

# Roadmap for mental health, addiction, and wellbeing

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Psychological distress is rising across Aotearoa, but the mental health system's response is not keeping pace. While progress has been made, it has not gone far enough, especially for young people and Māori. This roadmap sets out where faster, more focused action is needed to build a system that better meets people's needs.

## What must change

There has been progress over the past seven years, including increased access to primary and community mental health and addiction services, more specialist support, and improvements in workforce capacity. These gains are not yet reaching the people with the highest needs in the way they need to.

We need a system that works for everyone: one that provides support early, responds effectively in crisis, is easy to access, and delivers equitable outcomes. For people and whānau, that means getting help earlier, closer to home, in ways that reflect their culture, identity, and community, with care that is timely and respectful.

Through five years of monitoring, engagement, and advocacy, we have seen that the system works best when it supports young people's wellbeing, improves early and equitable access, responds effectively in crisis, and centres people with lived experience and their whānau. The roadmap below draws on those insights to show what good mental health policy looks like.

## What this means

What decision-makers prioritise and fund shapes the outcomes people experience. This roadmap brings together a select number of clear and connected priorities to help focus effort where it can make the greatest difference. Together, these priorities would support a system that is more responsive, more equitable, and more effective.

Most importantly, they would improve people's day-to-day lives by making support easier to reach, ensuring services respond to people in ways that make sense to them, and ensuring people and whānau are treated with dignity when they need help.

## Who we are

Te Hīringa Mahara – Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission – was established following *He Ara Oranga*, the 2018 inquiry into mental health and addiction, and is an independent monitor and advocate for mental health and wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our role is to contribute to better and more equitable mental health and wellbeing outcomes for everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand. We monitor progress, lead with new insights, advocate for change, and highlight where action is most needed. Our work is focused on improving outcomes for Māori and whānau and people with the highest need. We advocate for the collective interests of people with lived and living experience of mental distress and problematic substance use, and the whānau who support them.

# Roadmap for mental health, addiction, and wellbeing

## A strong mental health system must:



### Support the mental health and wellbeing of young people

*When young people get the support they need early, their lifelong wellbeing is much more likely to improve.*

#### We need to see:

1. Improved access to mental health and addiction services for youth; MHA specialist services, youth Access and Choice services and acute community options.
2. Online safety education rolled out in schools, greater regulation of social media platforms and youth co-design of solutions.
3. Commitment to ring fenced prevention and early intervention investment that reflects the 25% population of young people.



### Provide early, equitable access and respond effectively in crisis

*The earlier people can access support that works for them, the better the chances of preventing distress before it develops into crisis. When needed, crisis support must be timely, culturally responsive, and compassionate, to reduce harm.*

#### We need to see:

4. Full implementation of the Access and Choice programme, especially the Kaupapa Māori, Pacific and Youth services.
5. A national crisis response system, including nationwide access to 24/7 phone-based crisis support, crisis cafes, co-response teams and peer support in EDs.
6. A growing workforce, especially lived experience, and Māori leadership.



### Centre people with lived experience and their whānau

*When people are at the centre of their care, and they find it caring, responsive, fair, equitable, and just, their outcomes are more likely to improve.*

#### We need to see:

7. A commitment to a human-rights based Mental Health Act and pathway towards the elimination of seclusion and other coercive practices.
8. A commitment to sustained and equitable resourcing for Kaupapa Māori and other culturally appropriate services for tāngata whaiora and whānau.
9. A commitment to collecting prevalence data for adults.