

11 May 2017

C84970

Ti Lamusse  
[fyi-request-5701-113ffaac@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-5701-113ffaac@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Ti Lamusse

Thank you for your email of 8 April 2017, requesting information about Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between Corrections and the Ministry of Health which relate to mental health services, dating from 2008. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

Corrections has responsibility for the provision of primary health services, including primary mental health. We take the mental health of prisoners seriously and we have undertaken a raft of measures to improve and expand existing mental health support in prisons and for offenders in the community. The challenge we face is to improve people's overall wellbeing so they can engage in activities aimed at helping them stop offending.

We work closely with DHB Forensic Services in the provision of mental health services to ensure that prisoners who present with more significant mental health needs are assessed and treated. That may involve the prisoner remaining in prison and receiving treatment and support from Forensic Services or moving the prisoner to an inpatient bed.

A recent study of substance use and mental health problems found that newly sentenced prisoners have significantly more issues with substance abuse than the general population, and their mental health was significantly worse. The study found that nearly all prisoners (91%) had been diagnosed with either a substance use disorder or a mental health disorder over their lifetime. Over the last 12 months, almost two-thirds of prisoners had been diagnosed with either of these disorders. This is three times higher than the general population.

Mental health needs can be further complicated by other health issues such as substance use disorders, traumatic brain injuries or foetal alcohol syndrome, for example.

Last year, Corrections was allocated nearly \$14 million from the Justice Sector Fund to expand mental health services for offenders in prison and in the community over the next two years. As part of a two-year pilot, mental health clinicians will be appointed at 15 prisons and four Community Corrections sites (Manukau, Hamilton, Palmerston North, and Dunedin).

These new services are already operational at several sites. Mental health professionals will work directly with individual prisoners and offenders to stabilise and address their mental health needs and support Corrections staff working with these individuals.

The emphasis is on supporting offenders to stabilise their mental health so they can better participate in rehabilitation activities including programmes and employment opportunities.

In response to your request for an MoU that was signed between *“the Department and the Ministry of Health in approximately 2008 relating to the management of prisoners requiring secondary mental health services and hospital level care.”* and *“any other MoU between the Department and the Ministry of Health relating to mental health services since 2008”*, please find attached three MoUs which are within the scope of your request. These are:

- Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Corrections and the Ministry of Health.
- Memorandum of Understanding – Transport of offenders detained in a Regional Forensic Mental Health Service or a Care Facility for people with intellectual disability.
- Memorandum of Understanding – Management of prisoners requiring secondary mental health services and hospital level care.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Department. Alternatively you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Jo Field  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Service Development