

23 June 2021

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Tēnā koe Janis

**Re: Draft Report on Christchurch Women's Prison (CWP) Announced
Inspection October 2020**

On behalf of Deputy Chief Executive Health, Juanita Ryan, and myself, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft inspection report.

We were pleased that overall, the report noted women at CWP had access to a good range of education, rehabilitation, training, and reintegration opportunities, felt safe from bullying and violence, and staff were compassionate and professional.

The report also noted positive interactions with health staff, including proactive health screening and vaccinations. We were encouraged to read there was good support in terms of mental health care and counselling, women were well supported during pregnancy, and the Mother with Babies unit was considered a pleasant and well-maintained environment.

As you are aware, recently a programme of work has been established to drive the transformation of our three women's prisons into a cohesive network, underpinned by a trauma informed operating model, tailored specifically to the needs of women. This will involve working alongside the Te Mana Wāhine pathway to develop a programme for the Women's Prison Network focusing on the design, implementation and embedding of a gender responsive operating model, including a review of the maximum security classification for women. We have acknowledged some of the challenges and are collaborating to identify and implement practical and sustainable improvements including the integration of the Women's strategy into staff practice and culture.

There have been several improvements at CWP since your inspection which I wish to highlight including:

- The appointment of a Pou Tikanga role to support the site to improve its cultural capability
- Development of the Te Puawaitanga o Otautahi service delivery for women who have babies on site or are pregnant
- Progression of the Mana Wāhine Pathway, including completion of a co-design process by a group consisting of Māori partners and women with lived experience
- Establishment of the Waka Korero reference group consisting of women representatives from each unit. The site's reference group membership includes a transgender representative to support greater recognition of their particular needs and how we can better provide support
- Implementation of Making Shifts Work
- Progression of the modular unit construction

The site anticipates occupying its newly constructed modular units from 30 August 2021 which will provide additional programme and living spaces and upgraded facilities and allows for other essential maintenance work to be undertaken in other units.

The site moved to the new Making Shifts Work roster in March 2021 and this determines that most staff now work 10 or 12 hour shifts. This allows for an increased unlock time and improved routines for women, including mealtimes which are more closely aligned with "normal" dining times. Breakfast is now served from 7.00am and dinner from 5.00pm.

While many staff find the increased number of days off beneficial, it has highlighted several staffing challenges and limits the number of staff available to cover unplanned absences. The site roster is currently under review, and while staff still have a view that the prison is short staffed, the site is in fact fully staffed. A Work Force Manager has been established on a fixed term basis to coordinate leave, training, and other requirements to optimise available staff and respond when the site is low in staff.

I was pleased to note the positive feedback about the Receiving Office staff. This is a specialist role, with the site having staff funded to deliver services Monday to Friday only. There are no receiving staff at weekends or on public holidays, and Principal Corrections Officers must complete essential prisoner reception processes, accessing phone support from Christchurch Men's Prison (CMP) as required.

We acknowledge Receiving Office staff manage all aspects of AVL use including the movement of women to and from the facility alongside undertaking all prisoner property management responsibilities. We note this does impact their ability to manage aspects of their role and work needs to be prioritised which can cause delays such as property processing.

The report provided positive feedback regarding new arrival processes, noting that women were satisfied with their experience of custodial and health staff.

Each new arrival is provided with a free \$5 phone card to enable contact with their family/whānau. Support for pregnant women on arrival is an ongoing piece of work and falls within the Te Mana Wāhine pathway, this includes the provision of information for those likely to be eligible to apply to have their baby in prison.

Women told inspectors that there were insufficient pay phones in the units for them to access. Additional phones are being sought for the units to address this and it is anticipated this will be complete by 30 September 2021.

The Modern Prisons project currently underway, for which CWP is a trial site, is trialling digital communication and connectivity related initiatives including the use of cell based technology which will enable women to contact approved numbers directly. A trial of this specific initiative is currently scheduled at CWP for November 2021.

The report noted that there were inconsistencies in the way in which staff responded to complaints. A new process has been introduced which ensures all complaints are forwarded to managers, in a sealed envelope, before being allocated to the relevant staff member. Secure mailboxes are in the process of being placed in each unit to facilitate this.

The report stated there were limited opportunities for wāhine Māori to connect with their culture and customs. Significant ongoing work is underway to strengthen CWP's practice in this area, including:

- Appointment of a Pou Tikanga, reporting to the Prison Director and a member of the site senior leadership team, to improve site cultural capability, advise on tikanga matters and provide appropriate cultural support and guidance for women
- Development of the Pou Tūhono role to support wāhine Māori to connect with whānau, hapu, iwi
- Development of the relationship with Te Puawaitanga o Ōtautahi to provide culturally supportive services to women in Mothers with Babies Unit and hāpu wāhine
- Establishment of a Kapa Haka group which meets at least weekly. All women are able to attend subject to risk assessments.
- Support for babies to attend Kohanga Reo
- Engagement with Māori midwifery services to provide an alternative care option for women
- Out of Gate services provided by kaupapa Māori provider (He Waka Tapu)
- Navigation services to support reintegration provided by kaupapa Māori provider (Ngā Maata Waka)
- Appointment of a Pathways Lead for the Mana Wāhine Pathway and ongoing work to prototype a range of concepts arising from the co-design work undertaken with kaupapa Māori service partners
- The site now supports a monthly Ratana church service undertaken in Te Reo Māori

- The progression of the Mana Wāhine Pathway which over time will deliver a seamless, end to end, Kaupapa Māori pathway for all women, whether in prison or the community, and with a particular focus on wāhine Māori
- Monthly visits from Kaiwhakamana who meet with women over a shared kai

The site has obtained approval to mix women of different classifications for the purpose of tikanga Māori activities, including Kapa Haka. The significance of these activities and their limited availability on this small site make this a necessity.

While the Mothers and Babies Unit was observed to be well maintained and having a child friendly environment, the report noted there were too few custodial staff available who had received appropriate training to work with mothers and babies. However, the site now has an early childhood education qualified contracted provider on site most days of the week as part of the Te Puawaitanga ki Otautahi contract. This role supports mothers and custodial staff. Work is underway at National Office to develop further training for staff.

An exemption has been provided by the Regional Commissioner for the need for staff to wear SRBA whilst on escort with women and their baby. An alternate uniform will also be worn for off site escorts.

The report noted that pregnant women were well supported and had access to appropriate midwifery services. Additionally, all pregnant women are automatically offered an additional mattress and pregnancy diet, they no longer need to request this. Also, a supply of maternity clothing and bras is now available on site.

During the Inspection, it was identified that a baby on site had not been registered with a medical practitioner. This has been addressed and all babies are now enrolled in a health care facility.

National guidelines around the removal of babies from a Mothers with Babies Unit are being developed by the National Office Women's Team. The site is also engaging with Oranga Tamariki to establish a more supportive approach to managing situations where there are concerns for a baby's wellbeing.

The report identified women in self care were no longer escorted to do supermarket shopping and that the anticipated move to online shopping had not eventuated. A plan is in place to provide opportunities for individual and small groups of women to shop as part of their reintegration plan. This is currently subject to staff availability but is anticipated to be in place by the end of July 2021.

The Inspectors noted that the health team presented in a proactive, professional, and compassionate manner. Access to dental services was identified as an area for concern with waiting lists. There has been improvement in this since the visit, including:

- The health team working closely with custodial services and contracted Dental Service to monitor and maximise appointment opportunities for wāhine, accordingly, the wait list has reduced to around 12 weeks, a significant improvement since early 2021. We anticipate this waitlist will continue to reduce. Staff have been proactive in ensuring cancellations or gaps are followed up appropriately.
- We are seeking additional appointments with the provider to further reduce the waitlist
- CDHB Dental Service have provided education to upskill nurses relating to the triage of wāhine with acute dental issues so that the Wahine most in need are seen first
- A draft Options paper has been submitted to National Office Health team in order explore alternative options to dental service delivery across the Canterbury prisons to improve service offered.

The report highlighted the challenges around accessing custodial support which is critical to enable health appointments to occur. Since Making Shifts Work has been implemented at CWP, the site has been able to provide a dedicated custodial resource each day.

Women with mental health needs were reported to be well supported. The pilot Mental Health Nurse position has now been permanently established as a Clinical Nurse Specialist, Mental Health, and a single point of entry process has been implemented to ensure a timely, responsive, and integrated approach to service delivery. The site also has a Trauma Counsellor, Mental Health Clinician and access to ACC sensitive claims counsellors and packages of care to address specific mental health needs.

It is pleasing to note that interactions with women accommodated in the ISU were engaging and respectful. However, we acknowledge the needs of individual women in ISU were not always reflected in their plans and there was some blanket practice evident.

The Health Team are currently facilitating weekly Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meetings to discuss how best to support individual wāhine in the ISU. It has been recommended that MDT outcomes be appropriately reflected in individual care plans. A SCO role has also been reallocated to the ISU to provide leadership, consistency, and structure. This will be evident in an increasingly individualised approach to care. The site will be seeking funding for this to be a permanent position.

Some refurbishment of the ISU and Separates has occurred however there has been no substantive change in terms of amenities or design. It is intended to increase overall staffing in these areas, with the addition of an SCO already in place, to mitigate the limitations of these spaces. Additionally, the strengthened mental health care capacity of the site means that an increased level of support is available.

The site ensures that a thorough debrief is held after uses of force. Non-custodial managers often run these debriefs, and this has been found to be beneficial because it provides a more neutral approach (rather than having a senior custodial manager undertaking these). All debriefs have a custodial manager present and the Prison Director signs off the reviews in line with policy. While it was noted by Inspectors that debriefs do not always happen after significant events, there has been an improvement in this since the inspection was undertaken.

We note that the Inspectors found rubdown searches were conducted to a good standard, cell searches were undertaken routinely and that strip searches were conducted in a respectful manner. In the new Induction Booklet being developed for new arrivals into prison a description is provided of what to expect during a strip search. This is intended to remove some of the anxiety associated with these searches and to ensure that women understand how these searches should be conducted.

Your report noted that women generally had good access to visits with family/whānau although visiting times limited the ability of school aged children to visit. Work is underway to address this specific issue, with an anticipated implementation date of August 2021. It is also anticipated that the Modern Prisons project will enable women to have online visits with whānau who are not located in the Christchurch area, and children outside school hours.

Work is also currently underway to provide support for older children during visits for example through the provision of Playstations, so that women can interact with their children. Also, as part of the Mana Wāhine Pathway support has been sought for the establishment of a whānau liaison role to help women to better connect with whānau, including assisting those whose whānau live some distance from the prison.

At the time of the inspection it was noted volunteers were not being utilised to deliver services on site due to the absence of a Volunteer Coordinator and the potential risks that this presented. The site has since funded a fixed term position and has also sought funding for a permanent position. The return of Volunteers to the site has been positive for women.

Case Management were found to be achieving good results and providing good access and support for women. It was noted, however, that some women had not been allocated a case officer. This continues to be an issue, an approach to address this is being implemented.

Women had good access to education programmes, and it was noted that the Kia Rite programme for women new to prison was helpful. The Mana Wāhine Pathway is expected to deliver access to additional education activities as well as a suite of Kaupapa Māori focused activities. Issues related to access to classrooms should be addressed with the opening of the modular build in August 2021.

The decreasing number of women on site does create challenges around meeting programme and employment targets. There are several competing demands related to programme participation and the delivery of essential industries such as the kitchen (the largest employer on site). The region is considering various resourcing scenarios to support this.

Your report noted a low uptake of Release to Work (RTW). Recently Corrections has signalled a closer alignment between the work of prison based and community based employment resources to enable a more joined approach in terms of supporting women into employment. A declining prison population has meant there are fewer women in prison who are eligible or suitable for RTW opportunities, in addition to a tighter job market. One new initiative is driver licensing, up to full license, in association with Nga Maata Waka. This will go some way to improving the employability of women in prison.

Additional support in the reintegration space is provided by navigators who are employed by Nga Maata Waka to deliver services, along with the Out of Gate Service delivered by He Waka Tapu.

Conclusion

Prison inspections play an important role in building a culture of continuous improvement for Corrections and many of the opportunities to improve take time to implement successfully.

Overall, the report contains much that is positive. It recognises that the site is on a journey and while it has made gains there is still work to be done. It is pleasing to note, however, that CWP is recognised as a safe place for women, and their babies, and that staff are attempting to engage in professional and compassionate ways. There is a sense of optimism in the future.

I trust you are satisfied with our response to the draft report. Please advise me if you have any concerns or questions about the information provided.

Ngā mihi nui



Rachel Leota
National Commissioner