

# Media Release

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**15 June 2010**

## **Strengthening families**

A coordination service that brings social agencies together to work collaboratively with families is gaining fans in the Bay of Plenty.

Strengthening Families is a multi-agency initiative which recognises that by working together alongside families facing difficult issues, problems can be solved more readily.

Up to 80 families each year from Katikati to Otamarakau can access the service, which currently operates out of Relationship Services offices in Brookfield.

Coordinators Tessa Mackenzie and Glynette Gainfort say the key is to get the right agencies in the same room with a family, so a plan to help support and resolve the issues can be worked through as a team.

“There’s no time limit. Some families find one meeting sorts it out, while for others the meetings may go on for several years,” says Glynette.

They believe the secret to success is that the family’s input is integral to working out the solutions to the problem. “With Strengthening Families they are not being told what to do, they are a part of the planning and decision-making around how to achieve positive changes to their current situation,” says Tessa.

The pair say they meet some neat families and it is an incredible privilege to be allowed to work with them.

“Often a family may face difficulties due to something completely outside their control, such as illness or a job loss,” says Glynette. “It is great to see a family making progress and getting back on their feet with the team approach in action.”

Families using the service are usually referred by an agency, or can self refer if they are involved with two or more agencies such as schools, childcare centres, the DHB, Work and Income, budget service, community centres or church organisations.

Strengthening Families is about strengthening communities, they say, and they are continually impressed by the benefits that collective wisdom provides.

To contact Strengthening Families, call 07 576 8392 or email [sfcoordinator@relationships.org.nz](mailto:sfcoordinator@relationships.org.nz)

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