



12 September 2023

Tēna koe,

How will your party support people with Lived Experience if elected?

Changing Minds is a national not-for-profit organisation, proudly led by Tāngata Mātau ā-wheako, people with their own journeys of mental distress, substance use or addiction. We embrace the mana of these Lived Experiences as a source of collective strength to activate equitable wellbeing across all of Aotearoa.

On behalf of our community, we are writing to political parties to hear your views on the following questions, informed by Changing Minds community research, kōrero and engagement over the past 12 months.

1. If elected, how will your government challenge – and make a positive difference to – the prejudice, discrimination and self-stigma faced by people with Lived Experience of mental distress, substance use or addiction?
2. What does equitable and visible Lived Experience leadership within the health system, and mental health decision making, look like under your government?
3. What is your party vision to enable community-based mental health services, and community-led mental health networks and supports?
4. How will your government be accountable to the above outcomes, visions, and communities?

We believe one of the most powerful ways the Lived Experience community can create positive systemic change is to vote. Our goal is to ensure the community has access to information about issues that matter to them this election. We will share any responses you can provide with our community.

You can find out more about Changing Minds and our mahi at www.changingminds.org.nz.



Attached are some of the key messages our community want YOU to know about the challenges, benefits, and insights of experiencing mental distress, addiction or substance use in Aotearoa.

We hope to hear from you. Any questions can be directed to our communications team at communications@changingminds.org.nz.

Nāku iti noa, nā

Changing Minds Team

Changing Minds



Ahead of the 2023 General Election, what ONE thing would you like government, MPs, and policy makers to know about discrimination, prejudice and self-stigma for people with Lived Experience in Aotearoa?

- “That it still exists! In the policy development, in the organisational structures, in the media, within communities. The way in which mental health is spoken about is still problematic - we are not the problem! The system that doesn't serve us and our needs is the problem! We are the solution.”
- “It is stigma, particularly self-stigma, and the resulting discrimination that seems to particularly stand as a barrier between people and recovery.”
- “When people with mental illness are treated as second class citizens (through poor service, judgements, lack of resources etc) or that there is something 'wrong' with them, that message comes out as discrimination. Accepting discriminatory and bad practice as 'just how things are done' is dangerous and harmful.”

What do you believe would help end discrimination, prejudice and self-stigma for people with Lived Experience?

- “More funding into education in schools, employment sector and community groups so we do not feel so alone and chastised for being who we are.”
- “If everyone could look honestly at their own behaviors and accept that we all have some form of self-soothing coping mechanism; and that people who have developed unhealthy ways to cope need acceptance and human contact with kind others to succeed in creating new self-care routines.”
- “The politicians, the MPs, the policy makers need to be on the frontlines to see for themselves how people are struggling.”

What ONE thing would you like Government, MPs, and Policy Makers to know about access to support and services for people with Lived Experience?

- “These need to be available outside of 9-5 Monday-Friday. Only having services available during these hours perpetrates the stigma that we can't hold down jobs and makes getting support difficult for those of us that do work.”
- “Access to support and services needs to have a whare tapa wha approach with a combined approach involving multi-disciplinary agencies to support people earlier and prevent them from going into the system forever.”



- “There needs to be more!! Stop putting all the money into developing/building replicated services, instead invest in holistic approaches to wellbeing - invest in better transport, e-mental health approaches. Think about our rural communities. Think about our marginalised communities who cannot access services due to inequity.”

What ideas, changes or suggestions would you make to improve mental health and addiction policies or laws in Aotearoa?

- “Bring in culture shifts aligned with enabling good lives principles for more than just disability sectors. Hikoī and talk the talk.”
- “Listen to people with Lived Experience about their experiences using the system and work with them to create change. Treat the information shared with respect and koha appropriately. It should not stop at consultation but be throughout and carry the same weight as opinions of those working within the system.”
- “We need voices at higher levels who have been in hospital, been in respite or used community mental health services, because we know what works and what doesn't.”
- “Include Lived Experience in the development of policies and law. Make it an absolute requirement to have Lived Experience/consumers on all policy development and decision making. I am interested to see how the repeal and replacement of MHA will impact on seclusion and restraint practises. This needs to be an absolute priority for our focussed attention.”