follow ups with Survivors

Survivor and community feedback has consistently shown that following up with Survivors after their private session is really appreciated. As part of conducting an end-to-end process for Survivors that come through the Survivor Experiences Service, attempts are made by wellbeing providers to contact a Survivor after their private session to check in on how they are feeling after their session. Conducting the process in this way recognises the trauma that a Survivor can go through when sharing their experiences. It also enables our well-being providers to offer various forms of therapy and healing services to assist the Survivor if necessary. In keeping with the aforementioned theme of recognising that all Survivors are different and have different needs, the Service offers a wide range of well-being services to Survivors from mirimiri to therapy. This has been found to not only be appreciated by Survivors but offers a mutually beneficial closure to a Survivors journey through the Survivor Experiences Service.

It is important to note that feedback has shown that on-going support post-redress could be beneficial. Although the Survivor Experiences Service has a limited remit to be able to provide this to our Survivors, we have implemented systems to ease this need. However, to fully meet this need, a new redress system should consider what on-going support could be offered to communities post-redress.

####  Positive redirection

The Survivor Experiences Service has a narrow remit meaning that we do receive calls that we cannot address. To provide as much support to Survivors whose calls fall outside our remit, our kaimahi are trained on how to redirect Survivors to a number for agencies that support claims, support groups and advocacy bodies. This list is continuously updated as we progress. The new redress system should be an all-encompassing system for those seeking redress to avoid bouncing Survivors around government agencies. Robust memorandums of understanding with necessary agencies as well as consents and legislations should be considered and implemented before the system goes live to ensure that Survivors experience as smooth a process as possible whilst seeking redress. This will build trust and rapport with Survivors.

Ability to lodge claims on behalf of Survivors to help remove the barriers from claiming redress they could be entitled too, the processors themselves are very cumbersome and a real barrier to Survivors reaching out, by being able to assist with this we can initiate the contact and the agency can contact Survivor and discuss steps/processors etc.

#### Kaimahi training for redress

Feedback has indicated that Survivors and Survivor communities expect our staff to be trauma-trained and trauma-informed. Communities also want kaimahi capability should be built to enable them to walk alongside Survivors from the beginning of their redress journey, through the claims process, to a post redress support system. There should be clear guidelines and understanding of wellbeing and what services are available for whānau. The situation to be avoided is for kaimahi to not be on the same page and for a Survivor to be told contradicting stories from different kaimahi.

The level of support wanted or expected by each Survivor is different. This can often correlate with the Survivors decision-making capability. Some Survivors will need assistance to fill out claims forms or may need documents with large text to make the document accessible. Whereas another Survivor may want to fill out all forms independently but need on-going support to process the details revealed when they receive their care documents back.

Each Survivor's needs are unique, but a robust foundation, coupled with transparent policies and a comprehensive redress system, will greatly contribute to supporting Survivors and their communities effectively.

#### Faith-based Survivors

The Service is collecting more research on faith-based Survivors and their unique needs and experiences. The next Quarterly Insights Report will aim to go further in-depth on how the Service is reaching out to Survivors of faith-based abuse and whether the Service is meeting their needs.

## Broad Scope: Redress

#### What ‘redress’ looks like

Suggesting that redress should or only will be in a financial form could fall short of some Survivors needs and expectations. Comments from Survivors and communities about what redress should be or should look like has varied widely from financial redress to post-redress support for the wider community. A new redress system could connect with Survivors prior to system-set-up to consider what communities need from redress. As the Survivor Experiences remit does not extend to providing redress, feedback we have received on this matter has not been enacted or escalated.

#### Redress turnaround time

A new redress system must address the current long waits for redress. A lot of Survivors have found the current redress system retraumatizing due to long wait periods, often with no communication, and having to re-tell their stories to multiple different agencies which drags out the process. This is often accompanied by the feeling of having to ‘prove oneself’ or ‘one’s story’ repeatedly. This presents a common barrier to Survivors engaging with the system.

Whilst we recognise that necessary operational procedures will mean that providing redress will take time, the new redress system must consider pathways that do not leave Survivors waiting years and for redress or having to repeat their stories multiple times without cause.

## Broad Scope: Processes for Survivors with disabilities / impairments

We continue to update and review how best to support Survivors with impairments through the Survivor Experiences Service. An external review that took place in the early months of the Service was pivotal in fine-tuning the processes of the Service for Survivors within the Learning Disability, Neurodiversity and Cognitive Impairments (LDNDCI) community. The Service has noted several enhancements that can be made to the current Service to ensure these communities and cultures are engaged with at every level from initial engagements to final well-being checks.

It's important to emphasize that the Service’s commitment extends to all Survivors with impairments, including those with intersectional backgrounds. Survivors with impairments and that are a part of Deaf culture encompass a vast spectrum, and our efforts to address the needs of the LDNDCI community are just one part of our broader commitment to inclusivity and support. A new redress system must develop robust processes that can support all Impaired and Deaf Survivors, meeting them at the level they are at with the risk that, if it does not do so, these Survivors will not be able to engage with the system.

#### Learning Disability, Neurodiversity and Cognitive Impairments Survivors

Early in the Service’s tenure a report was developed to assist the Survivor Experiences Service to identify and implement best practice in relation to supported decisions making and wellbeing supports for Survivors with LDNDCI. Being able to provide an appropriate pathway through the Service, and good support for people with LDNDCI relies on first being able to identify the relevant individuals. The previous process within the Service was simply to ask individuals if they had a disability/impairment. The external review suggested that this type of approach is likely to result in an under-identification of people with LDNDCI given that individuals with LDNDCI do not always have a diagnosis, know about their diagnosis, or considered themselves to be disabled or impaired. Furthermore, it is not always easy to identify when someone does have a disability/impairment or when someone would benefit from assistance to understand information and give their informed consent, particularly for people who are largely independent in their daily lives. It was suggested that, in addition to asking about disabilities and impairments, asking questions about the support that people already use in their daily lives or would want to utilise during a private session, can provide a good steer that helps the Survivor identify their own needs as well as helping the Service be responsive to their needs.

#### Referring to Survivors with disabilities/impairments

The Service recognizes the importance of respecting individual preferences when referring to deaf and disabled/impaired Survivors. The Service understands that each person may have different preferences regarding labels such as "disabled," "impaired," or "Deaf," and we strive to use the terminology that aligns with their self-identification. As a Survivor-led service, we prioritize honouring Survivors' choices in how they wish to be labelled and referred to. While our aim is to adhere to the New Zealand social model of disability, which emphasizes the impact of societal barriers on individuals with impairments, we acknowledge that not everyone within the disability community resonates with this model.

Therefore, we approach this aspect with sensitivity and care, ensuring that our language and communication reflect the diverse perspectives and identities within the disability/impairment and Deaf communities. By doing so, we aim to create an inclusive and respectful environment where Survivors feel empowered and valued for their unique experiences and identities. It has been found that this resonates well with Survivors in these communities that value being correctly referred to and being heard when they express their desired for certain terminology to be used.

#### Supported Decision-Making

Undoubtedly, the decision to engage with a listening service or seek redress is significant for Survivors and typically involves considerable contemplation. For those whose impairment means they don’t communicate in a way we understand, we are open to hearing from whānau and/or supporters. For all individuals with disabilities or impairments, it is essential to ensure that their involvement is an informed choice. This necessitates providing them with a thorough understanding of the available options, including the potential consequences, risks, and benefits, thereby empowering them to make decisions aligned with their specific circumstances. Within the service, the consequences and risks of participation are less than what is to be expected in a new redress system which made the supported decision-making process simpler to implement. However, cross-agency collaboration to share the details of our findings can be arranged to make this process smoother within a new system.

# SECTION ONE - Conclusions

The insights drawn from the Survivor Experiences Service over its eight-month tenure highlight crucial considerations for any future redress system aimed at supporting Survivors of abuse in State and non-State institutions.

Firstly, the definition of a 'Survivor' extends beyond direct victims to include families, communities, and observers of abuse. Recognizing this broader scope is essential for a redress system to adequately address the impact of abuse and provide support where needed.

Secondly, barriers to engaging with a redress system, such as distrust of government agencies and accessibility issues, must be addressed. Humanizing interactions, providing accessible information, and streamlining processes are key steps to improve engagement and build trust.

Thirdly, support for Survivors should be multifaceted and tailored to individual needs. Follow-ups, positive redirection, and well-trained staff are critical components of a supportive system. Ongoing support post-redress should also be considered to facilitate healing and recovery.

Fourthly, the concept of 'redress' goes beyond financial compensation and should encompass a range of forms based on Survivor feedback. Reducing turnaround times and minimizing re-traumatization through repetitive storytelling are imperative for an effective redress system.

Lastly, processes for Survivors with disabilities require careful attention to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. Implementing supported decision-making and enhancing identification methods for LDNDCI Survivors are crucial steps towards providing equitable support.

In summary, the insights gathered from the Survivor Experiences Service underscore the importance of a holistic, Survivor-centered approach in designing and implementing a redress system. By addressing these key themes, a future redress system can strive to provide meaningful support and justice to Survivors of abuse and their communities.

# SECTION TWO – Reaching our Priority Cohorts

The Survivor Experiences Service has encountered various successes and challenges when engaging with our priority cohorts and the pre-existing community groups and NGO’s that support them. This has led to variations in our priority cohort’s levels of engagement with the Service. Section Two of the report will begin by discussing the common successes and challenges across all priority cohorts encountered by the Survivor Experiences Service. Subsequently, the report will delve into each priority cohort individually, providing a comprehensive analysis of the unique successes, challenges, and dynamics specific to engaging with Pasifika, Deaf and disabled/impaired, and LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui communities and supporting groups.

##

## Common success and challenges to engaging with our priority cohorts.

The successes stem from approaching communities in spaces where they feel most safe, prioritising the authenticity of Service-led engagements, and allowing engagements to be community and people-driven.

The approach of engaging where communities feel most comfortable recognizes the importance of creating environments that are conducive to open and honest dialogue, allowing survivors to share their question or concerns about the Service in a supportive and trusting setting. By meeting communities on their terms, the Service can build rapport and establish meaningful connections that facilitate engagement.

Prioritizing the authenticity of Service-led engagements involves being transparent and upfront about the scope of what the Service can offer to survivors. By clearly outlining the support, assistance, and resources available, the Service sets realistic expectations and avoids potential misunderstandings or disappointments. This authenticity from our people builds trust and confidence among communities, demonstrating the Service's commitment to providing genuine and meaningful support to Survivors.

Additionally, the Service's approach emphasizes cultural sensitivity and competence. By understanding and respecting cultural protocols, values, and communication preferences, the Service can create culturally appropriate engagement strategies that resonate with communities. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance, encouraging survivors to participate in Service-led initiatives.

The challenges stem from a range of factors, such as historical distrust in government-affiliated initiatives. This historical backdrop significantly influences how these communities approach engagement with services like the Survivor Experiences Service.

Cultural barriers and logistical difficulties have presented various challenges. Cultural sensitivity and competence play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. Each priority cohorts have unique cultural and community protocols, values, and communication preferences that must be understood and respected. Building trust and meaningful relationships requires approaching engagements from a place of respect and understanding, acknowledging the hesitancy and reluctance that stem from past experiences. It also puts onus on the Service to ensure that the people employed to engage with NGOs (non-government organisations), organisations familiar with the experiences of Survivors, and community groups have appropriate backgrounds that reflect the communities they are speaking to. This goes a long way in building trust and confidence through an authentic approach.

Accessibility is also a central theme. Engaging with Deaf and disabled/impaired communities has highlighted the need for the Service to implement physical accessibility methods, diverse communication methods, and support for caregivers or decision-makers to be able to engage. Overcoming barriers related to accessibility is essential to ensure that all survivors, regardless of their abilities, can freely and safely share their experiences in a way that is true to them.

Intersectionality adds complexity to engagement efforts, particularly when working with LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui communities. Survivors within these communities often belong to multiple priority cohorts and may have experienced abuse and trauma intersecting with issues of identity, discrimination, and access to support. An intersectional approach that recognizes and addresses these intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination is crucial for providing effective support.

Whilst the Service has encountered a range of successes and challenges in accessing and building trust with each priority cohort, some priority cohorts have been more hesitant to engage with the Service compared to others. This can be seen in the variance of registration numbers across our priority cohorts. Navigating challenges and disparities in engagement underscores the importance of adopting a multifaceted and inclusive approach to engagement. This involves ongoing community consultation, culturally responsive practices, accessible communication channels, and tailored support services. This approach goes a long way to ensure that all Survivors and their communities feel empowered to engage with and benefit from the Survivor Experiences Service.

## Pasifika Engagement

The Survivor Experiences Service has encountered resistance in engaging with Pasifika communities and organizations affected by the past experiences with Crown-related institutions. During engagements, there has been noticeable hesitation and reluctance to meet, which was apparent in both verbal communication and body language. This resistance is understandable, considering the historical context and the cautious approach that many individuals and groups take towards Crown-related agencies.

To address this resistance, the Service strategy will focus on leveraging trusted connections within the community to facilitate meaningful engagements. The Service recognizes the importance of building relationships from a place of trust, especially when dealing with sensitive issues related to abuse and trauma. It's crucial to acknowledge and respect the hesitancy that stems from past experiences and work towards establishing a safe and supportive environment for dialogue.

Another challenge encountered is the competitive landscape and funding pressures faced by organizations within the Pasifika community. Gaining the funding necessary to provide support and assistance to their communities and people is top of mind for a lot of Pasifika outreach groups and organisations. As the Service does not provide this kind of funding, it can become more difficult to land the ‘value add’ conversation when engaging on the topic of the Survivor Experiences Service. Navigating through this dynamic requires patience and a deep understanding of the cultural values associated with time and the building of relationships. Time is not merely a linear concept but a patient and reflective process that allows for genuine connections to form. Engagement with Pasifika communities and providers requires a nuanced approach that respects cultural protocols and values. Rushing the process risks closing the door to meaningful dialogue. However, waiting indefinitely is not an option, so we must strike a balance between respecting cultural timeframes and achieving our objectives effectively. The ‘value-add’ of the Service needs to be built up over time with areas of the Pasifika community to see a direct correlation between engagements with the Pasifika community and higher numbers of registrations of Pasifika with the Service.

In navigating these challenges, the Survivor Experiences Service remains committed to creating pathways for healing and support within Pasifika communities. We recognize the importance of cultural "whanaungatanga" and the ceremonial processes that pave the way for substantive conversations. While the journey may be complex, we are dedicated to making meaningful progress within the constraints of time and cultural considerations.

## Deaf and Disabled/Impaired Engagement

Engaging with Deaf and disabled/impaired communities about the Survivor Experiences Service presents unique challenges due to the diverse nature of these communities. Each community has specific needs and communication preferences that cannot be generalized or approached in the same manner. Building trust and confidence within these communities requires a tailored approach that acknowledges and addresses their individual concerns and barriers. This in and of itself is an important and big task. The Survivor Experiences Service is committed to getting this right for Survivors that wish to engage with the Service. To do so and to be confident that the Service can adequately provide to those who are Deaf or disabled/impaired takes incredible consideration, preparation and analysis to ensure the Service has all the supports and assistance required. Whilst the Service has made progress in this area in recent months and is due to make more progress through planned enhancements to the Service specifically dedicated to Deaf and disabled/impaired Survivors engaging with the Service, there is more to do.

One significant barrier is the lack of accessibility and accommodation in government agencies and support services for Deaf and disabled/impaired individuals. This longstanding issue has created a perception that Services like ours may not be accessible or accommodating, leading to hesitancy and reluctance to engage. Breaking down this barrier requires proactive efforts to showcase our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility and the follow through of the Service to get this right for Survivors.

However, bridging the gap between intention and implementation is a complex process that demands time and resources. The Survivor Experiences Service is actively working on developing different communication methods, incorporating Deaf kaitakawaenga to support Private Sessions, and adapting our messaging to better resonate with Deaf communities and those that have impairments that become disabilities due to lack of societal awareness or assistance. These efforts are crucial in ensuring that we can effectively engage with and support individuals with diverse needs.

Despite these strides, the limited timeframe until the Service's end in June 2025 poses a challenge. Balancing the urgency of inclusive engagement with the need for thorough preparation and implementation of accessibility measures requires careful planning and prioritization. It is essential to continue advocating for the needs of deaf and disabled/impaired communities while also recognizing the practical limitations and constraints we face in achieving comprehensive inclusivity within the Service's timeline. The Service is committed to balancing these needs for the Service in any way that can be achieved without overpromising and underdelivering which would be detrimental to the trust and confidence of our Deaf and disabled/impaired Survivors.

In addition to these efforts, the Service recognizes the diversity of communication methods within Impaired communities, including those who rely on communication methods that are unfamiliar to the Service, or have their families or supported decision-makers speak on their behalf. It is essential that any abused Impaired persons can freely and safely share their experiences in a way that works for them and that they can be interacted with by the Service in a manner that respects their unique communication needs. Furthermore, supported decision-makers must also be supported in their caregiving role while ensuring that the Survivor's voice and experiences remain at the forefront of our interactions. Balancing these considerations is crucial to ensuring meaningful engagement and support for all members of the Deaf and disabled/impaired communities.

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## LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui Engagement

Engagement with LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takutāpui groups and organisations has been generally positive but translating positive engagements into registrations and private sessions with the Service has been difficult in these communities whose journeys have often not been believed. It has been found that there is an added layer of complexity when engaging with these communities due to them having often faced increased levels of abuse in state and faith-based care due to the way they identify. This can create barriers in coming forward to talk about the abuse suffered due to fear of re-traumatisation, fear of not being believed again and fear of not having their needs met in terms of identity affirmation, inclusivity, and trauma-informed care. This has highlighted the need for targeted strategies and a nuanced approach to foster trust and meaningful participation. Some of the common themes coming from engagements with these groups and organisations are below.

The LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui community has historically faced discrimination, stigma, and marginalization, leading to deep-seated mistrust of institutions and services. This historical context creates barriers to engagement, as Survivors within this community may be hesitant to seek support from government-affiliated initiatives.

Survivors within the LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui community may have experienced abuse and trauma in diverse contexts, including within family settings, institutions, or societal structures. Whilst the Service has the remit to see all Survivors who were abused in state and faith-based care, the nature of the Service’s Survivor-led discussions means that there is a complexity to unpack a lot of things other than the abuse suffered in state and faith-based care. These varied experiences require sensitivity and cultural competence to address effectively, as the impacts of abuse can intersect with issues of identity, discrimination, and access to support. Many Survivors within the LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui community also belong to other of our priority cohorts. Intersectional identities add layers of complexity to their experiences and support needs, necessitating an intersectional approach that recognizes and addresses these intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination. The Survivor Experiences Service is well set-up to support these needs and has done so over the course of the private sessions and registrations of our LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui Survivors that have approached the Service, but there is always more work to do.

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## Māori Engagement

Engaging with Māori communities involves several key strategies and considerations to ensure authenticity for the community groups. One successful approach is utilizing community-led events and initiatives to share the Survivor Experiences Service. This allows for outreach in spaces where Māori are already engaged and comfortable, facilitating meaningful interactions and discussions about the Service.

Additionally, there has been a priority placed on maintaining relationships beyond initial engagements, with regular meetings to nurture trust and ongoing collaboration. The continuity of these relationships recognizes the significance of maintaining relationships in groups with Survivors. It also takes into account the significance Survivor-led groups hold with Māori Survivors and the trust they hold within Māori communities. A challenge that has been faced is ensuring Māori are kept involved in the development of processes for Māori survivors. Based on feedback received from iwi and hāpu, the Service will look to set up wānanga on how best to start addressing these concerns and involving communities in meaningful ways.

Authenticity plays a crucial role in successful engagement, especially in Māori cultural contexts where sincerity is highly valued. Meeting Māori communities where they are at, such as traveling to marae and other culturally appropriate meeting points, further demonstrates respect and understanding. The engagement approach for this priority cohort remains community and people-driven, without rigid agendas, allowing for free-flowing conversations and cultural considerations during discussions. This approach ensures that discussions are meaningful, relevant, and respectful of cultural norms and sensitivities.

Overall, the Survivor Experiences Service employs a grass-roots approach to engagement with Māori, valuing community input, cultural understanding, and genuine connections to effectively engage with Māori communities and address their unique needs and concerns regarding survivor experiences and support.

# SECTION TWO - Conclusions

In conclusion, the Survivor Experiences Service has encountered a range of successes and challenges in engaging with our priority cohorts and the pre-existing community groups and NGOs that support them. This has resulted in varying levels of engagement among our priority cohorts with the Service. The first part of the report discusses the common successes and challenges across all priority cohorts, highlighting key learnings and areas for improvement. Subsequently, the report delves into each priority cohort individually, providing a comprehensive analysis of the unique successes, challenges, and dynamics specific to engaging with Pasifika, Deaf and disabled/impaired, LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui, and Māori communities and their supporting groups.

Common themes in successful engagement strategies across all priority cohorts include approaching communities in spaces where they feel safe, prioritizing authenticity in Service-led engagements, and maintaining community-driven discussions. Building trust through genuine connections, understanding cultural protocols, and being transparent about the Service's scope fosters meaningful engagement and rapport. Challenges such as historical distrust, cultural barriers, and accessibility issues highlight the need for ongoing cultural competence, tailored support services, and inclusive practices.

In particular, engaging with Māori communities involves utilizing community-led events, maintaining ongoing relationships, and ensuring authentic and culturally sensitive engagement practices. Addressing feedback from iwi and hāpu and involving communities in processes are crucial steps toward meaningful engagement and support.

Overall, the Survivor Experiences Service is committed to balancing the needs of diverse communities, advocating for inclusivity, and fostering trust and confidence among survivors and their support networks.

# Full Report Conclusions

The comprehensive insights gleaned from the Survivor Experiences Service offer valuable guidance for the development of a future redress system dedicated to supporting Survivors of abuse in State and non-State institutions. By delving into the multifaceted nature of Survivor experiences and engagement challenges, a deeper understanding emerges on the critical aspects that must be considered in crafting a Survivor-centred approach.

Firstly, the expansive definition of a 'Survivor' extends beyond direct victims to encompass families, communities, and even observers of abuse. This broader perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of trauma and the ripple effects that abuse can have on various individuals and groups. Acknowledging and addressing these broader impacts is essential for a redress system to provide holistic support where needed.

Secondly, recognizing and overcoming barriers to engagement is paramount in fostering trust and participation within Survivor communities. Issues such as historical distrust, accessibility challenges, and cultural sensitivities can hinder Survivor engagement with support services. Humanizing interactions, providing accessible information, and streamlining processes are pivotal steps towards enhancing engagement and building lasting trust with Survivors.

Thirdly, the provision of tailored support services that cater to individual needs is crucial for empowering Survivors on their healing journey. Follow-ups, positive redirection, well-trained staff, and ongoing post-redress support are vital components that contribute to a supportive system. By offering diverse forms of support beyond financial compensation and reducing turnaround times for redress processes, a future redress system can better meet the varied needs of Survivors.

Moreover, the inclusivity and accessibility of processes for Survivors with disabilities require careful attention and proactive measures. Implementing supported decision-making, enhancing identification methods for specific Survivor groups, and adapting communication strategies are essential steps towards ensuring equitable support for all individuals, regardless of their abilities or communication preferences and abilities.

Lastly, redefining 'redress' to encompass a spectrum of forms beyond financial compensation is crucial in meeting the diverse needs and expectations of Survivors. Addressing long wait times for redress, minimizing re-traumatization through repetitive storytelling, and considering ongoing post-redress support are key elements that can enhance the effectiveness and impact of a redress system.

In conclusion, by integrating these key insights into the design and implementation of a future redress system, there is an opportunity to create a more inclusive, responsive, and Survivor-centered approach to supporting individuals affected by abuse. The lessons learned from the Survivor Experiences Service underscore the importance of prioritizing Survivor voices, fostering trust through meaningful engagement, and providing comprehensive support that addresses the unique needs of each individual. Through a collaborative effort that considers diverse perspectives and experiences, a future redress system can strive to deliver justice, healing, and empowerment to Survivors and their communities.

# Glossary

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| **Glossary**  |
| **Word/Acronym** | **Description** |
| **BAU** | Business as usual – typically refers to the ongoing or ‘everyday’ operational procedures of an organisation.  |
| **Kaimahi** | Staff - Te Reo Māori word for staff or team members. |
| **Kaitakawaenga** | Listener – Te Reo Māori word that the Service uses to refer to a person with good standing in their community that leads the conversation with Survivors in their Private Session.  |
| **LDNDCI** | Learning Disability, Neurodiversity and Cognitive Impairment |
| **LGBTQIA+, MVPFAFF and Takatāpui** | Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and othersMahu, Vaka sa lewa lewa, Palopa, Fa’afafine, Akava’ine, Fakaleiti, and Fakafifine (Pasifika Rainbow Community terms)Takatāpui (Te Reo Māori Rainbow term) |
| **NGO** | Non-government organisation |

1. The Cabinet Paper for the Service refers to this priority cohort as Deaf and disabled. The Service is committed to referring to Deaf and disabled/impaired Survivors in the way they wish to be labelled which does not necessarily utilise the word ‘disabled.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Some Survivors have indicated that they identify with more than one cohort. All data has been calculated based on priority cohort representation. Survivors are counted once in each of the priority cohorts that they represent. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Some Survivors have indicated that they identify with more than one cohort. All data has been calculated based on priority cohort representation. Survivors are counted once in each of the priority cohorts that they represent. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)