

MENTAL HEALTH PACKAGE FOR OFFENDERS

June 2016

A recent study has shown that 62% of newly received prisoners had experienced either a mental disorder or substance use disorder in the last 12 months.

A new \$14 million mental health package will provide targeted treatment and care for offenders and their families.

What does it include?

The \$14 million package includes new mental health services for offenders in prison and the community, supported accommodation, counselling for women prisoners and a post-release wrap-around family support service for those with mental health needs.

Contracted service providers will work with individuals experiencing mental health issues and provide support to staff managing these cases. The aim is to create integrated care services, ensuring the best possible outcomes for offenders. Psychiatric, psychological and forensic clinicians will work with offenders to stabilise and enhance their mental health and build the capacity and capability of custodial or probation staff who manage offenders experiencing mental health issues.

Within the prison, the contracted professionals will collaborate with health staff to ensure prisoners receive the best possible treatment and care for their mental health issues. Increased access to mental health services would be available in all prisons and in four Community Corrections pilot districts.

This will enable the contracted providers to employ approximately 32 mental health practitioners to work in prisons and 22 in the community. Nine counsellors and social workers will be employed at the three women's prisons.

It also includes funding for a Police-led initiative to improve the process for sharing information between justice sector agencies regarding an offender's mental health history.

Who will it benefit?

We estimate that between 9,000-10,000 offenders will be eligible for these proposed new services each year. Of course, it is not just the offenders who are being helped, but their families and communities too. In addition, the wrap-around family support service will help around 400 families over two years.

How will you know it is working?

The mental health package has funding for two years, and there will be robust evaluation carried out to ensure it has been effective.

The department will evaluate engagement in mental health services, participation in rehabilitation programmes, education and employment activities. We will also monitor incidents of harmful behaviour, suicide and self-harm rates and rates of compliance with sentence conditions. In addition, service providers' contracts will be based on outcomes, programme retention and completion.

A copy of the research report is available on the Corrections website:

www.corrections.govt.nz