

Christchurch Women's Refuge

Embargoed until 9.30am Friday 31 August

MEDIA RELEASE

New Service Will Make Local Families Safe@home

Thirty to forty high-risk Canterbury families will be made safer in the next year thanks to a new joint initiative between Christchurch Women's Refuge and Auckland-based agency Shine, supported by the Ministry of Justice.

This morning Judith Collins, Minister of Justice, announced government funding to expand Shine's safe@home service to three new regions – Canterbury, Tauranga and Manukau. safe@home makes the homes of women and children living with family violence, and who are at high risk of serious injury or death, physically safer from re-entry by a perpetrator. Christchurch Women's Refuge has partnered with Shine to deliver the service to Canterbury families.

The Ministry of Justice funding will cover the costs of making 300 homes safe over the next two years in the three new service areas, with funding for the Canterbury service covering 30-40 homes per year over the next two years.

"safe@home offers women and children real 'refuge' in their own home, not temporary safety in a Safe House" says Christchurch Women's Refuge CEO Nicola Woodward. "Only about 10% of our clients actually use our Safe House and that number has been decreasing since the earthquakes due to a lack of affordable, safe accommodation for women and children to move onto afterwards. safe@home is a viable and cost-effective solution to the critical problems of personal risk and housing shortages for some of our most vulnerable families."

The safe@home service was developed by Shine in 2008 and has had a 100% success rate in the four years it has been operating in Auckland. Christchurch Women's Refuge will deliver the service locally, commencing in September. It will be offered to any family assessed as being at very high risk in order to increase their safety and prevent an attack that could end in homicide. Half of the homicides in New Zealand are directly related to family violence.

"There are about 120-150 families a year in central and North-Canterbury who we estimate would meet the criteria for safe@home" says Woodward. "The Ministry of Justice funding will allow us to make 30-40 of those families safer. It's a great way to start, but of course we'll still be working hard to support those other 100 or so families as well. We are particularly excited about implementing Shine's safe@home service alongside the ReachOut service for men in North Canterbury. I am confident each service will enhance the effectiveness of the other."

Coordination and delivery of the Canterbury service, including family violence related family support, has also been supported by The Ministry of Social Development and local Rotary clubs. Shine estimates that it costs \$3,700 to install the necessary alarms, lights, latches and locks to help make one family home safe.

The service is just one of a range of new initiatives Christchurch Women's Refuge has been developing in the last 10 months as part of a new strategic direction, which also sees it now working with men who have perpetrated violence. "Traditional patterns of service to families living with family violence haven't really changed the family violence picture in New Zealand – statistics prove that" says Woodward. "It's time to do things very differently. We're developing a new and unique range of services that we believe can achieve real, long-term change and break the cycle of family violence."

Christchurch Women's Refuge

For any concerns related to family violence, please call Christchurch Women's Refuge on their 24-hour free-phone 0800 1 REFUGE (0800 1 733 843). In an emergency always call 111.

--ENDS--

For further information contact:
Nicola Woodward
Chief Executive Officer
M: 027 245 0255
T: (03) 353 7400

About Christchurch Women's Refuge

- Christchurch Women's Refuge exists to support New Zealand families become their best, free from family violence, by providing a unique range of services to prevent family violence and support communities and families, including women, men and children, overcome family violence.
- We are an independent, local charity and the first refuge to be established in New Zealand (1973)
- Christchurch Women's Refuge is a finalist in the Medium–Large Charity category of the 2012 Champion Canterbury Awards which recognising excellence, innovation and contribution to Canterbury.

Christchurch Women's Refuge Services:

- Access to residential Safe House for women and children
- Free Support & Information Lines for those living with family violence
- Proactive follow-up with women named on Police Incident Reports as living with family violence, and men named as perpetrators (being piloted in North Canterbury at present)
- Family safety planning
- Access to free Ministry of Justice approved education programmes for women, children and men
- Community based support and advocacy for women, men and children living with family violence
- Community Development, including specialist family violence training; capacity building of other agencies; and public awareness raising
- Specialist Peer Support from women and men who have overcome family violence for those on the same journey. This is a new service in the New Zealand family violence sector. The first training programme will take place in late 2012.
- Safe@home service, including home security improvements to enable women and children to stay safely in their own homes
- ReachOut crisis intervention service for men named on North Canterbury Police Incident Reports of family violence.