



Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026–2036

Consultation summary

We want to hear from you

This document is a summary of the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026–2036 (the strategy). It will help you understand the strategy so you can share your views. We are getting feedback on the strategy from 8 April to 18 May.

The strategy is a long-term plan. It sets out how the health system will work over the next 10 years to:

- help people feel mentally well
- support people, families and whānau when they need help
- reduce harm from mental distress, addiction, gambling and substance use.

Your voice matters

This consultation is for everyone. People with lived and living experience, families and whānau, communities, professionals and organisations all have valuable knowledge. The strategy has been shaped by what we've already heard is important to people through other consultations and ongoing conversations. We now want your feedback to help us improve the strategy and develop a plan to bring it to life over the next three years.

This summary explains:

- the main ideas in the draft strategy
- the four priority areas for change
- what the future could look like if the strategy is successful.

You do not need to read the full strategy to have your say. This summary is enough to help you share your thoughts.

How you can have your say

There are lots of different ways you can give your feedback. You can choose the way that works best for you.

You can:

- Fill in the online survey
- Download a copy of the survey and email them back to us at **mhasp.engagement@health.govt.nz**.
- Join an online consultation session.
- Print the survey and send your answers to us at:
Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Consultation
PO Box 5013, Wellington 6140.

Please choose the way that works best for you.

The Ministry of Health website has more details about these options:

<http://www.health.govt.nz/mhws-consultation>

If none of these work for you, or you need some help giving feedback, please email us at

mhasp.engagement@health.govt.nz

What happens next

After 18 May, we will:

- review all feedback received
- summarise people's feedback and suggestions
- work on improving the strategy and making a plan to bring it to life.

We will share information about the final strategy and next steps at:

<http://www.health.govt.nz/mhws-consultation>

Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026–2036

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (the strategy) sets the direction for improving the mental health and wellbeing of New Zealanders over the next 10 years. It is one of a set of strategies that guide how the health system plans, invests and delivers services.

At its heart is the vision that 'All New Zealanders are supported in the ways they need to thrive and experience positive mental health and wellbeing alongside positive physical health'.

The strategy:

- looks at how well the system is working now
- describes the changes and challenges we may face in the future
- says what needs to improve to get better outcomes

An **implementation plan** will sit alongside the strategy. This plan will turn the ideas in the strategy into the steps we will take.

The health system cannot do this work alone. The strategy recognises the important role of:

- other government agencies
- families and whānau
- iwi and Māori partners
- community and voluntary groups
- businesses and workplaces.

Working together will help improve mental health and wellbeing for everyone.

The four priorities

The strategy focuses on four priorities. These are the areas where long term effort is needed to make the biggest difference.

These priorities are:

- strengthening the focus on prevention and early intervention
- improving access to mental health and addiction supports and services
- growing and supporting the mental health and addiction workforce
- improving the quality and effectiveness of mental health and addiction care.

For each priority, this summary explains:

- why it matters
- what the future could look like
- the main actions suggested in the strategy.

Priority 1: Prevention and early intervention

This priority is about helping people earlier to prevent problems and stop them from becoming more serious. It focuses on:

- promoting mental wellbeing
- reducing the impact of mental distress, addiction, substance use and gambling
- working with other sectors to help people stay safe and well.

Supporting people early in life, and during important life stages, is especially important.

What the future will look like

- Mental wellbeing is actively supported in everyday places like schools, workplaces and communities.
- People can get help early and during important stages in their lives, especially children and young people.
- Individuals, whānau and communities have the tools, skills and confidence to look after their own wellbeing and support others.
- The health system works with other sectors to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions that support mental wellbeing.

Strategic actions

1. Strengthen programmes that promote wellbeing and improve understanding of mental health, addiction, gambling, and substance-related harms. Focus on approaches that work for communities at higher risk of distress and harm.
2. Make it easier for people to access early support when mental health, substance use, or gambling challenges start.
3. Use evidence-based programmes to prevent suicide, support people after a suicide, and reduce harm from drugs, alcohol and gambling.
4. Grow local supports that help pregnant people and parents of young children maintain good mental wellbeing, and support families experiencing mental health or addiction challenges.
5. Increase access to age-appropriate supports for children and young people at different ages and stages.
6. Ensure people using, or leaving, mental health and addiction services are supported with essential needs such as housing and employment.

Priority 2: Access to supports and services

This priority is about making support easier to get, no matter where people live. It focuses on making sure services are:

- easier to access
- better connected
- responsive to people's needs

- more consistent across the country.

What the future will look like

- People can get the right support when they need it.
- Support is joined up across different services and life stages.
- People experiencing multiple and/or complex needs get support that works for them.
- Communities with specific needs can also get support that works for them and are supported to care for their own mental wellbeing.
- People can access the services they need, no matter where they live.

Strategic actions

1. Expand community-based supports and improve access to a full range of mental health and addiction services.
2. Increase the availability of safe and effective digital supports, including telehealth.
3. Provide services that are safe, trauma-informed, accessible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to people with specific needs.
4. Ensure people are well supported when they move between different services.
5. Work together to develop clear and consistent approaches to care, continuously improve them, and make them available across the country.

Priority 3: Workforce

This priority is about having enough skilled people to provide mental health and addiction support. It focuses on making sure that workers feel valued, confident and able to do their jobs well.

What the future will look like

- A larger, more diverse skilled workforce provides care that is welcoming, culturally safe and centred on the people they help.
- There are more roles for peers and people with lived and living experience.
- Workers are supported to stay well and safe, helping services attract and keep staff.
- The system can meet growing and changing needs.
- People get support from teams that can care for mental, physical and social needs together.

Strategic actions

1. Grow the workforce by increasing training opportunities, internships, and student placements. Provide good supervision and clear career pathways.
2. Broaden the range of roles that support people with their mental health, addiction, and wellbeing, and support workers to use their full skills.
3. Build workforce capability through training that improves quality of care, fills specialist skill gaps, and supports flexible and culturally safe practices.

4. Improve recruitment and retention by making mental health and addiction services good places to work.
5. Develop a diverse workforce that reflects the communities it serves.
6. Strengthen planning, coordination and support for the Consumer, Peer Support, and Lived Experience workforce so they can play a greater role across the system.
7. Support health and social service workers to build the skills needed to recognise and respond to people's mental health, addiction and wellbeing needs.

Priority 4: Effectiveness

This priority is about improving the quality and safety of mental health and addiction care.

It focuses on care that:

- people can trust
- respects people's rights
- is guided by lived experience
- continues to learn and improve.

What the future will look like

- People experience a mental health and addiction system that is safe, effective and welcoming, and that respects their rights.
- Lived experience and peer leadership is built into every level of the system, and valued as much as clinical expertise to ensure care is responsive and people centred.
- A connected system learns from evidence, research and people's experiences, and adapts as needs and technology change.

Strategic actions

1. Build strong systems to support lived experience leadership at all levels and involve people, families and communities in designing and delivering supports and services.
2. Take action across health and other sectors to reduce prejudice and discrimination and improve outcomes for people with mental health and addiction challenges.
3. Improve the quality of data to better understand what is working and where changes are needed.
4. Strengthen population, prevalence, and wellbeing data so funding and services better reflect community needs.
5. Improve the safety and quality of compulsory care, reduce how often and how long it is used, and work towards ending seclusion and restraint.
6. Shift to partnership-based funding approaches, support providers to respond to local needs, and strengthen how results are tracked.
7. Improve the safety and quality of mental health and addiction facilities.
8. Strengthen how the system identifies new research, risks, and emerging issues, and support the system and people working in it to respond effectively.

Bringing the strategy together

This summary has outlined the key ideas in the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the four priority areas for change.

Together, these priorities show how the health system could better support mental health and wellbeing over the next 10 years by:

- supporting people earlier
- improving access to services
- growing the workforce
- improving the effectiveness of care.

The strategy is for everyone. It reflects what we have already heard from people with lived and living experience, families and whānau, communities, professionals and organisations. It recognises that mental wellbeing is shaped by everyday experiences, timely support and care that works for different people and communities.

Your views matter

The strategy will help guide how the health system supports mental health and wellbeing over the next 10 years. Getting it right matters.

We want to hear what is important to you. What do you think will work well? What could be improved? Where is the most change needed?

Your feedback will help us strengthen the final strategy and guide the actions that follow. Public consultation closes on 18 May. Please share your views.

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