TE ORANGA TONUTANGA O WAITAHA

LIVING WELL WAITAHA

CANTERBURY SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN REPORTING 2022-2025





INTRODUCTION

WHAKATAKINGA

In 2018, Canterbury agencies, led by Health, unified efforts to enhance suicide prevention in response to regional challenges. Combining forces allowed for a coordinated and collaborative approach that aimed to strengthen our community, family/whānau and individual wellbeing. Many agencies had been working together closely since 2011 to support the mental wellbeing of our community however the work being undertaken in the more targeted field of suicide prevention in Canterbury was not easily visible. "Living Well Waitaha" sought to change this.

In 2021, The Canterbury Suicide Prevention Governance Committee (CSPGC) created a cross-agency Canterbury Suicide Prevention Strategic Action Plan. Living Well Waitaha 2022 – 2025 aimed to increase collaboration through sharing data and resources across the sectors and within agencies. The CSPGC is excited to now report to you the progress of this plan and the opportunities for further collaborative work.

Every day in Canterbury lives are saved through the exceptional work of community workers, counsellors, whānau workers, coaches, first responders, frontline workers, police, teachers, nurses, doctors, rural support workers, social workers, correction officers, and family and whānau who support those they love. For those of you who have lost loved ones to suicide, our hearts are with you. We hope that in working together, we can mitigate and reduce deaths by suicide and suicide attempts in Canterbury and encourage all to live well.



NEW ZEALAND STATISTICS

AOTEAROA TAUANGA

This section condenses deaths by suicide into statistics, which are helpful to understand patterns. The Ministry of Health publishes confirmed and provisional suicide deaths in New Zealand on their Suicide Web Tool. Suicide rates, expressed as deaths per 100,000 people, facilitate comparisons across locations and demographics.

While population growth may increase total numbers, rates can significantly vary year to year, making a long-term view (5+ years) essential for identifying trends.

Confirmed data becomes available after the Coronial process is complete (around 3 years). Until then, data is treated as provisional, which refers to suspected suicides.

The most recent data from 2022/23 shows that the average national rate of suspected suicide was 10.6 per 100,000 people. This is lower than the average rate over the last 14 years, and lower than the rate immediately prior to Covid-19 in the 2018/19 financial year, which was 13.1 per 100,000 people.

New Zealand remains in step with international data that shows no change, or a decrease, in rates of suicide over the past several years.

This global trend is considered attributable to Covid-19 and the subsequent increase in awareness of mental health issues, enhanced access to support services and community solidarity (Smith and Doe, 2023). While declines are encouraging, the long-term effects of the pandemic on mental health are still being studied.

Māori continue to be disproportionately negatively affected, with the provisional rate of suspected suicide for Māoril5.8 per 100,000 people for the 2022-2023 financial year, and this has not changed compared with the average over the past 14 years.

It is important to remember that each of the following numbers represents a person whose life has been lost and a family, whānau, and community bereaved.



Figure 1. Rate of confirmed and provisional suicide deaths per financial year across New Zealand Aotearoa and Canterbury District Health Board 2009 – 2023. Copyright 2024 by Ministry of Health.

PROGRESS TO DATE

TE AHUNGA WHAKAMUA

In 2018/19 Canterbury's suicide rate was 12.6 per 100,000 people, slightly lower than the national average of 13.1 per 100,000 people.2019/20 saw Canterbury's rate rise to 13.7, exceeding the national figure of 11.8. The following years saw a decline in Canterbury's rates, dropping to 8.9 in both 2020/21 and 2021/22, below the national averages of 11.9 and 10.5 per 100,000 people, respectively. In the latest data from 2022/23, Canterbury's rate increased again to 12.8, while the national rate remained relatively stable at 10.6. This fluctuation illustrates the varying mental health challenges faced by different regions, and the regional variations in response to these challenges, and emphasises the need for targeted support and intervention strategies.

Living Well Waitaha 2022-2025 has provided Canterbury with a strong suicide prevention foundation, based on an acknowledgement that cross collaboration between agencies ensures that a local response is authentic, fits the environment, utilises knowledge and resources cross-agency and identifies areas that need resourcing.

Living Well Waitaha 2022-2025 has evidenced a range of suicide prevention and postvention supports, services, resources, and tools to support the wellbeing of Canterbury and respond to local needs.

AREA 1: COORDINATION OF SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES MAHITAHI

Living Well Waitaha 2022-2025 has overseen a range of suicide prevention activities. Mana whenua continue to provide resource to the committee and there have been increased efforts in crosscollaborative prevention strategies alongside local Māori providers who work at all levels of prevention and intervention to increase wellbeing and resilience and provide care for the most vulnerable. He Waka Tapu continues to build capabilities and resilience through its suicide prevention programme Kia Piki Te Ora.

Between 2022-2025, Le Va has provided the national Lifekeepers suicide prevention gatekeeper training programme 6 times in Canterbury. There have been ongoing efforts by committee members to promote Lifekeepers to community members, giving people in the community the skills to recognise and support those at risk of suicide.

Ongoing standardised suicide prevention activities have been overseen by the committee, including developments towards both primary and specialist health services adopting SafeSide, a suicide prevention education programme for the health and social services workforces. The committee has also overseen the regular revision of suicide prevention information available on Hospital and Community health pathways.

Committee members including Hato Hone St John, Sports Canterbury, Ministry of Education, Oranga Tamariki, NZ Police, Mana Ake, Etu Pasifika, Ministry of Social Development and Specialist Mental Health Services have additionally, in their formal roles, provided education, training, information, community connecting, prevention and postvention support, strengthened by the relationships held within the group.

AREA 2: ENABLING WELLBEINGWAHANGA TUARUA HAUORA

Living Well Waitaha 2022-2025 acknowledges that building resilience and supporting wellbeing is the best way to reduce distress. Creating vibrant and strong individuals, whānau and communities who are culturally and socially connected lowers distress in our community.

The Ngāi Tahu Wellbeing Strategy has made a concerted effort in improving outcomes for whānau, focusing on holistic support through initiatives such as Whānau Ora which assists whānau in accessing vital resources and services. The "Building Awesome Whānau" programme is delivered in partnership by a number of agencies in Canterbury, aiming to support parenting and promote generational wellbeing.

Tangata Atu Motu Trust continues to provide essential services through Pasifika Mobile Community Nursing, focusing on nutrition and physical activity as part of the Pasifika Primary Mental Health Programme. Whānau Ora workers collaborate closely with Pacific families to address psychosocial determinants of health, ensuring a comprehensive support system.

Broader community initiatives have been equally impactful. Workplace Wellbeing Programmes, supported by the Mental Health Education Resource Centre (MHERC), are offered across major agencies, reflecting a commitment to employee mental health. Canterbury Men's Sheds facilitate connections among men, promoting mental and emotional well-being. St John Community programmes, including Caring Callers and youth initiatives, continue to enhance community engagement. The Healthy Families Christchurch programme, delivered by Sport Canterbury, supports a culture of health within the community. The Department of Corrections contributes to wellbeing through education and training programs, focusing on literacy, numeracy, and reintegration support for individuals within the prison system.

Through these comprehensive strategies and programmes, Canterbury agencies are making significant strides in fostering a supportive and connected community, contributing to the prevention of suicide and the enhancement of overall mental health.

AREA 3: STRENGTHENINING MENTAL HEALTH WAHANGA TUATORU: WHAKAPAKARI HAUORA HINENGARO

The CSPGC acknowledges the investment Canterbury agencies have made to provide access to all levels of mental health and addiction care and information when people and their whānau require it, in a variety of settings. Receiving the appropriate help reduces stress and allows people to regain control of their lives, achieving Tino rangatiratanga – self-determination.

A range of Kaupapa Māori NGOs provide essential mental health and addiction (MH&A) services, including online support for alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues. Key organizations such as He Waka Tapu and Purapura Whetu offer clinical and residential interventions, while Te Korowhai Atawhai provides specialised Māori mental health services through the Canterbury Specialist Mental Health Service.

For Pasifika communities, the E Tu Pasifika team offers mental health nursing and social work support, focusing on both physical and mental fitness Christchurch Resettlement Services (CRS) provides vital mental health counselling for migrants and refugees, particularly those affected by the Christchurch Mosque attacks. This support is complemented by Purapura Whetu, which offers additional resources for impacted individuals and families.

In Mid Canterbury, Lives Worth Living coordinators focus on suicide prevention and wellbeing, working closely with suicide prevention teams to create care pathways in Mid Canterbury. The Rural Support Trust in Canterbury supports the farming community, ensuring they have access to necessary resources.

In North Canterbury, the Waimakariri District Council supports suicide prevention initiatives through the Wailife Suicide Prevention network and works collaboratively with the suicide prevention team to implement evidence-based programmes in their region.

AREA 3: STRENGTHENINING MENTAL HEALTH WAHANGA TUATORU: WHAKAPAKARI HAUORA HINENGARO

Waitaha enhances access to mental health services through initiatives like the 1737 Whakarongorau triage for MH&A concerns and integrated primary mental health services.

Te Tumu Waiora continues to improve access to mental health care for individuals and whānau, by placing mental health and wellbeing at the heart of general practice. The initiative focuses on delivering culturally appropriate and responsive support within primary care settings, making it easier for people to seek help for mental health and addiction issues.

Through these comprehensive services, agencies across Canterbury are working collaboratively to enhance mental health outcomes, address addiction issues, and support those in need across diverse populations.



AREA 4: PROVIDING SUICIDE INTERVENTION AND POSTVENTION WĀHANGA TUAWHĀ: AUKATI WHAKAMOMORI ME TE MANAKI

Canterbury offers a comprehensive inter-agency approach to provide suicide intervention and postvention support. The initiatives achieved within Living Well Waitaha 2022-2025 highlight collaborative efforts among various agencies, cultural sensitivity, and the integration of specialised programmes aimed at addressing mental health crises and supporting those affected by suicide.

Specialist mental health services continue to provide critical crisis response and treatment for individuals presenting with mental health challenges. These services operate 24/7, ensuring that those in distress receive timely assessments and appropriate interventions.

The Whakahohoro Te Hau initiative has successfully addressed barriers faced by whānau seeking mental health crisis support. This service operates collaboratively through the combined efforts of Purapura Whetu and He Waka Tapu.

Comprehensive postvention support is provided by a range of agencies in Canterbury. In 2024, A Kaupapa Māori postvention plan was developed in collaboration with He Waka Tapu for Canterbury.

After a suspected suicide, Police and Victim Support collaborate to support families through the coronial process. Victim Support provides immediate postvention assistance, helping families navigate the complexities of grief.

Yellow Brick Road Canterbury and Community Wellbeing North Canterbury Trust offer the Waves Programme to support families bereaved by suicide. The Suicide Prevention Governance Committee continues to assist Clinical Advisory Services Aotearoa to promote the free grief counselling initiative: Aoake te Rā, specifically designed for those affected by suicide.

The Suicide Prevention and Postvention Team offers professional expertise and guidance to workplaces and organisations, including schools and tertiary institutions, in navigating the complex challenges that arise from suicide deaths of colleagues and students. This team not only aids in managing these incidents but also provides specialised input on the management of frank or emerging suicide clusters, actively working to minimise the risk of suicide contagion.

Furthermore, the team collaborates closely with regional coordinators to ensure a seamless provision of cross-boundary support, enhancing the effectiveness of their interventions and fostering a cohesive approach to suicide prevention and postvention efforts across different communities.

AREA 5: WĀHANGA TUARIMA: IMPROVING STANDARDS AND EVIDENCE BASE

PIKI AKE TE KOUNGA ME TAUNAITANGA

Canterbury's suicide prevention efforts are continuously evolving, driven by a commitment to improve standards and strengthen the evidence base. The organisations that contribute to the CSPGC continue to uphold best practice standards and implement continued service evaluations.

Specialist Mental Health services continue to use the Suicide Risk Allocation Table as an initial management tool for consumers who are presenting with suicidality.

Crisis Response services continue to be strengthened through training in assessment and management of people in crisis with this training made available for Emergency Departments, Specialist Services and NGOs.



BARRIERS TO SUICIDE PREVENTION

In Canterbury, gaps in suicide prevention persist, highlighting the ongoing need for a collaborative approach. There is a pressing demand for greater access to a broader range of supports, particularly for children and young people, to both prevent suicide and provide effective postvention services.

Additionally, the existing continuum of care lacks sufficient resources for sustained wellbeing promotion and crisis recovery, which are crucial for long-term mental health. The 2024 public service cuts in New Zealand have sparked significant concern within the CSPGC regarding funding challenges and staff turnover (Ministry of Health, 2024). The CSPGC has seen high staff turnover rates and loss of experienced personnel. As government budgets tighten, many essential services are facing reductions and there are diminishing resources for critical programmes. A number of programmes within the 2022-2025 Action Plan have seen funding cuts/disestablishment and staff churn has impacted contingency plans.

Furthermore, the region requires better local suicide prevention data and evidence to inform development of strategies and policies. Localised data also allows targeted allocation of resources, ensuring that areas experiencing increased risk receive immediate support and intervention. The Ministry of Health's Suicide web tool does not calculate suicide rates regionally by ethnicity or age due to the small data sets however the inequities of suicide rates in terms of ethnicity and age are reflected in Canterbury. The proposed inter-agency data dashboard is complicated by data privacy concerns, inconsistent reporting/lack of standardisation, delayed data release and resource limitations. At present, Canterbury does not have the technological infrastructure necessary for real-time data collection and sharing.

The New Zealand Police's recent withdrawal of support for mental health callouts (New Zealand Police, 2023), coupled with restructuring and funding cuts to public services, has raised concerns regarding the ability for those in need to access timely care. Whilst there are new initiatives working to improve access, the concern is that these changes will lead to increased risks for vulnerable populations as gaps in crisis response widen.

Creating safer environments and addressing the wider social determinants that influence suicide rates, such as housing, education, employment, social isolation, and economic stability, are also essential for a comprehensive approach to reducing suicide rates[AB1] in the community. Enhanced national system leadership is necessary to coordinate these efforts effectively, alongside targeted workforce development to equip professionals with the skills needed for effective intervention.



In Canterbury, the vision for the future of suicide prevention is rooted in both immediate and long-term goals that prioritise the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

In the shorter term, the aim is for everyone to have access to high-quality, timely support. Canterbury's suicide prevention workforce will possess a clear understanding of its roles and competencies, ensuring effective intervention and care. Those bereaved by suicide should receive compassionate and effective support. We hope these efforts will be supported by more robust data and evidence, to inform targeted suicide prevention and postvention strategies, while enhancing the safety and supportiveness of people's environments.

In the longer term, Canterbury aspires to significantly reduce its suicide rates, lower the prevalence of suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts, and foster improved mental wellbeing for all members of the community. The 2025-2029 New Zealand Suicide Prevention Action Plan outlines a new framework aimed at reducing suicide rates across the country. It emphasises a holistic approach, focusing on community engagement, mental health support, and targeted interventions for at-risk populations.

Key strategies include improving access to mental health services, enhancing training for healthcare providers, and fostering collaborative efforts among government agencies, community organisations, and iwi.

As we reflect on the journey since 2018, the collaborative efforts of Living Well Waitaha have laid a solid foundation for a unified approach to suicide prevention. By fostering partnerships across various sectors and engaging the community, we are not only enhancing our understanding of mental wellbeing but also empowering individuals and families to seek and provide support. As we reflect on the progress made, we remain committed to creating a safer, more supportive environment that prioritises mental health and wellbeing. Together, we can continue to build on this momentum, aiming to reduce suicide rates and inspire hope in our community, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live well and thrive.

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS FOR SUPPORT

If you or someone you know needs support for mental health distress, problems or suicidal thoughts, these sources can help:

CANTERBURY CRISIS RESOLUTION

0800 920 092 Available 24/7 for urgent or crisis mental health care.

1737

Free phone or text to 1737, to speak to a trained mental health counsellor. Available 24/7 (funded by Ministry of Health).

YOUR GP

Your GP can refer you to HIPS (Health Improvement Practitioners), Health Coaches and Brief Intervention Counsellors – the services are free.

PRIVATE COUNSELLOR OR PSYCHOLOGIST

Your GP can refer you. You will have to pay. Most regions have a local Therapists Directory you can use to find a counsellor.

"JUST A THOUGHT"

Free online strategies for anxiety, depression, insomnia, and other problems - check it out www.justathought.co.nz

SMALL STEPS

Free online tools to manage stress and wellbeing. https://www.smallsteps.org.nz/

AOAKE TE RA

Suicide Bereavement Support Service. free counselling for people impacted by a suspected suicide death. Funded by Ministry of Health, you can self-refer online or your HR, EAP, GP can refer you: www.aoaketera.org.nz

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CANTERBURY SUICIDE PREVENTION GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- NZ POLICE
- HATO HONE ST JOHN
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
- MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- HE WAKA TAPU
- NGAI TAHU
- PEGASUS HEALTH
- MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE AND EDUCATION CENTRE
 TE PUNI KOKIRI
- CHRISTCHURCH YOUTH COUNCIL

- AGE CONCERN CANTERBURY
- SPORT CANTERBURY
- ORANGA TAMARIKI
- ARA POUTAMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
- TE WHATU ORA CANTERBURY
- CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL
- RURAL SUPPORT TRUST
- COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH CANTERBURY

See the broad horizon (beyond the darkness), hold on to life!

Tirohia te pae whānui, tuātu i te pō. Tūramarama ki te ora, whakamauā kia tīnā!

66

Every Life MattersHe Tapu te Oranga o ia tangata

Aotearoa New Zealand, Whakataukī