

Briefing

Publications: 2026 'Assessment of wellbeing outcomes' report and an accompanying 'What matters for wellbeing' report on factors that affect mental wellbeing

Date due to MO:	4/05/2026	Action required by:	14/05/2026
Security level:	UNCLASSIFIED	Briefing number:	BN2026-009
To:	Hon Matt Doocey, Minister for Mental Health		
Copy to:	Stephanie Buick, Principal Advisor System Planning & Accountability, Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora		

Contact for Telephone Discussion

Name	Position	Telephone
Karen Orsborn	Chief Executive	
Ella Cullen	Director – Wellbeing System Leadership & Insights	

Minister's Office to Complete

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ Approved | ☐ Decline | ☐ Noted |
| ☐ Needs change | ☐ Seen | ☐ Overtaken by event |
| ☐ See Minister's note | ☐ Withdrawn | |

Comment:

Publications: 2026 ‘Assessment of wellbeing outcomes’ report and an accompanying ‘What matters for wellbeing’ report on factors that affect mental wellbeing

Security level:	UNCLASSIFIED	Date:	4/05/2026
To:	Hon Matt Doocey, Minister for Mental Health		

Purpose

1. On 14 May 2026, Te Hīringa Mahara - Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (the Commission) will publish two documents – a report assessing wellbeing outcomes of people who use mental health and addiction services; and an accompanying report that provides deeper insights into factors that affect mental wellbeing. This briefing summarises the key points.

Summary

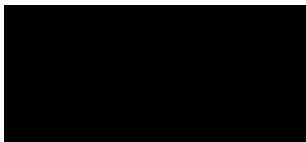
2. Our wellbeing outcome assessment responds to our role and ongoing work to monitor cross-government contribution to mental health and wellbeing outcomes for people at a population level. In 2026, we are adding new deeper insights on factors that affect people's mental health and wellbeing outcomes to further focus cross-government responses to improving outcomes.
3. These reports, along with a lived experience and cross-agency forum planned to take the work forward in 2027, further develops our wellbeing system leadership role, in line with both our new Strategy, and our most recent letter of expectations.
4. We will publish two reports as part our 2026 wellbeing outcomes assessment:
 - a. An ‘assessment of wellbeing’ report on the wellbeing of people who access mental health and addiction services. This is an update to our 2025 report, with new (2023) social survey data. We compare wellbeing outcomes for people who interact with services to outcomes with people who do not interact with services.
 - b. A ‘what matters for wellbeing’ factor analysis report, looking at the association between wellbeing factors and overall mental wellbeing. This highlights factors that are more strongly related to overall mental wellbeing for people who access specialist services, so identifies areas for focused effort.

5. Our analysis shows that, in the seven years since the He Ara Oranga Inquiry, the wider conditions that support mental wellbeing – including physical health, social connections, and material resources – have not improved for people who access specialist mental health and addiction services.
6. We continue to advocate for more cross-government action and contribution to improving wellbeing for people who interact with services. We want to see mental wellbeing outcomes brought into the decision-making for the other systems that affect health, social, and material wellbeing.
7. We would like to see government commitment to consistent, nation-wide support to improve physical health, social connection, and material wellbeing for all people, with a particular focus on working with people with lived experience to support those outcomes for tāngata whaiora.
8. Subject to minor edits and design changes, we will publish the monitoring report and relationship analysis on our website on 14 May 2026.

Recommendations

We recommend you:

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------------|
| a) | Note the ‘assessment of wellbeing’ monitoring report, and ‘what matters for wellbeing’ factor analysis report, will be published on 14 May 2026. | Yes No |
| b) | Note we intend to release this briefing under our proactive release policy. | Yes No |



Karen Orsborn
Chief Executive
Date: 4/05/2026

Hon Matt Doocey
Minister for Mental Health
Date:



Discussion

Background

1. We use our He Ara Oranga wellbeing outcomes framework to assess and report on population wellbeing. Our previous reporting to date has included Te Rau Tira baseline report (2021); Pacific wellbeing (2023); young people wellbeing (2024); and wellbeing of people who interact with mental health and addiction (MHA) services (2025).
2. Our 2026 wellbeing assessment report replicates the 2025 report's quantitative analysis. The data is drawn from three General Social Surveys conducted between 2018 and 2023, and Te Kupenga Māori wellbeing survey in 2018. The analysis highlights the association between a range of factors and the mental wellbeing of people who access mental health and addiction services, in Aotearoa New Zealand.¹ It does this, using administrative data in the IDI, to calculate the statistical associations between a range of factors and mental wellbeing outcomes for people who access services.
3. The analysis for the wellbeing assessment report and the 'what matters for wellbeing' factor analysis were carried out using survey and administrative data from people who have interacted with services. While not representative of the full population of people with lived experience, in the absence of prevalence data for adults this provides the best proxy available to us in the IDI, where proxies for a variety of determinants (wellbeing factors) can also be analysed.
4. The factor analysis allows us to show which factors are strongly associated with mental wellbeing. In doing so, it will support decision-makers, advocates, and the Commission to prioritise effort to improve mental wellbeing outcomes for people with lived experience.
5. A two-way relationship exists between mental wellbeing and these factors – our analysis does not determine causality but identifies factors that are strongly associated with mental wellbeing of people with lived experience, and so action and effort toward connecting parts of the system responsible for those factors are likely to work.

Key findings

6. There has been no improvement in any of the 22 measures we looked at, for people who interact with specialist mental health and addiction services, between 2018 and 2023.

¹ For these reports, and on the advice of lived experience groups we consulted, we have avoided the term 'determinants', instead talking about 'wellbeing factors', or 'factors associated with wellbeing'.



7. Our analysis shows that some factors are strongly associated with mental wellbeing:
 - i. Good self-reported health had a very strong relationship with mental wellbeing.
 - ii. Social connection and whānau-related factors are also strongly associated with mental wellbeing.
 - iii. Material wellbeing indicators are strongly related to good mental wellbeing.

Implications of the findings

8. Each of the relationships highlighted in this report also hold for the wider, non-service using population. What is good for tāngata whaiora, under this analysis, is good for everyone.
9. For tāngata whaiora who interact with services, the findings highlight an additional point of leverage or intervention available to government to improve mental wellbeing outcomes: the overlap between the MHA system, and other systems that support wellbeing.
10. As a result, we want to see mental wellbeing outcomes brought into the decision-making for the other systems that affect health, social, or material wellbeing.
11. At the same time, we want health, social and material wellbeing outcomes of people who access services strengthened in the decision-making for the mental health and addiction system.
12. We would like to see government commitment to consistent, nation-wide support to improve physical health, social connection, and material wellbeing for all people, with a particular focus on working with people with lived experience to support those outcomes for tāngata whaiora.

Consultation

13. The indicator selection for the monitoring report was informed by a lived experience data reference group established in 2024. The group was reestablished in 2025 to advise on the factor analysis; they provided understanding of the emerging findings in November 2025 and February 2026.
14. The reports have been peer reviewed externally from a lived experience and lived experience research perspective; a research and physical health perspective; and for data and methodology.

Communications

15. A high-level communications plan is attached for your information. We will distribute the reports to stakeholders and will be available for media interviews.



16. Ella Cullen, Director – Wellbeing System Leadership and Insights, will be the spokesperson for any media interest. We will keep your office informed of media activity.

Next Steps

17. The final reports will be shared with your office prior to publication.
18. Subject to minor editorial and design changes, the attached ‘Assessment of wellbeing’ and ‘What matters for wellbeing’ reports will be published on our website on 14 May 2026. We will also publish a technical document.
19. In early 2027, we will organise a cross-government forum bringing together decision makers, lived experience leaders, and sector representatives. The purpose of the forum is to better understand, describe, and drive improvement in mental health and wellbeing outcomes for people who access mental health and addiction services in New Zealand.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix A | Assessment of wellbeing for people who interact with mental health and addiction services report |
| Appendix B | What matters for mental wellbeing: analysis of factors related to mental wellbeing Report |
| Appendix C | Comms and engagement plan – Minister’s office |

ENDS

