

09 September 2022

C154465

S 9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 8 July 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information about mental health. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Please accept our apologies for the delay in providing the response to you.

We recognise the demand for mental health services across New Zealand and are fully committed to improving the mental health and wellbeing of people in prison, helping them better engage in the education, rehabilitation, and employment programmes we know will help them to live crime free on release from prison.

The mental health services provided in prisons do not replace the services provided by Forensic Mental Health Services, however, while someone is in custody, we make every effort to support and improve their mental wellbeing, ensure their physical safety, and to treat them with dignity and respect. We are often required to manage some of New Zealand's most unwell people in a custodial environment, including, at times, people waiting for a bed in a dedicated forensic mental health facility outside Corrections. This can be extremely challenging for our frontline staff who do an incredible job working with often volatile and vulnerable people.

While our prison-based services are not designed to support people with severe mental illness, we are doing more than ever in the area of mental health and are being proactive in ensuring people in prison have access to the specialist mental health support they need. We have a range of work underway to improve the mental health support for people we manage. This includes doing more to upskill our frontline staff in identifying and managing people's needs and ensuring they have the appropriate tools and resources to keep people safe from harm.

When a person enters prison, our immediate priority is to ensure their mental and physical health. Each new person to prison undergoes an induction process, which includes health staff assessing their health needs, including any mental health needs they have, whether they may be at risk of self-harm or suicide and whether they require a referral to a prison

doctor. This assessment assists us to determine whether they should be accommodated in an Intervention and Support Unit (ISU) for a period of time. A review of an individual's at risk status is carried out in a wide range of circumstances including when someone returns from court, following an inter-prison transfer, if force is used against them, if parole is deferred for two or more years, following a change in family circumstances, confirmation that an individual has been diagnosed with a serious or terminal illness, if they begin to display negative signs or change in mood or behaviour, or if information is received about them that causes staff concern.

An ISU is a safe environment with a multi-disciplinary team approach to patient care. People in these units are closely monitored, have access to specialised care, and have individualised plans to help them to return to a state of wellbeing and return to their unit on site, or to receive ongoing support while they wait for a bed in an inpatient mental health facility.

In Budget 2017, Ara Poutama Aotearoa received funding to improve intervention and support for people in prison at risk of self-harm and suicide. The Intervention and Support Project introduced multi-disciplinary teams of psychologists, occupational therapists, mental health nurses, social workers, and cultural support workers. These multi-disciplinary teams provide earlier assessments, develop individualised plans and provide therapeutic interventions and support that is flexible to an individual's changing needs. The intention of these teams is to provide better and more enduring outcomes for psychological wellbeing.

Intervention and Support Practice Teams (ISPTs) were initially established at Christchurch Men's Prison, Auckland Prison and Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility. At these sites, clinical supervision and support are offered to health and custodial staff, and education was provided to staff to build awareness and knowledge of mental health and addictions-related behaviours. The clear and concerted focus on staff training reflects the need to support the wellbeing and upskilling of staff dealing with some of the most vulnerable people in prison.

Additional funding from Budget 2019 has allowed us to continue improving services to meet the needs of people with moderate to severe mental distress. In 2021, three new ISPTs were established at Rimutaka Prison, Mt. Eden Corrections Facility and Spring Hill Corrections Facility. One further ISPT is currently being established at Otago Corrections Facility. Initially, ISPTs worked primarily in ISUs, however, this has since expanded to include the provision of support for people experiencing moderate to severe mental illness in all units across each prison site.

Additional specialist mental health support is provided by Clinical Nurse Specialists (Mental Health) at nine prisons where ISPTs are not active. Clinical Nurse Specialists provide clinical services to individuals with moderate to high mental health needs. In addition to this, they provide expertise to triage referrals and help to coordinate the care that individuals receive. Clinical Nurse Specialists are not only located in ISUs but work across all units within a prison.

We have also expanded supervision and training to custodial staff working in all of our ISUs, and started to deliver training on understanding and effectively engaging and working with

people with complex behaviours and personality disorders. Foundational mental health training (Mental Health 101 training) commenced for all frontline custodial staff in mid-2021.

In 2020 we also restructured our Health Services to align with our departmental strategy, Hōkai Rangi. The new structure supports a stronger collaboration between national office, regional mental health and health leadership. Other changes include establishing specialist heads of profession, with a strong focus on delivering a model of care that best meets the needs of Māori as an overrepresented group in our prisons. As an example, a Chief Māori Health Officer role was established to strengthen our approach to addressing health inequity issues for Māori progressing towards pae ora (healthy futures), and my role was created to strengthen and expand mental health and addiction services.

Ara Poutama Aotearoa is currently developing a new 500 bed facility at Waikeria Prison, with an additional 100 beds in a dedicated mental health and addiction service named Hikitia. Construction is underway on the new facility. The development represents a significant investment in strengthening mental health services and providing more rehabilitation, education and training space and opportunities for people in prison. Hikitia will be the first of its kind in Aotearoa New Zealand. We have worked in partnership with Raukawa and Ngāti Maniapoto mana whenua and iwi, and the Waikato District Health Board to design the Mana Whenua – Ahi Kā Model of Care for the new service and an implementation plan.

You requested:

Please provide copies of briefings, reports, memos, aide memoires, presentations or other key documents provided to ministers or the department's senior officials that were created in 2022 and relate to the following:

- 1. Mental health needs of the NZ prison population and the support provided to them by Corrections;*
- 2. The need for DHB-provided specialist forensic mental health services and problems accessing this support.*
- 3. The condition of prisoners who required DHB-provided specialist forensic mental health support but were not able to access it in a timely fashion.*

On 20 July 2022, Ara Poutama Aotearoa transferred your request for documents received by the Minister of Corrections to his office. The Minister of Corrections will provide you with a response in due course.

The importance of the health and wellbeing of people in prison cannot be overlooked. This is especially true since prison populations tend to have some of the highest and most complex needs—including a high prevalence of people with serious, often life-threatening, conditions.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Whakamaua (Māori Health Action Plan 2020 – 2025) and the New Zealand Health Strategy (2016) underpin the vision of Ara Poutama Aotearoa Health Services. This vision is one in which all will “live well, stay well, get well.” It is also a vision

that seeks to facilitate collaborations with stakeholders that meet existing and emerging needs, and which ensures our service is overall well placed to achieve better health outcomes for Māori.

This vision is also consistent with Hōkai Rangi (2019 – 2024), which advocates that we must do better for the people in our care. In particular, it advocates that we must work to advance health equity for Māori, particularly through engagement and partnership with both iwi and Māori providers from the wider health sector.

To understand the health needs of the people in prison, Ara Poutama Aotearoa conducted a health needs assessment which is a systemic review of the health issues faced by people in prison, including unmet health needs. Overall, it seeks to:

- Understand the burden of disease among people in our care.
- Build a picture of the current Ara Poutama Health Service.
- Understand how we can advance Māori health and achieve health equity for Māori.
- Target efficiency—are resources being appropriately directed? Are those in need of health services receiving them?
- Inform future work planning—the services that are required, their effectiveness and potential benefits.

Please find enclosed as Appendix One – Health Needs Assessment – September 2021. Furthermore, enclosed as Appendix Two – Understanding the wellness of our people and impacts of COVID-19 on those in prison environments. Appendix Two provides analytical insights into the information gathered in the Health Needs Assessment.

While these documents do not solely focus on the mental health need of people in prison, it is important to provide information on both mental and physical health as part of a holistic health system.

In 2022, Ara Poutama Aotearoa launched a new Suicide Prevention and Postvention Action Plan 2022 – 2025. This action plan signals the commitment of Ara Poutama Aotearoa to take deliberate and targeted action to address the problem of suicide for those in our care and management and their whānau. The overarching aim of the plan is to reduce the number of unnatural deaths that occur among those in our care, however this is not the only goal. The development of this plan also provides a timely opportunity to review the range of supports that we are providing, and to consider what more we can be doing. It also provides a good opportunity to reflect on how we go about creating conditions and environments for the individuals in our care and management and their whānau to thrive.

Alongside other key strategic documents, our action plan was also heavily influenced by Every Life Matters – He Tapu te Oranga o ia Tangata: Suicide Prevention Strategy 2019–2029 and Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2019–2024 for Aotearoa New Zealand. Using the framework outlined in Every Life Matters as a guide, our action plan was developed with the understanding that reducing suicide requires collective effort and action. Our action plan was developed with recognition that there are many factors that contribute to suicide, and therefore many points of intervention. This means that efforts aimed at promoting

wellbeing, efforts aimed at supporting those in distress, and efforts aimed at supporting individuals and whānau who might be impacted by a suicide event are all given equal consideration in this plan.

Please find enclosed a copy of the Suicide Prevention and Postvention Action Plan 2022 – 2025 as Appendix Three.

Additionally, Ara Poutama Aotearoa conducted a study in 2016, into the co-morbid substance use disorders and mental health disorders among New Zealand prisoners. This study is publicly available on our website [here](#).

Please also provide the following data:

4. *The number of prisoners who receive mental health support and/or addiction from Corrections annually.*

In the 2021/22 financial year, Intervention and Support Practice Teams (ISPT) and Clinical-Nurse Specialist Mental Health delivered mental health services for 8,966 people. A number of the consultations are mental health screens and brief interventions, but the data also includes more intensive therapeutic work.

Mental health clinicians employed by contracted providers also provide mental health support as part of Ara Poutama Aotearoa's Improving Mental Health Service (IMHS). The number of people in prison who receive support from IMHS is not readily available and would require significant time to collate. However, during the 2021/22 financial year there were 3,197 people referred to this service. This number includes referrals which may have been declined for a range of reasons.

5. *The number of mental health and addictions staff (eg psychologists) employed by Corrections.*

As of 30 June 2022, there were 67.6 mental health established FTE, of which 45.2 FTE were filled. The remaining 22.4 FTE were vacant. These are practitioners are in ISPTs and Clinical Nurse Specialists – Mental Health.

As of 30 June 2022, there were 39 mental health clinician established FTE who are employed by providers contracted by Ara Poutama Aotearoa to deliver the Improving Mental Health Service (IMHS). Of the 39 FTE, 33.44 FTE were filled. The remaining 5.56 FTE were vacant.

6. *The number of prisoners who receive DHB-provided specialist forensic care annually, including inpatient admissions.*
7. *The number of prisoners currently on a waiting list for DHB-provided specialist forensic treatment and the amount of time the longest-waiting prisoner has been waiting for treatment.*

Ara Poutama Aotearoa does not centrally collate this information and it is only held on a person's medical file. To provide this information, we would need to manually check

individual files. Therefore, this request is declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA as it requires substantial collation or research.

As per Section 18B we have considered whether consulting with you would enable the request to be made in a form that would remove the reason for the refusal. However, we do not consider that the request can be refined in this instance, as it is specific in its request and requires manual collation.

In regard to question seven, Ara Poutama Aotearoa does not hold the DHB waiting list for people waiting for specialist forensic treatment. We contacted the Ministry of Health on 27 July 2022 enquiring if the Ministry of Health, Health New Zealand, or the individual District Health Boards can answer this request. We are still awaiting their formal response on this enquiry.

Please note that this response may be published on Corrections' website. Typically, responses are published quarterly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. I encourage you to raise any concerns about this response with Corrections. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Ngā mihi



Juanita Ryan
Deputy Chief Executive
Health Services