

MEDIA RELEASE

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Progressing the move to an all-ages specialist after-hours mental health urgent response team

Ministry of Health Mental Health Advisor Dr John Crawshaw has reviewed and approved Nelson Marlborough Health's (NMH) decision to establish an all-ages specialist after-hours mental health team.

The review was done at the request of Health Minister Dr David Clark and the Minister supports Dr Crawshaw's approval for NMH to proceed. Dr Crawshaw recommended that NMH proceed while closely monitoring service responsiveness and effectiveness.

This decision means that NMH will continue towards the transition to an after-hours urgent response service for all ages, staffed by specialised mental health clinicians. General Manager of Mental Health, Addictions and Disability Support Services Jane Kinsey says the main reason for the change is to ensure the best people are in the right places at the right time.

"By the end of August we'll have a specialist after-hours team in place, and our CAMHS clinicians will have more capacity for their specialist daytime work, which is where the most demand for CAMHS lies."

She says people who use the service will not notice any change.

"If someone has been assessed as needing to be seen urgently after-hours they will be seen quickly by a fully-qualified mental health clinician that night. If needed, a senior child psychiatrist is available on-call to offer advice and support 24/7.

"CAMHS clinicians are experts in their field – they work with young people and their families to reduce the need for urgent interventions. Our clinicians are focused on providing comprehensive support and care plans, during the daytime. Overall, the changes will facilitate better, more timely provision of care to those who need it.

"We are also really focused on strengthening our relationship with other key agencies, such as schools, GPs and NGOs to put holistic support plans in place for CAMHS clients," Ms Kinsey says.

CAMHS clinicians will no longer need to be on-call for after-hours work, and NMH will continue to monitor the changes and survey service users to gauge their experience.

The other change, already in place, is that all after-hours calls are triaged by phone and if a face to face assessment is required an after-hours mental health clinician is awake and ready from their base in the emergency department. Previously, after-hours clinicians were on-call at home, potentially woken from sleep.

The changes are operational, unrelated to funding and bring NMH in line with national DHB practice. Ms Kinsey acknowledges the commitment of mental health staff throughout the transition.

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