

19 July 2022

C153604

S 9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe S 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 20 June 2022 to the Department of Corrections – Ara Poutama Aotearoa, requesting information older elderly people managed by Corrections. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Corrections manages some of the most complex and vulnerable people within our society. People in prison are known to have limited access to health care in their communities prior to entering prison and are therefore likely to have unmet health needs. While older people (those aged over 65 years) are a small proportion of our prison population, they often have high and complex health needs that require specialist management to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing while in our care.

Corrections is legislatively required to provide people in prison with healthcare reasonably equivalent to primary-level care in the community. More information on the services we provide can be found on Corrections' website at the following link:
https://www.corrections.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/44398/Annual_Report_2020_2021_Final_Web.pdf.

In addition to the primary-level care provided in prisons, Corrections has a High Dependency Unit (HDU) at Rimutaka Prison. The HDU is a specialist unit that accommodates up to 30 people who may have health conditions described as age-related or have complex health and disability needs. These may include cognitive impairment, medical conditions or injuries and disability where there is a requirement for assistance to support their day-to-day activities of daily living.

Corrections has also established relationships with the various Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) teams, which are an agency within each District Health Board (DHB) that assesses health and disability needs for people in their community. Each DHB of the referring prison can be approached to provide an assessment to determine the level of care and support services required.

Corrections' health services are underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Whakamaua (Māori Health Action Plan 2020 – 2025) and the New Zealand Health Strategy (2016), alongside our organisational strategy, *Hōkai Rangī*, which advocates that we must do better for the people in our care and prioritise the wellbeing of the people who come into our management.

Hōkai Rangī can be found on Corrections' website at the following link:

https://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/strategic_reports/corrections_strategic_plans/hokai_rangi.

You requested:

'...It appears that the last report on the care of older adults (65+) within the prison system was conducted back in 2020, on data from 2019. Given the ageing of the NZ population generally, has there been an increase in the numbers or has the older prison population numbers remained fairly static?'

Please see below a graph displaying data for period January 2019 to May 2022.



Also, what are the current numbers of those aged 65+ within the prison system?

As of 31 May 2022, there were 298 people aged 65 years and above being managed in New Zealand prisons.

When will the next report be conducted and has there been any review update of the status of care since the 2020 report?

Thematic inspections by the operationally independent Corrections Inspectorate help to promote a culture of continuous improvement within Corrections and are used to enhance our management of people in the corrections system, and our practice, procedures, and policies. The thematic report was the first Thematic report of its kind. Thematic reviews and reports are carried out on an as needs basis, therefore there is no set date for the next Thematic report.

The Thematic report about the conditions and treatment of older people within prison provided valuable independent feedback for Corrections. A key outcome from this review is the development of the Ageing Well Framework to respond to the age-related needs of older people in our care and assist in the management of their health needs. This framework includes five focus areas that are aligned to the Ministry of Health 2016 Healthy Ageing Strategy – ageing well, living well with long-term conditions, acute and restorative care, supporting people with high and complex needs, and a respectful end of life.

The report found, overall, that older people's basic needs were generally being met. Corrections staff demonstrated innovation, care and respectful decision-making. However, it stated there was increasing demand for prisons to provide care home-type environments for many older prisoners and for staff to support their specific needs.

The National Commissioner responded to the Thematic report by acknowledging that a robust health framework, complemented by a holistic understanding of wellbeing, will provide a solid foundation for each person's plan of care and equitable health outcomes for all people in our care and management. Health Services are currently leading the development of an Ageing Well Action Plan and have identified five focus areas which align to the Ministry of Health 2016 Healthy Ageing Strategy – ageing well, living well with long term conditions, acute and restorative care, supporting people with high and complex needs, and a respectful end of life. Alongside this, *Hōkai Rangi*, gives staff a clear direction that all efforts they make are to ensure the wellness and wellbeing of people. The Ara Poutama Aotearoa Ageing Well action plan is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

In addition to the work mentioned above, Health Services have developed a Disability Action Plan which is nearing its final stages for approval. Through this process enhanced disability focused questions (formally known as the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability) have been included in our health assessments which provide a mechanism for assessing vision, hearing, communication, mobility, activities of daily living and cognition.

Corrections intends to carry out a further assessment of the health issues faced by people in our care to ensure we adequately understand and are responsive to people's health needs. Through a developing Health Equity and Outcomes reporting function, we will be able to review identified clinical indicators via demographic age bands which will provide information to support the delivery of services to meet the needs of older people.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Donnison', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alexandra Donnison
Principal Adviser Ministerial Services