



# Gandhi Nivas

Serving our families

Sahaayta  
Counselling and Social Support...



**Developing culturally specific early intervention through community collaboration for men bound by Police Safety Orders in Counties Manukau**

## Study Eight

**Narratives of complexity: Six case studies of Gandhi Nivas client police records**



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## **Overview**

Six case studies of men with intakes to Gandhi Nivas and complex records of encounters with police investigating family harm occurrences have been analysed for patterns of changes within the men's documented histories. In Part I of this study, we report the patterns of the men's Police records with respect for their specific situations and circumstances. Patterns in the men's cases emerge, affirming differences and complexities in the lives of men referred to Gandhi Nivas. In Part II of this report, each of the six case studies is produced as a narrative from the first encounter the men have with police investigating family harm, through to their last recorded police interaction.

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## **Gandhi Nivas: Early Intervention for family violence**

Gandhi Nivas was established in 2014 as a community collaboration with New Zealand Police and Sahaayta Counselling and Social Support (Sahaayta) to provide early intervention services for family violence in Counties Manukau. The concept emerged from consultation processes with ethnic communities undertaken with the support of the New Zealand Police Commissioner. Police play a central role in early intervention through issuing Police Safety Orders (PSOs) when family members are threatened with violence and police intervene. Men who are bound by PSOs in the region may be referred to Gandhi Nivas to provide accommodation because they cannot return home for the period specified in their Order. Men who reside at Gandhi Nivas (the 'home of peace') do so voluntarily and have the support of a social worker as well as opportunities to engage in change programmes or counselling. When men accept intake at Gandhi Nivas, their families are also contacted by Sahaayta and offered safety planning, social services and counselling opportunities to enhance safety in the home. While initially established for men from South East Asian communities, Gandhi Nivas quickly opened their doors to all men in the community. As well as men bound by PSOs, they accept men on bail or those who have self-referred in need of support to maintain safety in their homes (Coombes et al., 2017), for violence such as intimate partner violence (IPV) and specific offences like Male Assaults Female (MAF).

Previous research with Gandhi Nivas includes a large-scale statistical assessment of client Police records and qualitative studies of women's and men's experiences of engagement with Gandhi Nivas early intervention services (Buckingham et al., 2022; Coombes et al., 2024; Coombes et al., 2020/2024; Mattson et al., 2020; Morgan & Coombes, 2016b; Morgan et al., 2020). Clients are culturally diverse and multi-lingual members of communities, often with shared religious and spiritual commitments. They are also often members of immigrant communities who are under- or unemployed. Their social conditions are understood by stakeholders as inequitable in access to the determinants of health and wellbeing (Coombes et al., 2017).

Our previous statistical research analyses interpreted clients' Police records to show changes in patterns of police attendance at family violence incidents involving clients before and after they accept accommodation with Gandhi Nivas (Morgan et al., 2020). While most clients do not have records of police attending family violence incidents prior to their intake at Gandhi Nivas, we are aware that underreporting is one of many caveats in our interpretation of statistical data. We cannot assume that because there are no records, there have not been any incidents of physical violence perpetrated by the men against their family members. Our qualitative research with stakeholders and clients draws attention to the complex and precarious circumstances that are involved in underreporting, including mistrust of police and shame within families and communities (Coombes et al., 2024; Coombes et al., 2017; Coombes et al., 2020/2024; Mattson et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, our statistical studies have immersed us in data for clients who do have histories of family violence interventions by police, sometimes going back to their childhoods. In our initial study of clients' records for the first year of Gandhi Nivas' operations (Morgan & Coombes, 2016b), we were able to examine all of the men's Police records, whether indicated as family violence or not. While we only analysed data related to family violence, we noted that not all offending in the clients' histories was related to family violence. For our second statistical study (Morgan et al., 2020), we received only family violence indicated data, so we did not have the same access to later clients' complete Police records. Through two periods of immersion in the data, we became aware that some men would need more extended interventions given their histories of offending and coming to police attention for family harm. We consulted with Gandhi Nivas stakeholders on the appropriate meaning of "early intervention" in the case of clients whose Police records indicate complex and lengthy involvement with police. Where police issue PSOs to men with extensive family violence records, we understand that Police were intervening early in an *incident* that may escalate to more serious *offending*, as has evidently happened previously.

While undertaking a statistical analysis of client Police records from 2014-2019 (Morgan et al., 2020), we discussed the seriousness of offending in the few client cases involving homicide and strangulation charges. We considered how information relating to previous offending or involvement in incidents where serious offences were concerned was

inaccessible to police or Gandhi Nivas staff at the time of the men's intake. For example, if a man had previously been investigated for a serious offence, Gandhi Nivas would not be informed of his prior record. It is also the case that if a man formed a new relationship after intake, services would not be offered to the woman if violence occurred in the new relationship unless he was referred back to Gandhi Nivas. As we examined the records to analyse statistical patterns as outcomes of our study, we reflected on how our engagement with the Police data enabled a story of clients' involvement with police that deepened our understanding of the complexities in clients' lives. In this study, we engaged a novel approach to interpreting statistical data to examine six client cases from two different groups: clients charged with strangulation offences after intake at Gandhi Nivas, and clients who do not record any further family violence offences after their intake. Strangulation offences were introduced during the period of time covered by Police records used in our statistical study (Morgan et al., 2020).

The first group shared a final record of an offence that is regarded as serious in the police categorisation of offences. Seriousness, in this sense, is understood in relation to the lethal risk of specific kinds of assaults. Risk assessments were also conducted by police at the time our data was collected, but they were in the process of changing their risk measurements and we were not given access to risk assessment data on Gandhi Nivas clients. We became curious as to whether police records of incidents and offences, ranked according to lethality, would produce patterns in the men's stories that could address the risks to safety of women and children that previous clients of Gandhi Nivas might still pose. We contrasted the cases of strangulation that occurred after a referral and intake to Gandhi Nivas with three cases of clients who committed no offences and did not come to police attention again after their intake. In these cases, we were curious about whether the police records could distinguish between those men who offended again and those who did not. In the following section we discuss the novel methodology we have used to interpret Police records in these six cases.



## The Narrative Case Studies Project

Our project sought to identify and analyse patterns of gender-based family violence that are evident from Police family harm records for men receiving services from Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta in Counties Manukau, Aotearoa New Zealand. We take a novel approach to research, where statistical data is qualitatively analysed to identify narrative patterns of men's violence against women and children evident within records of police encounters. Whilst there are studies that do utilise qualitative methods to interpret statistics, this is usually demonstrated through the gathering of qualitative data in addition to quantitative data to enrich and deepen understandings and inferences gained through statistical analysis. However, the narrative case studies project is an interpretative analysis of the statistics themselves, and there is a relative lack of published research that attempts to analyse the stories that statistical data tell. Acknowledging the dearth of research in this area, Stone (2015) notes that it is an approach to research whose 'contours' are hard to define. This oversight in opportunity for analysis of statistical data is interesting given that all statistics are interpretative: through statistics, we infer meaning from numbers and counts to wider populations, social contexts and phenomenon, and therefore it makes sense that we as social scientists should be explicitly interested in what narratives emerge from the statistics themselves. Indeed, Stone (2015) notes the somewhat problematic tension inherent in establishing a boundary between quantitative and qualitative analyses, arguing that, no matter how much quantitative researchers may appeal to objective science to bolster their truth claims, these claims are always justified and supported through processes of narration in order to give the numbers meaning.

Although novel, our approach does find guidance and support in methodological literature, in particular enumerology. Enumerology acknowledges that numbers are not a mirror reflection of a particular event or phenomenon, but instead they reflect the guiding attitudes, assumptions, and concerns of those who produce numbers and counts in relation to particular events and/or phenomena (Bogdan & Ksander, 1980). Embedding statistics within time and place also enables us to acknowledge how the process of counting has a "temporal dimension" (Bogdan & Ksander, 1980, p. 304). This is a well-established acknowledgement when working with operational databases, such as Police records, as they

are always located in a particular socio-political context, constantly responsive to policy, legislative and social change across time. This is realised in the narrative case studies project with a recognition of some large shifts in how the police can 'code' and 'count' family violence. In 2018, NZ Police moved away from coding responses to family violence as 'domestic disputes' to instead initiating 'family harm investigations'. The change in coding aligns with wider discussions of the need to challenge interpretations of family violence as singular actions taking place in isolated, discrete events, in favour of locating individual acts of domestic violence within the wider familial context (Busch & Robertson, 2020). Later that same year, a new strangulation offence was introduced (Family Violence (Amendments) Act, 2018), which recognised and accounted for strangulation as a specific and high-risk act of family violence (Law Commission, 2016). Taking up this acknowledgement of meaning construction and temporality, our approach attempts to further imbue Police codes and counts with context and meaning by narrating the storylines of Police records through narrative accounts that speak of processes and effects of changes in relation to men's encounters with police over time.

Any stories that we tell, however, are recognised as being partial, ambiguous, and open to contestation. This can only ever be so because of the layers of attention and interpretation: what began as an account of police response to family harm was translated into Police code at the site of intervention. As researchers, we then counted chosen (abstracted from context) codes in order to infer patterns in offending and re-offending (Morgan et al., 2020), and now we are tasked with 're-storying' those counts of de-contextualised and abstracted codes into a narrative in an attempt to provide a more nuanced account of complex cases presented in the Police data.

In each of the following case studies, we gathered between 5 and 48 lines of data associated with each client's case record. Our process of interpretation involved collective discussions of how each line of the record provided information on the client's involvements with family harm incidents and how each event built up an account of family harms that illustrate the complexity of the situations in which clients are embedded and Gandhi Nivas early intervention services address.

Within our statistical study, clients were assigned to one of four groups, depending on their histories of Police records for family violence and their intake record for the occurrence of their first referral to Gandhi Nivas (Morgan et al, 2020). These groups were formed after consultation with stakeholders about the differences amongst clients, where they affirmed that the complexity of some men's circumstances warranted more extensive intervention. Subsequently, we distinguished clients into groups according to the seriousness and extensiveness of their records of family harm. Most clients were bound by PSOs (65.63%) and had fewer than 5 records of family violence investigations prior to intake (62%). These men formed the PSO Early Intervention group. Other clients who also had fewer than 5 records of family violence but were charged with offences (7%) and/or self-referred (5.2%) formed the Non-PSO Early Intervention group. While the majority of men had fewer than 3 prior Police records of family harm, some men had family violence records exceeding 30 occurrences, had more than one intake occurrence, more than 10 incidents recorded at their intake occurrence, or had three or more intake offences recorded. These men formed an extended intervention category. Clients' records of reoffending over time were analysed within groups for those with PSO early and PSO extended interventions and those with non-PSO early and non-PSO extended interventions. Of the six case studies we present here, three are PSO clients and three are non-PSO clients, three are early intervention clients and three are extended intervention clients. We did not deliberately balance cases across groups, since their selection is based on complexity and the occurrence of their last known Police record. It is evident though, that complex cases of clients' family harm histories and the seriousness of their offences were not confined to clients who had been charged with offences at intake or who had long prior histories of family harm records. Even across groups of men who shared criteria for inclusion in early and extended intervention statistical analysis, there is no pattern we could identify that connected the men's police records of incidents and offences except the criteria for which we selected the cases: a strangulation record *after* intake, and no further police record *after* intake.

The six case studies we present next have been separated into the two distinct groups we chose for comparison: Three studies of complex records that end with strangulation and three case studies that end with no further records. Only three strangulation offences were recorded in a database with more than 5846 offences recorded; however, these cases are

exceptional because the offence has now become visible through legislation. The three cases of no further records are interesting given that despite all three cases in this group experiencing a history of complex family harm relationships in their records prior to intake, there is no evidence of further encounters with police for family violence after connection to the services at Gandhi Nivas. In the Police records, the men were identifiable only by numbers. In our narrative case studies, each of the men have been given pseudonyms that are common names in their ethnic communities here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **Part I: Patterns of Statistical Evidence**

In this section, we present patterns of the men's Police records with respect for their specific and diverse circumstances. Through Police records, we notice patterns in the men's case histories emerging, affirming the differences in conditions that men referred to Gandhi Nivas are experiencing despite their same or similar Police coding of incidents and offences that involved them. These are the patterns that we were able to identify through the narrative case studies that follow. They are patterns of demographics, social conditions and encounters with Police and Gandhi Nivas in the context of family violence intervention.

### ***The first time he comes to police attention***

He's a young man

He's still a teenager

He's well into adulthood

He's a child

He's middle aged

He's a young adult

He is monolingual

He is multilingual

He is married

He doesn't live with his partner

He is living with his partner

He is living with his wife and other family members

He is living with his family

He is not an aggressor to start with

He is victim of IPV

His siblings and parents were abusing each other

His first time was against family members

### ***Then***

Despite victimisation he moves in to live with his partner

More incidents in his family are investigated in his childhood  
Police attend his home 10 times over 18 months before intake  
He first offends as a teenager  
He is not an aggressor prior to intake  
He lives many experiences of violence in his family  
He is a victim of IPV more than once  
He is protected by a PSO  
He is a victim of IPV that occurs in a public place  
In his family it seems normal to use violence  
His second time was IPV  
He is only ever an aggressor  
He has never been recorded as a victim or a witness to family violence  
He is a victim or witness of family violence six times in the 12 months before intake  
People he knows are involved in violence, not only his family  
He is the subject of an IPV investigation in a public place  
His next time was against a parent and partner

***At intake***

It is his first time  
It is three months after his first record  
It is two years after his first time  
It is many years after his first record  
He offends against three women in his family  
He offends many times against multiple family members, including children  
He is bound by a PSO  
He is issued with a PSO  
He is bound by multiple PSOs  
He is suspected of 12 common assaults as well as offences against children  
He is suspected of wilful damage in the context of IPV  
He assaults two women in his family, including his wife

He is charged with MAF offences

He is charged with common assault against a parent and sibling

He is charged with four MAF offences and wilful damage

He offends against his mother and partner

He has bail conditions that prevent him returning home

He has no bail conditions or PSO

***He is referred to Gandhi Nivas***

He is unemployed

He is a low wage shift worker

He has steady employment

His employment is unstable

He is ideal for early intervention as a first-time aggressor

He is not ideal for early intervention

He and his family are linked with support

He does not breach his PSO

He does not stay at Gandhi Nivas

He stays at Gandhi Nivas for his whole bail period

He can return home if he wants to

He chooses to stay for two and a half weeks

He stays for one day

***Then for some...***

His first time after intake, he is a witness to violence amongst his wife's siblings and parents

He offends again against his wife and mother within months

He is charged with serious assault

He is not referred to Gandhi Nivas

His next time, he is a victim of assault by his partner, parent and someone else he knows

He is a non-aggressor in two other incidents involving three generations

He assaults his wife and a parent again

He steals from the family he assaults

He offends in a public place

He does not return to Gandhi Nivas

His next time, only his partner and someone else are involved

It is 18 months before his next time

He is not an aggressor

His next offence is strangulation

He strangles his partner

He strangles his wife and mother

He strangles his partner, step-parents, and step-child in a public place

***Then for some....***

He returns to Gandhi Nivas twice voluntarily

He does not come to police attention again



## Part II: The Narrative Case Studies

### Three Complex Case Studies of Strangulation

Ali<sup>1</sup>

Ali first came to police attention for a family harm related occurrence as a young man from an Indian Fijian community. From our previous statistical analysis (Morgan et al., 2020), we know that men from the Indian Fijian community were the third largest group of men who were clients of Gandhi Nivas and are ethnically connected in Counties Manukau through the diaspora of Fijian immigrants of Indian descent. When police first met Ali in the context of family harm, just under three months prior to Ali's intake to Gandhi Nivas, he was not the aggressor. Instead, someone else in his family was being investigated for family harm against Ali's wife. Whilst Ali's record shows he was present at this family harm occurrence against his wife, he was not a witness or a victim.

Within three months of his first family harm indicated record, the police meet Ali again, but this time Ali is the aggressor in a family harm occurrence. It is nearly 4.30pm and Ali has been at home, threatening, and possibly assaulting two women in his family, as Police records make reference to two women victims of Ali's harmful actions that day. He is suspected of two counts of 'Male Assaults Female' against his wife and a second woman who is a family member, most likely his mother. 'Male Assaults Female' is a specific charge for gender-based violence and Ali is suspected of assaulting his wife and mother with his hands ('manually'). Police also bind Ali not to harm his wife and family member any further by issuing him with two PSOs: one protecting Ali's wife and her household, and one for the second woman.

As a result of being issued with a PSO, Ali is referred to Gandhi Nivas. Ali's referral to Gandhi Nivas by police is common for Gandhi Nivas clients, as well as is the complexity of the relationships involved in distressing harm within families (such as non-aggressor and aggressor roles in occurrences that involve multiple family members). From our research, we have heard men talk of histories of victimisation as sons in their family (at the hands of their

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<sup>1</sup> Ali's record was included in the PSO early intervention group. We interpreted 15 lines of data in Ali's case.

fathers, primarily, but also of mothers who are responsible for ensuring moral conduct in the father's absence from the home) (Mattson et al., 2020). The men told us of their responsibilities as providers, both materially and for the moral reputation of their family, where they learned authority and corporal punishment as discipline was central to meeting their responsibilities as masculine providers for the family.

Ali's situation is ideal for the early intervention Gandhi Nivas provide in the sense that these occurrences are the earliest opportunities the police have to link him and his family with support. Gandhi Nivas welcome Ali to the home of peace, with food and talk. When Ali is first introduced to Gandhi Nivas, he is unemployed, and the staff at Gandhi Nivas will talk with him about his family, how he feels about not being able to provide for them, and how he can't resort to violence to solve the social issues facing him and his family. If he is willing, they would help him find work or apply for jobs or get his driver's license if need be. They understand the social determinants of health inequities and would refer him to other services he may need.

Ali does not accept the offer of somewhere to stay at Gandhi Nivas for the duration of his PSOs when he can't return home, either to his wife or to his mother's house. Despite not staying at the home, Ali does not breach his PSOs as far as Police records show. If Ali did return home that day, his family did not call the police and he would still have the opportunity to engage with services if he chose.

Even though Ali doesn't stay with Gandhi Nivas at the home, Sahaayta staff will still make contact with Ali's wife and mother because of his intake. If they are willing, they will collaborate to develop culturally sensitive safety plans for the family. Safety planning may include applying for a Protection Order, or explaining how the Police may be trusted to investigate further incidents. Such discussions will open spaces to talk about the complex family relationships and dynamics that may affect Gandhi Nivas clients and their families. Given that Ali was a young man when referred to Gandhi Nivas, we remember some examples from the men and women we have spoken to about the kinds of issues Sahaayta staff may have discussed with Ali's family: the kinds of situations he is in, the support he has

available, his study or employment status as well as the circumstances that led to his violence.

We have heard from the women's stories how cultural tensions can emerge between younger people participating in social life beyond the borders of their ethnic communities and their parents who disapprove of their conduct (Coombes et al., 2024; Coombes et al., 2020/2024). The women raised concerns about young men's conduct in the home involving truancy and violence towards women and girls in the family. We have heard about fathers who assault youth in an attempt to change their peer associations or interests, and of mothers-in-law who support the disciplining of their daughter-in-law and exercise authority in the father's absence. From the men, we have heard stories of troubled relationships with their children and troubling conduct from other young people, including excessive alcohol consumption (Mattson et al., 2020).

A few months after Ali's intake to Gandhi Nivas, he comes to police attention a third time, when police attended an incident where Ali was witness to six counts of assault. There was no use of weapons, and the assaults involved his wife, siblings, and parents. Without their records, it's not clear who were the aggressors or victims at that incident, but it is clear that Ali has not been recorded as an aggressor this time. Still, it is the third time that police have been called to Ali's family, and given that these assaults, and earlier recorded assaults, span only five months, police attention to the family escalates over a relatively short period of time. We know, though, that police attention doesn't necessarily mean that the harms are escalating. Earlier incidents may not have been reported, and the escalation in encounters with police could possibly be due to the family's increasing trust of, or willingness for, police involvement. If increasing trust in the police means family members call for early intervention, services may again be put into place for the family.

At the time our records cease, Ali has come to police attention once more. Less than a month after Ali is a witness to assaults involving his wife, siblings and parents, Ali is bound again by two PSOs and a family harm investigation records him as a suspect in a serious assault charge against two members of his family, his wife and most likely his mother again. In the Police records, the offence Ali is suspected of is described as *impedes breathing/blood*

*circulation (strangulation/suffocation)*, a new offence that was introduced a month before this last occurrence in Ali's family harm Police records. Perhaps before the new charge became possible to investigate, Ali would have been suspected of Male Assaults Female without using a weapon, or the lesser charge of common assault if evidence of strangulation, like bruising, was not obtainable until days later. This new offence specifically recognises the dangers of threatening a woman's life by taking her breath. We know that violence can escalate when women start trusting and calling the police because they feel supported to seek help for their safety (Coombes et al., 2024). Quick responses and investigation, as followed in Ali's case, is essential to preserving life.

Bahati<sup>2</sup>

Like Ali, Bahati first comes to police attention as a young man, in his late teens. Of East African descent, Bahati is a member of a very marginalised community, and his first experience with police occurs nearly two years before he comes into contact with Gandhi Nivas. The first time Bahati meets with police concerning family harm, he is just ending his adolescence and has been the victim of a family violence assault at the hands of his partner who he is not living with at the time.

Over the next year and a half, up until the episode that results in Bahati's intake at Gandhi Nivas, the police come to Bahati's home another ten times for family harm related occurrences. Bahati is not identified as violent or an aggressor at any of these episodes, but instead has been a victim and person at risk of IPV, and has also witnessed the violence of his partner and others in the context of family harm investigations. It is evident from Bahati's records prior to engagement with Gandhi Nivas that, from a young age, Bahati has been in a relationship in which violence occurs frequently enough to draw police attention, and that he has experienced complex family and social relationships of violence.

Less than a year before Bahati's intake to Gandhi Nivas, and only a month after a family harm episode where his partner threatened to kill or harm him, Police records show that Bahati and his partner have begun living together. When police see Bahati for the first time after moving in with his partner, it is because he is identified as a person at risk of IPV. Unlike previous occurrences that took place within Bahati's home, this time the threats to Bahati occur in a public place: a shopping centre.

At this point, we considered the reasons why Bahati might move in with someone who is assaulting him. Women victims are commonly asked why they don't leave abusive partners and in the context of gender-based violence often reasons of fear, social entrapment and coercive control can be considered (Heron et al., 2022; Lohmann et al., 2024; Tolmie et al., 2024; Tolmie et al., 2018; Wilson & Webber, 2014). Indeed, these considerations may be at

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<sup>2</sup> Bahati's record was included in the non-PSO extended intervention group. We interpreted 48 lines of data in Bahati's case.

play here for Bahati given his partner recently threatened to harm him, and, through hearing the men's stories (Mattson et al., 2020), we are aware of men who have been coerced into marriages where their partners have had serious mental health issues that the men were unaware of, and of men who have been socially coerced into intimate relationships where they feel vulnerable, yet are necessary for their family's security. We are also mindful of patterns within relationships where physical violence is perpetrated, and reconciliation periods afterwards can involve minimising the harm and romantic re-engagements, often called a 'honeymoon phase' (Walker, 1979). While these phenomena have been systematically associated with gender-based violence, they could potentially be conditions that led to Bahati and his partner moving in together after experiencing violence.

When Bahati's family harm records tell us that violence is now moving to public spaces, such as a shopping centre, we may also ask whether this is a context in which violence is normalised as a response to conflict in relationships and social shame does not inhibit perpetrating violence publicly. Violence as a response to intimate conflict may be so normalised at this stage for Bahati, his partner and their family, that it no longer needs to be hidden within the privacy of the home to avoid discovery by others but can now take place out in the open in public. Embedded in a social and familial context in which violence may be a fairly common and normalised response to conflict, Bahati is victim to, and bears witness to, IPV frequently.

Bahati and his partner come to police attention in relation to intimate partner violence again six times in the following 12 months. Most frequently, the episodes happen in public places, including once in a different city to where they live and another time at a sports ground. The various public locations of the IPV episodes speak to how Bahati and his partner are moving through communities, engaging in fairly 'normal' couple activities in their everyday lives (e.g. shopping together, travelling together, going to sports events together) and as they move through living together as a couple, violence has become normalised as a solution to problems wherever they go and regardless of who else may witness or report the violence to police. On two occasions, the family harm episodes not only involve Bahati and his partner, but also other people Bahati knows. As in all previous encounters with police, Bahati is not recorded as an aggressor at any of these events. Instead, over these 12 months, Bahati was

present when police initiated a family harm investigation, was a victim of assault at the hands of his partner, and, at the last family harm episode prior to his intake at Gandhi Nivas, was witness to a family harm episode. At this last episode, Bahati was in a public place when he witnessed his partner and someone known to him verbally threatening to kill each other or cause grievous bodily harm. We might imagine that the person known to Bahati attempted to intervene in the ongoing pattern of intimate partner violence between Bahati and his partner that is evidenced in the Police records.

A week after the episode in which Bahati was witness to his partner's violence, he is arrested for assaulting her in their home, as well as assaulting his step-mother and another woman at the house who was known to him. While the Police records are unable to tell us why Bahati, having been previously only recorded as a non-aggressor, has now moved to an aggressor role in family harm, we can imagine that, located in a context where familial violence is normalised, he may have become violent as a solution to a problem or conflict he is experiencing. Perhaps, up until now, Bahati has himself been coercively controlling, and his partner's resistance has become violent over time. It is possible that this is the first incident at which Bahati's usual strategies of coercive control have not worked, and he felt he had to use violence to enforce his authority. It is even possible that, having been coercively controlled and social entrapped himself, his violence is in resistance to the violence he is experiencing. For each of these possibilities, normalisation of violence as resistance to violence perpetuates cycles of harm.

Bahati's violence occurs when he is a young man, unemployed, and he is facing three assault charges and bail conditions that do not allow him to return home. He is referred to Gandhi Nivas, where he stays for the next 17 days. His is quite a lengthy stay at Gandhi Nivas in comparison to other men, usually those bound by PSOs stay between one and three days. The length of stay is due to his bail conditions and reflects the seriousness of the violence Bahati has inflicted upon his victims. Despite the length of his stay, we have no evidence of engagement with any of the services that Gandhi Nivas offers while residing at the house, unlike in Ali's case where disengagement is clear from him leaving before he is released from the conditions of his PSO. We don't have any records of whether Bahati stayed all the time, engaged with support or programmes, or whether he used the residence as a base to come

and go without engaging further. We may wonder whether Bahati's engagement differed also because he was on bail, and so he did not have the same choice to stay or leave as those residents bound by PSOs. For stakeholders, it is significant that the men have a choice to stay at the home so that their engagement in early intervention is voluntary (Coombes et al., 2017). Regardless of his engagement, Sahaayta would have made contact with his partner and family members to offer support for them too.

Within a matter of months of leaving Gandhi Nivas, Bahati has re-offended against his partner again, and also another woman known to him, in his home. This re-offending against his partner and another woman is serious, as the charges he faces tell us that the police have evidence of his intention to do serious harm or injury to the women he assaults. After Bahati is charged with serious assault against the two women, he does not come to police attention for family harm for another seven months. When the police do see Bahati again in the context of a family harm investigation, Bahati is at someone else's home and has been the victim of assault at the hands of his partner, his parent and someone known to him. He is identified as a person at risk from all three of the people who assaulted him. One week later, back at Bahati's house, the police initiate a family harm investigation due to a domestic dispute involving Bahati's parent and his partner, and less than two months after this the police are back again to investigate a family harm episode involving three generations (partner, parents, and children), but where Bahati is not identified in an aggressor role. Bahati's family are evidently continuing patterns of violence against each other, in contexts where relatively frequent police intervention is occurring. We have no evidence that increased police interventions were related to anyone in Bahati's family having a Protection Order, or learning to trust police sufficiently to call them when family harms are escalating.

It has been just over a year since his intake to Gandhi Nivas, and 11 months since he was last recorded as a violent aggressor in Police records, when Bahati is violent towards his partner again. This time, while at a railway station, Bahati steals from and seriously assaults both his partner and one of his parents. Stealing from his family suggests disputes over money or property may be a consideration for Bahati. He was unemployed when he was at Gandhi Nivas, and we are aware from other studies that money problems, especially responsibilities



for providing for the family, are challenges for many men whose livings are precariously made (Coombes et al., 2020/2024; Coombes et al., 2024; Mattson et al., 2020). Bahati does not return to Gandhi Nivas, either on bail or to seek help for the violence or the precarity he and his family are experiencing.

It is almost nine months after the episode at the railway station before the police see Bahati again. This time, the police investigate a family harm incident involving Bahati's partner, but Bahati is not identified as an aggressor or a victim in this occurrence. The apartment the police go to at this occurrence is outside the area of where Bahati and his partner usually live, so they may have moved houses or perhaps they are visiting someone they know. It is even possible that the IPV in this context involves another couple that Bahati and his partner may have been visiting at the time. Witnessing violence amongst their friendship group or perhaps extended family with whom they're not living, suggests relatively broad acceptance of family violence within Bahati's everyday life. Considering that only an estimated 24% of violence occurring in families is reported to police (Ministry of Justice, 2014), Bahati's record speaks to extensive normalisation of violence within his social context.

Just over two months later, Bahati is once again involved in a family harm occurrence, however this time he is identified as an aggressor and is suspected of very serious assaults against four different family members: two step-parents, his partner and a step-child. He has become the suspect of the new family violence offence of strangulation. Bahati seriously harms his family members in a public place in what the records show was a prolonged attack just after midnight. Bahati has a complex history of family harm with the police, involving being not only an aggressor, but also previously a victim, witness and otherwise present at family harm occurrences, however in no other prior occurrences that the police attend has such a level of severe and serious violence been seen. That Bahati strangles four different people in a public place speaks to a level of violence in the streets that is concerning. It is clear that Bahati's own use of violence against his family has escalated to severe and potentially lethal levels, given that strangulation can cause extreme injury and even death. It is also evident that Bahati has been socially entrapped in relationships in which family violence has been normalized. We have no evidence, however, of whether Bahati is also coercively controlling within his familial relationships. We understand that patterns of

coercive control are resisted by women who are sometimes also willing to use violence in self-defense or in response to their partner's attempt to control them. Bahati may still be controlling and also be misinterpreted as a victim of "mutual violence" since this is a common misunderstanding of the dynamics of family violence.

Casey<sup>3</sup>

Casey is a Samoan man in his mid-thirties when he first comes to police attention. Casey speaks both English and Samoan, so we understand him to be a member of the Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Samoan community, many of whom are immigrants and many of whom are born here in Aotearoa New Zealand. Casey is older than both Ali and Bahati when he first meets police and Gandhi Nivas in the context of family harm. He is in the second most common age range of men who stay at Gandhi Nivas: those between 30 and 39 years old.

Casey's first record with the Police is the same day as his intake to Gandhi Nivas. Police attend Casey's house for a family harm investigation and suspect him of willful damage in the context of IPV with a partner he doesn't live with at the time. The violent incident begun very early in the morning, just after 3am. We notice that, at the time police come to his home, Casey is employed as a low wage shift worker in an unskilled industry with late night and early morning workhours, therefore early mornings may not be an unusual time for the couple to be awake and engaging with each other. Listening to the men's and women's stories (Coombes et al., 2020/2024; Coombes et al., 2024; Mattson et al., 2020), we are reminded of how precarious employment, like Casey's, is frequently mentioned as a challenging condition of the men's lives. Exploitation in employment and bullying in the workplace are reported in other studies where they are understood as aggravating conflict and escalating violence in the home. For some families, when men are in precarious employment they struggle, or are no longer able, to fulfil their obligations to their family within traditional gender roles. It may be that Casey's employment has contributed to the circumstances that lead the police to first meet him in relation to family harm.

The same day as the police first meet Casey, he also comes to stay at Gandhi Nivas. Casey is referred to Gandhi Nivas by police, but at the time of referral Casey has not been charged with an offence and as is not subject to bail conditions or a PSO. Men always have the choice whether or not to stay at Gandhi Nivas, but they are more likely to stay if they have either a police or court order that makes it more compelling to accept the referral and invitation.

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<sup>3</sup> Casey's record was included in the non-PSO early intervention group. We interpreted five lines of data in Casey's case.

Casey chooses to stay at Gandhi Nivas even though he is not socially coerced into being there by any formal order, and he stays there for quite the lengthy period of two and a half weeks, which is longer than the usual length men often stay at Gandhi Nivas when they are bound by PSOs. Casey would have had the opportunity to engage with the social worker in the home, or join a stopping violence group, or undertake counselling over this period. He would also have had the chance to be referred to any social services helpful for his circumstances, with follow up to ensure his needs were met. Although we have no records of Casey's engagement with early intervention, as with the case of Ali and Bahati, family members would be contacted by Sahaayta and offered support.

It is 18 months, quite a long period of time, before police see Casey again. At this time, Casey is living with a partner. The police see Casey in the context of a family harm investigation involving IPV, but he is not recorded as an aggressor at this occurrence, nor as a victim and it is unclear how Casey has been involved this time. Previously, Casey chose to stay at Gandhi Nivas voluntarily, but this time Casey does not return to the home of Gandhi Nivas for support again.

Within three weeks of seeing Casey again (without a referral to Gandhi Nivas), the police are called to the home he shares with his partner. This time, Casey is recorded as an aggressor in a serious offence, with the police having evidence that he strangled his partner. They are gathering evidence for another assault charge as well. As with Ali and Bahati, the intervention this time, arrives too late to prevent serious harm. Here, there is still no clear evidence of coercive control, and some evidence that for a period of time after Gandhi Nivas residence, Casey desisted from IPV incidents involving his former partner, like those for which he was charged before intake. In previously analysing post-intake statistical data, we found a number of clients who become new offenders in the second-year post Gandhi Nivas intake. Casey is one of the clients who is among those who desist from violent incidents temporarily (Morgan et al., 2020). Women in our previous study spoke of partners who desisted from physical or sexual assault but continued to exercise coercive control over the decision making in the family and the women's autonomy (Coombes et al., 2024).

## Accounting for Strangulation

The new offence of strangulation rarely appears in the Police records of our statistical study (Morgan et al., 2020) as it was introduced in 2018, only one year prior to data collection in 2019. However, given the significance of the charge for indicating seriousness of family violence, these three cases and their complexities became the focus of our first case studies: they are the only such charges in the dataset.

Ali and Bahati both have Police records well before their intake at Gandhi Nivas. Casey's first record coincides with his intake date. Casey is also unusual in his choice to stay voluntarily at Gandhi Nivas when he is neither bound by a PSO or bail conditions. Ali is PSO bound, and Bahati is on bail, so all of the men have different intake and police histories.

Whilst Casey's Police records suggest Casey had not been violent towards an intimate partner for 18 months after staying with Gandhi Nivas, we are unable to confidently assume that this is because Casey engaged well with the support and help provided by Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta after leaving the house. Police records and justice statistics are obscure, influenced by a range of factors that may not reflect changes due to help and support. We can imagine various reasons why men may go for lengths of time without records of violence, such as separating from the intimate partner and not re-coupling, periods of imprisonment, returning to their country of origin, or abandonment of their family entirely (Coombes et al., 2024; Mattson et al., 2020). Despite Casey's Police records being scant, the seriousness of his last offending led us to wonder whether Casey has previously offended without coming to police attention. Underreporting is a common issue in relation to family harm, with many victims not reporting family harm due to thinking the violence is not serious enough to warrant police attention, or the belief that family harm is a 'private' issue (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010; McLaren, 2010). Victims often do not report their partner's violence out of fear that to do so may place them at greater risk of harm (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2016; Girard & Higgs, 2023; Robertson et al., 2007; Towns, 2009). In Ali's case, we notice increases in Police records after his intake at Gandhi Nivas, suggesting that his family are calling the police more often than before his intake to Gandhi Nivas and their contact with services. Some women have reported making use of protection orders

after being supported by Sahaayta staff to trust the police intervention (Coombes et al., 2024).

In all three strangulation case studies, the seriousness of the men's last reported family harm offence leads us to conclude that police have been involved too late to prevent serious harm. Although for the purposes of our research both Ali and Casey are considered 'early intervention' cases in the criteria that they met for our previous statistical analysis, given Casey's scant Police record and Ali's early non-offending, the severity of Ali and Casey's violence in their final record means we are not looking at early intervention harm. Here we notice a serious limitation in research police statistics on reported incidents and offences, hierarchically organized according to lethality. The histories of the men's encounters with police for family violence obscure patterns of coercive control that are punctuated by episodes of physical and sexual violence infrequently reported to police. We're aware that desistance from physical and sexual violence may co-occur with continuing psychological, emotional, financial and economic abuses, social entrapment and institutional and systems harms from hearing women's stories and appreciating the risks to their autonomy that are perpetuated by focusing attention exclusively on incidents and offences coded in police records. Risks to women's safety and security continue, and we have also found previous evidence that new offences may be perpetrated, even after relatively long periods of desistance (Coombes et al., 2024; Morgan et al., 2020).

From Bahati's records we storied records where many members of the family were involved in family harm incidents, both in public and private spaces. From our perspective, Bahati's case speaks most clearly to patterns of violence in which harm generates further harm. Bahati's record shows that he has met every Police category for those present during a family harm investigation from the time he was a child. His home life has been embroiled in harms among family members. Violence appears normalised in Bahati's everyday life, and we are reminded of men's stories that tell us that discipline within the family was a father's responsibility, and corporal punishment a social norm enacted by mothers and other older adults as well as fathers (Mattson et al., 2020). The authority of men to discipline their families is understood by some Gandhi Nivas clients as integral to their gendered responsibilities as fathers, as is their responsibilities as providers, both materially and for the

moral reputation of their family (Coombes et al., 2024; Mattson et al., 2020). Although Ali's history of Police records is not as extensive as Bahati's, he had been present when his wife was victimised by another family member, and where violence is normalised to enforce authority over the movements of others. Crucial to Gandhi Nivas intervention is ensuring that men understand that violence against their family is against the law in Aotearoa New Zealand (Mattson et al., 2020), and women know that they are entitled to make decisions for themselves (Coombes et al., 2024). It is also crucial that Gandhi Nivas counsellors and social workers understand the normalisation of violence in multiple and complex social contexts. From research with the stakeholders, we are aware that they recognise the diversity within their communities, including the use of violence as a form of discipline amongst some families (Coombes et al., 2017). We make sense of the complexity of Bahati's and Ali's experience of harm in their homes as a commonality among many men who come to Gandhi Nivas with histories of victimisation as sons in their family at the hands of fathers, primarily, but also of mothers responsible for ensuring moral conduct in the father's absence from home (Mattson et al., 2020).

While we may find common threads, like evidence of normalisation of violence, or police responsiveness that prevents lethal harm, there are such differences even in these three cases that we cannot offer insights into strangulation as an offence with specific pre-conditions. For instance, Ali is unemployed, and Casey is a shift worker. Bahati stays at Gandhi Nivas longest, and Ali does not stay at all. We cannot account for engagement with Gandhi Nivas for any of the cases based on their Police records, yet Ali most clearly disengages from the referral police offer to him and while Casey stays voluntarily at first, he does not return to stay at the home of Gandhi Nivas before he harms his wife again.

The conditions of Ali, Bahati and Casey's lives were diverse, yet all involved precarious socio-economic circumstances in different community contexts where they carried gendered responsibilities to provide for their families. We appreciate that there are also patterns in the men's and women's stories that speak to social entrapment within colonial and patriarchal social power relations where coercive control is exercised through the normalisation of men's authority in the family (Mattson et al., 2020). These are conditions that Ali, Bahati and Casey share with many of the men who are clients of Gandhi Nivas,

including the three complex cases with no re-offending recorded after intake that we present next.



### Three Complex Case Studies of No Further Police Records

Dalgeet<sup>4</sup>

Dalgeet was a child under 10 years of age when he first comes to police attention in the context of family harm. He is a Punjabi youth who speaks three languages fluently: English, Punjabi and Hindi. Since he is multilingual, he is able to converse easily in three cultural settings and has grown up in a multilingual diasporic community.

When police first meet Dalgeet, he is recorded with the status of 'Other (Child)' in an investigation of four family harm related offences. Each of the offences recorded in this police encounter involved other family members (sibling and parents) who speak threateningly, and although his parents were involved, the offences were not recorded as intimate partner violence. Dalgeet's role of 'Other' at this first occurrence is ambiguous, but it does indicate that police did not believe he was an aggressor or victim. He was a child experiencing violence in his home and was present when police investigated verbal and psychological abuse occurring within his family. Dalgeet wasn't expected to give police any evidence based on his experience, since he wasn't recorded as a witness either. We know that mothers use strategies they develop to protect and minimise harm to their children (Morgan & Coombes, 2016a; Nixon et al., 2017; Radford & Hester, 2006; Wendt et al., 2015). We have also heard from women who are deeply convinced that their children are protected from harm by deep sleep through episodes of IPV against their mother (Morgan & Coombes, 2016a). Perhaps Dalgeet was sleeping, since the offences were committed at night, and are recorded as starting at 8pm, reported to police at 9pm and ending just before 10pm. Yet it is unlikely that Dalgeet was so deeply asleep that he did not experience the incident at all, and the police intervention itself was evidently experienced by Dalgeet as a child.

One year and four months later, when he has turned 10, Dalgeet is again present when police attend a family violence investigation late at night. Like the first time police meet

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<sup>4</sup> Dalgeet's record was included in the non-PSO Early Intervention group. We interpreted 10 lines of data in Dalgeet's case.

Dalgeet, he is recorded as Other at a family harm occurrence that involves his parents and siblings. However, this time, no offence charges were laid when the police attended.

Five years after this encounter, Dalgeet has his first recorded occurrence as an aggressor. This is the event that leads to his first intake at Gandhi Nivas. Dalgeet is the offender in two charges of Common Assault (Manually) against a parent and a sibling. Once again, the occurrence has happened at night. By this time, Dalgeet is in his mid-teens, and so his charges would have been processed through the youth court system. The Common Assault charges Dalgeet has to answer to at this occurrence are grouped within the 'serious assault' Police offence codes. Despite his youth, the seriousness of the violence enacted on his parent and sibling motivated police to proceed with offence charges in order to ensure the safety of his family, alongside the provision of support and intervention services for Dalgeet and his family through referral to Gandhi Nivas. Here too, seriousness is conceptualised in relation to physical assault, so that the dynamics of authority and coercive control in his circumstances are obscured.

Dalgeet's intake to Gandhi Nivas occurred on the same day as he was charged with common assault and he stayed for one day. Despite the short duration of his stay, the referral indicates that police decided the young man would be best accommodated at a Gandhi Nivas home. Given that the offending occurred late at night, and Dalgeet is young, the police have referred him to Gandhi Nivas to provide a "cool down" time for him and his family. Dalgeet is not bound by a PSO, so we do not know how long he needed to stay away from his home, if indeed he was required to do so rather than being referred by police for the opportunity of available services.

Here, we remember that Bahati's record also speaks to his youth embedded within the normalisation of family violence, though Bahati comes to Gandhi Nivas attention much later in his record of encounters with police than Dalgeet. We also acknowledge that Gandhi Nivas would have been in contact Dalgeet's family and that the men and women's stories we have heard in previous research speak of sons and young men who have experience of family histories of violence. The mothers in our research spoke of boys who have become abusive and threatening to them and other family members (Coombes et al., 2024). The

men spoke of family histories of normalised violence when they were growing up too (Mattson et al., 2020). Among Gandhi Nivas clients' families, there are teenage sons who have no longer wanted to go to school, do not want to find employment, may drink and take drugs, and can get angry and violent. These are young men with histories of experiencing abuse in the home and are becoming perpetrators themselves, for whom early intervention may be suitable. In Dalgeet's case, the resolution in the moment was that the police thought it would be beneficial for him to be removed from his family home and, like other young men, Gandhi Nivas offers Dalgeet a place to begin a process of safety where the family are offered opportunities to work towards non-violence in their lives. Gandhi Nivas have a range of resources that can help young men work towards non-violence, including organising accommodation, mentors, and work opportunities in order to negotiate good outcomes for the youth and their families.

Gandhi Nivas began housing men involved in family harm in December 2014, and Dalgeet's intake is early in Gandhi Nivas' history. It is promising to see that after his intake, Dalgeet has no further family harm indicated occurrences, especially since he is one of the clients in our dataset who had a four year follow up period with no further Police records. Dalgeet's family harm occurrence records suggests that the support and services he and his family were provided through both Police and Gandhi Nivas were successful at enabling him to live safely enough going into adulthood to no longer come to police attention.

Eddie<sup>5</sup>

Eddie is a Māori man who speaks English. He was a little older than most men at the time of his first Family Violence indicated record, in his late 40s. However, we do not assume that Eddie has not previously been involved in family harm, because of rates of underreporting.

When Eddie first comes to police attention, he is recorded as the subject of a domestic dispute that occurred in a public place and involved a partner who he was living with at the time. No charges are recorded, and Eddie is not bound by a PSO on this first occasion. Police intervention seems limited to attending and recording a specific event that was brought to their attention. Violence in a public place indicates a level of normalisation of violence where social sanctions do not deter assaults that are witnessable by others. Despite this being Eddie's first recorded police intervention, the lack of concern for social sanctions indicates more extensive experiences of violence in Eddie's family history.

After this incident, it is over 2 years until his next family harm indicated record and his intake to Gandhi Nivas. On this occasion, Eddie is recorded as an aggressor multiple times: as a subject of a family violence investigation, as a suspect in multiple offences and as a person bound by multiple PSOs. Considerable harm has taken place over a period of an hour, late at night. There are other family members, adults and children whose victimisation police are concerned with. Conceptualising violence as an eruption of physical harm in the context of ongoing coercive control provides us with a context in which it is sensible that Eddie's social context normalises violence and his control over his family to an extent where it is primarily hidden from view. The harms that police suspect Eddie has perpetrated when he is referred to Gandhi Nivas are serious eruptions of physical violence in his home.

Eddie is suspected of 12 common assault charges, with two of the assaults victimising his partner and other assaults directed at his children, and possibly grandchildren. Six Child Protection Reports are recorded, and we interpret the concern of the police for the children's safety to be clear in their issuing separate PSOs to bind Eddie for their protection.

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<sup>5</sup> Eddie's record was included in the PSO Extended Intervention Group. We interpreted 30 lines of data in Eddie's case.

One PSO is also issued to protect Eddie's partner. Eddie's intake to Gandhi Nivas occurs after police decide that their suspicion of Eddie's harm towards his children and partner requires an immediate response. We interpret the lack of offender records in Eddie's file for this occurrence as meaning there was insufficient evidence to charge him at the time.

When Eddie is referred to Gandhi Nivas, he has steady employment suggesting that financial precarity may not be affecting him and his family; although if he is the only provider, he may still be earning less than needed to cover their costs. Underemployment is also a concern for many of the families that Gandhi Nivas support (Coombes et al., 2024; Mattson et al., 2020).

Eddie stays at Gandhi Nivas for one day, the duration of the PSO issued to him, and it is likely that 24 hours after a significant family harm event occurred, Eddie returns home to the house where his partner and children live. It is likely that both the police and Eddie have regarded his PSO as a "cooling off" period for him and his family, however it is little time for support to be put into place for anyone involved in the offences.

There are no further Police records involving Eddie after his stay at Gandhi Nivas. Despite knowing that Sahaayta would have been in contact with Eddie's family, we don't know whether or not they engaged with support offered to them. We do not know whether his whānau became protected by longer term Protection Orders, as did some of the women we spoke with in previous research (Coombes et al., 2024). When thinking about the lack of further records after such a serious family harm event has occurred, it is possible that this reflects Eddie's whānau's distrust of police intervention. We have known for some time that Māori are overrepresented in the criminal justice system (Department of Corrections, 2007; Ministry of Justice, 2009) and in the context of Māori overrepresentation, it is also not unthinkable that Eddie may serve a term of imprisonment if sufficient evidence is gathered for the offences he is suspected of. Just as we do not assume that Eddie has no other prior history of harming his partner and children, we cannot assume he has become safer in his family on the basis of Police records alone.

Frank<sup>6</sup>

Frank is a Niuean man who speaks English, Niuean and Tongan, and is in his early twenties when he has his first encounter with police in the context of family harm. At this first encounter, Frank is recorded as the subject of Domestic Disputes<sup>7</sup> involving one of Frank's parents and two 'other relatives', indicating that the people harmed in this family harm incident included not only members of Frank's immediate family, but also wider family members.

The second time Frank comes to police attention, it is four months later. Once again, Frank is the subject of a Domestic Dispute, and at this occurrence, in addition to harming immediate family, we also note that intimate partner violence has been introduced early in his Police records. When police see Frank, he has harmed one of his parents and his girlfriend. As in the first time police meet Frank, no charges were laid on his occasion, nor was a PSO issued for the protection of any family members or his girlfriend.

Just over five months later, Frank is again the subject of two Domestic Disputes involving Frank's parent and girlfriend. Again, we see that Frank's violence is not directed towards relatives or partner only, and instead Frank's household experiences intergenerational violence perpetrated by a child and a boyfriend. It is the third time in two years that police investigate Frank in the context of family harm without charges laid or PSOs issued. It is possible that underreporting means other family violence didn't draw police attention, yet we also recognise that coercive control is not policed in the context of justice systems that privilege episodes of physical and sexual violence. Although there's no evidence of escalation of recorded or reported physical violence prior to Frank's intake at Gandhi Nivas, his pre-intake record does show police attention for violence in Frank and his family's lives for almost two years.

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<sup>6</sup> Frank's record was included in the PSO Extended group. We analysed 23 lines of data in Frank's case.

<sup>7</sup> Frank's record includes earlier coding of Family Violence as Domestic Disputes. Police introduced Family Violence Investigations during the period over which our data was collected (Morgan et al., 2020).

It is over a year before Frank's record includes a significantly serious family violence episode. At this point, Frank is in his mid twenties and it is this serious episode that leads to Frank's referral to Gandhi Nivas. As with previous episodes, Frank's violence this time involved more than one member of his family. Frank was charged with four Male Assaults Female offences, where he has assaulted his girlfriend once and his mother three times. He is also charged with wilful damage of property belonging to his girlfriend and his parents. While Frank is charged, the police decide to issue him with PSOs as well: three to protect parents and one to protect his girlfriend. In Frank's transgenerational household, police are concerned for the threats to all his adult relatives and his girlfriend. Threats are significant in situations of coercive control: they act as deterrence from resistance to the authority of the perpetrator (Stark, 2009). Although there were no previous records indicating escalation of violence, the serious harms that Frank is charged with are an eruption of violence that we interpret as punishment for resistance to his authority.

As the record indicates multiple offences against his mother and girlfriend, Frank's violence on this occasion was directed towards women members of his family. Women and children are primarily subjected to men's coercive control within families, since they are accorded the status of authorities over the family's lives in many colonised, patriarchal social contexts (Mattson et al., 2020).

When Frank came to Gandhi Nivas, he was bound for three days by the PSOs protecting his family and he stayed at the home for the full duration of his order. He returned to Gandhi Nivas just over a month later as a self-referred client. Then, four days after leaving the home, Frank self-referred again, staying another seven days. Over this time, Frank's employment circumstances change significantly. At his intake, Frank was working as a dispatcher. When he returned the first time, he was still employed, but in a different position. On his third intake, he was unemployed. It is possible that the offending Frank has been charged with has had consequences for his employment, and it is likely that his unemployment is stressful for himself and his family. His self-referral at a time of stress suggests that Frank and his family have recognised the need for, and benefit of, reconnecting with the services Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta provide. In total, Frank spent a much longer period of time within a shorter space than other men in our sample.

Frank did not return a fourth time to Gandhi Nivas, nor were there any further police reports of Frank harming his family. As with other cases, we cannot assume that lack of records means lack of violence in the home, however Frank's pattern of engagement with Gandhi Nivas is different and we are hopeful of changes that increase safety and security for him and his family.



## Accounting for Cases with No Further Records

Our earlier three case studies involved complex family relationships where strangulation offences are the final records in our data set. In the second three case studies, complex family relationships are also involved in Police records, yet the final records in our data set show no further incidents of police attending family violence episodes in their home after intake to Gandhi Nivas.

In the three cases with no further records after intake, we chose to narrate the complexity of Gandhi Nivas clients' encounters with police for family violence episodes. Dalgeet, Eddie and Frank have no prior offence records until their intake episode, yet there are differences in their journeys to intake. All men have been involved in family violence incidents, at home or in public, with one or more other family members. However, Dalgeet's journey traces involvement from a young age and includes records where he is a non-aggressor, whereas both Eddie and Frank only come to police attention as aggressors of family harm and have not been recorded as a victim or a witness to family violence.

In each case, Gandhi Nivas intake is the clients' last Police record for family violence during the follow up period of at least two years. In one case, Dalgeet, the follow up period is 4 years, a relatively long period of not coming to police attention. While we do not know whether the men have come to police attention after 2019, the follow up years for their families didn't involve the crisis of police intervention for protecting their families again.

Although both Eddie and Frank were not recorded as offenders prior to their intake at Gandhi Nivas, they were allocated to the extended intervention groups because of the number of offences recorded at the time of their intake. We do not assume that Eddie, Frank or Dalgeet have not previously perpetrated physical violence against members of their family. Underreporting, as we have previously discussed, obscures traces of any violence the men may already have perpetrated. Nor do we assume that their partners and families have not experienced the harms of coercive control and social entrapment, where the privileging of physical violence within justice system practices and processes obscures patterns of

coercive control, intimidation and manipulation in the context of men's violence towards women and children.

We also remember the normalisation of violence within Bahati's family interpreted through their willingness to enact violence in public. Eddie too, has a record of public violence, which is the first time he comes to police attention as the subject of a domestic dispute. The ambiguity of Eddie's role as being someone investigated for intimate partner violence, yet not offending or becoming a suspect does suggest that he is neither a witness nor a victim in the incident. His involvement in the incident is at least suspicious of threatening harm to his partner. Unlike Bahati, no other members of Eddie's family were involved in the public incident, so we have no indication of whether violence is normalised in Eddie's wider family, though we are well aware that colonial violence perpetrated against Māori brings intergenerational traumas disproportionately into many whānau homes (Wilson, 2016).

## **Journeys of Six Men Referred to Gandhi Nivas (as Told by Police Statistics)**

Our narrative engagement with the Police records of six men referred to Gandhi Nivas speaks to the similarities and differences in their journeys through family harm and interventional response. Our first three case studies spoke of men's journeys to serious harm, with their last recorded offence being that of strangulation. The second three case studies explored the journeys of men who had no further records after their intake to Gandhi Nivas. Whilst all six case studies suggest journeys embedded in complex family relationships and multiple encounters with police, there are also many differences that manifest the complexity of responding to family violence in our communities.

Within the narratives of serious harm and no further records after intake, we see differences and similarities in police involvement before and at the time of referral to Gandhi Nivas. Ali encountered the police once before intake and was bound by multiple PSOs when he entered the home. Bahati has encounters with police multiple times for many years prior to intake and was referred to Gandhi Nivas as a condition of bail. Casey has no history of encounters with police prior to his intake and is not bound by a PSO or subject to bail conditions when he is referred. Dalgeet met police first as a child and has several encounters with police prior to intake where, like Casey, he was not required to stay at Gandhi Nivas due to PSO or bail conditions. Eddie, like Ali, only had one encounter with police prior to his referral, and is subject to multiple PSOs at the time of his intake. Frank has multiple encounters with police prior to intake at Gandhi Nivas and, like Ali and Eddie, enters the home with multiple PSOs. While all of the men came to Gandhi Nivas in response to a police referral, the conditions under which they interacted with police were considerably different.

We also see similarities and differences in the histories of family harm in Police records before and at the time of the men's intake. Ali had been present at family harm occurrences before his referral but was only identified as an aggressor at his intake event. At intake, his violence involved violence against women: both IPV and the harm of another woman family member. In the many encounters with police prior to his intake, Bahati has been the victim and a person at risk of, and witness to, family harm and IPV. However, like Ali, he was never

identified as an aggressor until his intake event. And, like Ali, at intake, Bahati's violence involves IPV and violence against other women family members. Casey's intake event, and first record, is in the context of IPV only and involves no other family members. Dalgeet, like Ali and Bahati, was present when police investigated family violence in his home prior to intake but was not identified as an aggressor of violence until his intake event, where his violence did not involve IPV, but instead harm against a parent and sibling. Although Eddie was not identified as an aggressor prior to intake, he was the subject of a family harm investigation involving IPV prior to referral and at intake, where his violence involves IPV as well as violence against children. Frank, like Eddie, has multiple encounters with police as a subject of a family harm investigation prior to intake. His first encounter with police as a subject of a family harm investigation involved a parent and two other relatives, and subsequent occurrences prior to intake involved not only parents, but also his partner. As for others, we see Frank's first record as an aggressor at his intake event, in the context of IPV and violence against his mother. These narrative histories point to the complexity of relationships and experiences concerning IPV and family harm, and the diverse individual contexts, that Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta services must respond to when meeting the men at the home for the first time. Among the men's histories, some have experienced victimisation and all but one engage in gender-based violence against a partner; however even this exception practices gender-based violence against his mother.

We also see diversity in the men's employment conditions when entering the home of Gandhi Nivas. At the time of intake, Ali, Bahati and Dalgeet are unemployed, whereas Frank first enters the home employed, but experiences job loss before he leaves the home for the last time. Casey is employed in low wage shift work, and Eddie has steady employment. The men's employment status is representative of the men who are referred to Gandhi Nivas, the majority of whom are unemployed, or employed in low-wage positions (Morgan et al., 2020). Amongst the complexity of the men's relationships and histories of violence, Gandhi Nivas also responds to the men's precarious socioeconomic circumstances.

We recognise no pattern of similarities and differences with the men's engagement at the home of Gandhi Nivas as indicated by the length of their stay and their willingness to return. Ali does not stay at all at the home after intake, Dalgeet and Eddie stay for one day, and

Bahati, Casey and Frank all have lengthy stays, with Frank returning multiple times as a self-referral to receive the help and support Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta provide. The differences in the ways in which the men respond to the availability of Gandhi Nivas seems unrelated to the outcomes of their cases, except perhaps for Frank who is the most frequent to self-refer and has no further records of family harm after intake.

When hearing the journeys the Police records tell of family harm after intake, whilst Dalgeet, Eddie and Frank all share a journey of no further police recorded violence, this journey leads to serious harm for the families of Ali, Bahati and Casey. Both Ali and Casey come to police attention two more times after their intake to Gandhi Nivas. Ali meets police twice within months after leaving the home. The first time Ali sees police again, he is witness to violence involving his partner, siblings and parents, and the last time, he strangles his wife and mother. Casey does not see police for a longer period of time after his stay at the home, but, like Ali, meets police firstly as a non-aggressor, where he is present in the context of an investigation involving IPV, and finally when he strangles his partner. Like Ali, Bahati also comes to police attention within months after leaving Gandhi Nivas, and over the course of almost two years has multiple encounters with police. In this time, he is a subject of family harm investigations, and an offender, in multiple occurrences of IPV and violence against his mother and other women. On one occasion, he is the victim, and person at risk, of his partner's, parents' and another person's violence. His last encounter is when he strangles his partner, step-parents and step-children in a public place. Whilst the journeys of the men in the serious harm group lead to strangulation, it is clear that the paths towards serious harm are diverse. Ali and Bahati's journeys both see them having encounters with police soon after leaving Gandhi Nivas, and involve IPV, violence against other family members, and in Bahati's case, also other people and children. Casey is not violent for a while after his intake, and his violence is isolated to the context of IPV. The differences in the men's journeys are not necessarily indicative of differences in the normalisation of violence in their families, since it is possible that Casey's record is a consequence of underreporting.

Although it may be that for the cases with no further records the men engaged well with the support and services provided by Gandhi Nivas and Sahaayta, we do not have evidence of how the men engaged with the help and support they were offered. It's unlikely that Ali did engage, given he did not stay at the house to participate in the services available there. We can also see Casey stays despite not being required to through PSO or bail conditions, and with Frank we can see multiple points of engagement with his self-referred returns. However, the data that the narratives emerged from cannot answer questions about how the men did or did not take up the help and support offered, and in what ways. Even without answers to such questions, it is evident from those who stay and their families that the services provided by Gandhi Nivas are a vital opportunity for intervention (Coombes et al., 2024; Mattson et al., 2020).

Furthermore, we cannot confidently conclude that the absence of police recorded records in any of the men's cases (either for specific time periods, or after intake) represents the absence of violence in these men's lives. We have talked previously about how Police records can obscure changes in relationships and social circumstances (such as de-coupling, abandonment of family, imprisonment or relocation), and are subject to the underreporting of family harm and changes in criminal justice processes. We have also spoken of how incident-based evidence and measurement within criminal justice processes and practices conceptualise domestic violence as organised hierarchically around risks identified by authorities. Such conceptualisations are unable to account for women's experiences of the multiple harms of coercive control, social entrapment and institutional abuse. Risk to women's and children's safety is unpredictable based on incident and offence histories, and the narratives that emerge from our engagement with records of police intervention for family violence provide evidence of the unpredictability of risk and safety. However, what we can see from the narrative case studies is that Police and Gandhi Nivas continue to respond and intervene in an attempt to prevent lethal harm, hold men accountable for their violence and support their victims and families.

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