

2023 GENERAL ELECTION

KEY MESSAGES

Platform Charitable Trust

These are the actions that the next Government should take to improve the mental health and addiction system and services, and reduce systemic inequalities across society.

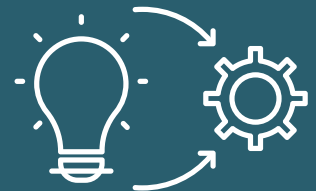
1

Back the strength, skills, and solutions we have in the community.



2

Act on the work that has been done – be courageous.



3

Fight the reasons behind inequality, like poverty, housing, and income.



4

Save lives by changing how Aotearoa supports people with mental health and addiction needs.





Back the strength, skills, and solutions we have in the community.

The NGO and community sector needs investment and resourcing to provide an effective range of community-led solutions that really enable whānau centered service responses. This will allow innovative, community-based solutions that support early intervention and maintain strong community connections to support better mental health, addiction, and wellbeing outcomes. Actions towards this would include:

- **Staff should be paid for the work that they do, not where they work.** Removing barriers that hinder the performance of NGO and community providers, such as a lack of pay parity between the community sector and Te Whatu Ora district services, addressing auditing and multiple contract burden, and applying relational commissioning approaches to the funding of services.
- **Supporting people in acute mental distress**, by investing in options for acute and crisis specialist community-led supports, such as community-based peer-led crisis services.
- **Taking action to invest and build a future mental health and addiction workforce**, prioritising peer and lived experience workforces, Māori, Pasifika, and culturally appropriate workforces.
- **Investing and supporting digital mental health and addiction resources** and support the mental health and addiction workforce to use digital health.



Act on the work that has been done – be courageous.

The health and disability system reform and the establishment of Te Whatu Ora-Health New Zealand and Te Aka Whai Ora-Māori Health Authority, gives us the opportunity to turn intentions into better mental health and addiction outcomes. Actions towards this would include:

- **The hard work has been done, now we need implementation and accountability**, by ensuring investment in mental health and addiction priority actions in Kia Manawanui Aotearoa¹ and Te Pae Tata², that seek to maximise Aotearoa's mental wellbeing and reduce inequalities in outcomes.
- **Championing the delivery of community-led solutions and services**, by investing in the implementation and practical aspects of the national mental health and addiction system and services framework. This will support diverse and highly specialised community-led supports, improve integration of services, and remove the current silo configuration of mental health and addiction services.
- **Investing in data gathering that provides up-to-date population mental health and addiction needs**, alongside supporting improvements in NGO and community service data processes and integration and supporting people with lived experience to inform system and service improvements.



Fight the reasons behind inequality, such as poverty, housing, and income.

This involves supporting and investing in the inclusion of wider social determinants within mental health and addiction services and supports, working across multiple domains to achieve better outcomes for tāngata whai ora and whānau. This would include looking at contributors such as poverty, employment, housing, engagement with the justice system, institutionalised racism, physical health, and educational opportunities. Actions towards this would include:

- **Ensuring people with serious mental health and addiction needs have appropriate and sustainable housing options**, especially following incarceration and acute residential or inpatient mental health and addiction stays.
- **Taking action to reduce the number of people with serious mental health and addiction needs who die prematurely of physical health conditions**, including through awareness of funded medicines, vaccines, and screening that can reduce mortality risk.
- **Investing in employment support for people with mental health and addiction needs who are unemployed**, reviewing disability benefits and expanding access to Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in specialist mental health and addiction services.



Save lives by changing how Aotearoa supports people with mental health and addiction needs.

This involves improving the legislative and regulatory environment to support a positive wellbeing approach, and amending stigmatising and discriminatory legislation that negatively impacts on people's mental health, addiction, and wellbeing. Action towards this would be:

- **Investing in public health services and health promotion** to raise awareness and understanding of mental health, addiction, and gambling stigma, discrimination, and bias, and prevent loss of life through suicide.
- **Reviewing and amending gambling acts, drug acts, alcohol reform, and related legislation**, to reduce gambling and drug-related harm and discrimination in communities.
- **Completing the process to repeal and replace the Mental Health Act**, so that it reflects a human right-based approach, promotes supported decision-making, aligns with the recovery model of mental health, and provides measures to minimise compulsory or coercive treatment.

Background

Mental health, addiction, and wellbeing remain paramount to maintaining the overall health of New Zealanders. However, to support the future services needs of tāngata whai ora (people seeking wellness) and whānau in communities, significant resourcing of implementation and increased accountability is needed.

We know that mental distress is common; research shows that between four in five adults have experienced mental distress personally or among people they know³. Further to this, the most recent population level data on diagnostic criteria suggests that one in five adults in 2003/04 met diagnostic criteria for a mental health condition or substance use disorder in the year prior⁴.

In terms of accessing services, from July 2021-June 2022⁵, 114,500 people were seen in the community through the Access and Choice programme funded through the 2019 Wellbeing Budget. However, we know that access to more intensive specialist mental health and addiction services is difficult, with only 191,053 people (3.7% of the population) accessing these services [1] across 2020-2021⁴.

We commend the Government's recent successes in the mental health, addiction, and wellbeing space, including establishing the Access and Choice programme, enabling increased support in the community for people with mild to moderate mental health and addiction needs; increased funding for community-based crisis and acute-alternative services; providing increased mental wellbeing support through the Mana Ake initiative to primary and intermediate school-aged students; and the continued funding of the alcohol and other drug treatment courts in Auckland, Waitākere, and Waikato.

However, if the next Government is to make a real difference in addressing mental health and addiction inequities, election promises and policy proposals need to look beyond the “one in five” rhetoric and grapple with the underlying inequities of social determinants such as housing, employment, and poverty.

Cross-party collaboration and ongoing leadership are pivotal to planning future service needs for tāngata whai ora and whānau. The 2023 General Election is a key time to address what is prioritised to achieve healthy futures and better mental wellbeing, ensuring timely support and access to mental health and addiction services when needed.

[1] Specialist mental health and addiction services are NGO or District Health Board (DHB) services funded by Manatū Hauora-Ministry of Health. This excludes mental health and addiction NGO and community services funded through other government departments, such as the Department of Corrections or Oranga Tamariki, Lottery grants, or philanthropic investments.

Who are we?

Platform is a peak body and membership organisation representing the mental health and addiction non-governmental organisation (NGO) and community sector. We directly support 84 mental health and addiction NGOs and community organisations that provide support to tāngata whai ora and whānau, including kaupapa Māori and Pasifika providers, and whānau and peer-led services.

In addition to our members, Platform promotes a wider network of mental health and addiction NGOs (~200 service providers in 2021) who share the same aspiration of a mental health and addiction system and sector that is driven by the need for better and more equitable outcomes for all.

Collectively across 2021/22, mental health and addiction NGO and community providers supported over 80,000 tāngata whai ora, 36.5% of which were Māori and 6% Pacific Peoples⁷, approximately 42% of all people who access specialist support for their mental health or addiction needs in Aotearoa New Zealand⁶.

References

1. Ministry of Health. Kia Manawanui Aotearoa: Long-term pathway to mental wellbeing. (Ministry of Health, 2021).
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3. Kvalsvig, A. & Health Promotion Agency. Wellbeing and mental distress in Aotearoa New Zealand: Snapshot 2016. (2018).
4. Oakley Browne, M. A., Wells, E. J. & Scott, K. M. Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey: Overview of Methods and Findings. (2006) doi:10.1080/j.1440-1614.2006.01902.x.
5. Te Huringa Mahara New Zealand Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. Access and Choice Programme: Report on the first three years-Te Hōtaka mō Ngā Whai Wāhitanga me Ngā Kōwhiringa: He purongo mō ngā tau tuatahi e toru. www.mhwc.govt.nz (2022).
6. New Zealand Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. Te Huringa: Change and Transformation - Mental Health Service and Addiction Service Monitoring Report 2022. (2022).
7. Ministry of Health. Data from Programme for the Integration of Mental Health Data (PRIMHD) data set, sourced 27/03/22. PRIMHD Preprint at (2022).

