

The Labour Party

Summary: Labour has no addictions, alcohol or other drug policies to review. Some great mental health initiatives and a mostly pragmatic approach to finding the way to address systemic issues. However, assessment of solutions in priority areas needs work.

- Providing 80 mental health professionals in primary and intermediate schools in Canterbury is needed as PTSD symptoms begin to show at these ages and early intervention is key.
- Piloting primary mental health teams is a good idea and something that has been needed to be trialled for some time to address the gaps between mild-moderate care for those deemed not serious enough to qualify for help.

- While the trial of primary mental health teams is good to test models for more cohesive service delivery, there seems an unnecessary and costly over reliance on general practitioners (GPs) articulated in this policy. Skilled professionals in the community sector are experienced and able to deliver navigation services as well as full recovery-focused health and social support.



Reality checks...

- While a 100 day review of the mental health system is preferable to an inquiry for expediency, experts wanted to emphasise that this should take into account the plethora of existing literature about system challenges and recommendations from previous inquiries, strategies etc.
- While school-based services sound useful, these are already in place in low-decile schools yet the suicide rate is higher for teens living in deprivation than those who aren't (also see take home message).
- While experts felt that increased access for under 25s was a good initiative, there is a question around where the initiatives are for other age groups that also experience high need.

- Without significant increase in the capacity of the workforce, this proposed investment in School Based Health Services is unlikely to result in improved access.
- School based health practitioners would still be referring young people to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) that is failing to see many young people currently.
- There is no specific focus on Maori who should be a priority population in this area.

A take home point from our experts...

Of the 606 suspected suicides last year, 38 people were aged 15-19. The NZ youth suicide rate age range is between 15-24 years old and includes people who may have left high school early and those who are no longer high school aged. The proposed initiative is good, but it should not be discussed as a complete solution for addressing youth suicide (117 young people last year) in New Zealand. Other initiatives need to be considered.