



31 August 2020

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Official Information Act Request for - Mental Health and Addiction Services Staffing & Recruitment

I write in response to your Official Information Act request initially received by us 12th August. Your initial request was sent as a media query on the 7th August, but subsequently agreed to be processed as an Official Information Act on 12th August, requesting the following information:

According to a report to the latest Counties Manukau DHB Hospital Advisory Committee staff recruitment remains a major problem for its Mental Health and Addiction division. It states:

“Across the CM Health Mental Health and Addiction division there continues to be areas with significant workforce recruitment and retention issues. Intake and assessment is another team that is experiencing high vacancies and is working to ensure an acute response is able to be provided across CM Health.”

“Although there has been a significant improvement in the staffing numbers, which has assisted with team morale and service delivery, it is important to acknowledge that a number of the new staff are relatively junior in their career and some are new to the Child and Youth service.”

That’s despite there being an increased demand for Mental Health and Addiction services following the Covid-19 lockdown.

The report also refers to the lack of experience many of the new recruits have.

Counties Manukau DHB Response:

1. How many staff is the Mental Health and Addictions division short of?

Counties Manukau Health’s Mental Health and Addictions division is short 121 positions out of a total of 723 positions.

2. What steps is Counties Manukau Health taking to address the shortages?

It is acknowledged within the mental health sector that there is a national shortage of registered mental health staff, in particular within Nursing. A key emerging workforce challenge is the move to provide more mental health services in social services, some NGOs, primary care, correctional facilities and education.

The CM Health MH&A service has taken several steps to date with the aim of addressing the recruitment and retention challenges within the Nursing workforce. Examples are listed as follows:

- As part of our service and workforce development initiatives, MH&A services have developed and implemented attractive nursing career pathways and structures, including the nurse practitioner pathway. This has resulted in three fully qualified mental health nurse practitioners.
- Implementing a strong Nurse Leadership structure to support senior nursing growth and development. This includes having Nurse Leads for specific portfolios – i.e. Maaori, Pacific, Child and Youth and Integrated Mental Health.
- We are supporting higher numbers of newly graduated nurses into the New Entry to Specialty Practice – Mental Health and Addiction (NESP) programme. While the greater benefits are expected in the medium term, this has started to show moderate success, with 27 NESP graduates starting on this programme in 2020. These individuals will be supported by 2.0 FTE clinical coach roles, both in terms of their pastoral needs and in ensuring they have the appropriate experiences to meet their clinical competencies.
- We are currently working with two external overseas agencies to bring Registered Nurses to NZ on 12-month locum contracts.
- We have temporarily moved staff from other areas to support services with high vacancies.

We also advocate nationally and locally to support and to develop the growth of Mental Health Registered Nurses.

In addition to efforts specifically targeting our Nursing workforce, CM Health MH&A is also developing workforce strategies for Psychiatry and Allied Health. Specific strategies currently being employed within these disciplines are:

- Recruiting locum psychiatrists to fill doctor vacancies;
- Contracting private psychology for some specific areas to cover;
- Offering intern positions for psychology;
- Offering new graduate positions for occupational therapy.

3. Are the current border restrictions affecting the DHBs ability to recruit offshore?

Across CM Health Mental Health Services there are a number of clinicians who have been offered permanent roles/medium to long term contracts but who are currently overseas. The majority of them have had delayed start dates which has been primarily due to COVID-19 related issues. These clinicians are from the nursing, psychology, and medical professions and are from the UK, USA and South Africa.

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 7,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 569,400 people). We see

over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Fepulea'i Margie Apa', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health