

Position Description | Te whakaturanga ō mahi

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora

This position description is intended as an insight to the main tasks and responsibilities required in the role and is not intended to be exhaustive. It may be subject to change, in consultation with the job holder.

Title	Director of Lived Experience and Family-Whānau		
Reports to	General Manager, Specialist Mental Health Services		
Location	Waitaha/Canterbury		
Department	Specialist Mental Health Services Divisional Leadership		
Direct Reports	TBC	Total FTE	7.3
Budget Size	Opex	Capex	
Delegated Authority	HR	Finance	
Date	August 2026		
Salary band (indicative)ⁱ			
Children's Worker roleⁱⁱ	No		

Better Health, Better Care, Every Day.

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora is committed to providing high-quality healthcare for all New Zealanders. We are focused on improving access to care, delivering better health outcomes, achieving national health targets, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of our health system.

We know that great healthcare starts with great people. That's why we are committed to building a high-performing, inclusive workplace where our people are supported to grow, contribute, and make a real difference for patients, whānau, and communities across Aotearoa.

About the role

The Director of Lived Experience and Family-Whānau is a senior leadership position within Specialist Mental Health Services (SMHS), reporting directly to the General Manager. The role leads the Lived Experience and Family-Whānau team and sets its direction in line with SMHS divisional priorities and organisational objectives.

The Director provides strategic leadership to embed the voices, experiences and aspirations of tāngata whaiora and family-whānau in strategy, governance, service design, workforce development, quality improvement and decision-making. As a member of the Divisional Leadership Team, the Director contributes to organisational wide leadership and major service, workforce and system priorities to improve access, experience and outcomes for tāngata whaiora, whānau, staff and communities.

Working with clinical, operational, cultural and community leaders, the Director leads system change through lived experience leadership, co-design and partnership. The role strengthens

recovery-oriented, person-centred and whānau-centred practice and builds organisational capability to apply lived experience expertise in service design, delivery and evaluation.

Key deliverables:

Key Result Area	Expected Outcomes / Performance Indicators
Strategic Leadership & Organisational Performance	• Provides executive leadership to embed lived experience and family-whānau perspectives across SMHS strategy, governance, service planning, workforce development, performance and decision-making. • Contributes as a member of the SMHS Divisional Leadership Team to divisional strategy, priorities, planning, risk, performance and decision-making. • Sets the strategic direction for the Lived Experience and Family-Whānau team and aligns its workplans, resources and delivery with divisional priorities. • Provides strategic advice to the General Manager on service, workforce, organisational and system priorities. • Leads organisation-wide change that strengthens lived experience and whānau-centred practice and improves outcomes for tāngata whaiora and whānau. • Aligns priorities with Health New Zealand objectives, Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations, national mental health priorities and local service needs. • Translates lived experience and whānau priorities into measurable service improvements and organisational performance indicators.
Lived Experience and Family-Whānau Leadership	• Champions lived experience expertise, family-whānau partnership, recovery-oriented practice, co-design and equity across service design, delivery, evaluation and improvement. • Ensures tāngata whaiora and whānau perspectives inform governance, policy, planning and quality improvement. • Influences organisational culture to value partnership, inclusion and shared decision-making.
System Partnership	• Builds and maintains strategic partnerships with Māori, tāngata whaiora, whānau, community, government, academic and sector stakeholders. • Represents SMHS in regional and national forums and contributes to mental health and addiction policy, strategy and sector development. • Promotes collaboration and shared accountability across organisational and sector boundaries to improve service integration and outcomes. • Influences investment, commissioning and resource allocation so services respond to the needs and aspirations of tāngata whaiora and whānau.

Workforce Leadership and Organisational Capability	• Leads and develops the Lived Experience and Family-Whānau team, setting clear expectations, supporting wellbeing and professional development, and ensuring accountability for delivery and quality. • Builds the leadership capability of Lived experience and Family-Whānau team members • Builds an inclusive, high-performing and values-led culture that supports innovation, learning and continuous improvement. • Supports workforce sustainability through capability development, succession planning and strengthened lived experience practice.
Access and Outcomes	• Supports efforts to improve access to services and achieve better outcomes for the communities we serve. • Uses evidence and insights to identify barriers and opportunities for improvement. • Contributes to inclusive, responsive, and effective service delivery.
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	• Demonstrates a commitment to understanding and applying Te Tiriti o Waitangi in a practical and appropriate way. • Supports initiatives that improve outcomes for Māori and strengthen relationships with Māori partners and stakeholders. • Contributes to an inclusive workplace that values diversity and supports the attraction, development and retention of Māori employees.
Health & safety	• Exercises leadership and due diligence in Health and Safety matters and ensures the successful implementation of Health and Safety strategy and initiatives. • Takes all reasonably practicable steps to eliminate and mitigate risks and hazards in the workplace that could cause harm, placing employee, contractor and others' health, safety, and wellbeing centrally, alongside high-quality patient outcomes. • Leads, champions, and promotes continual improvement in health and wellbeing to create a healthy and safe culture.
Compliance and Risk	• Takes responsibility to ensure appropriate risk reporting, management and mitigation activities are in place. • Ensures compliance with all relevant statutory, safety and regulatory requirements applicable to the Business Unit. • Understands, and operates within, the financial & operational delegations of their role, ensuring peers and team members are also similarly aware.

People and Culture Leadership

- Provides visible, effective leadership that aligns people, resources, and effort to organisational priorities and outcomes.
- Builds high-performing teams through coaching, development, succession planning, and a commitment to continuous learning.
- Creates an inclusive and engaging workplace where people are supported to contribute, grow, and succeed.
- Builds trusted relationships with stakeholders and works collaboratively to deliver sustainable outcomes.
- Fosters a culture of accountability, innovation, and continuous improvement, ensuring people and organisational performance support strategic objectives.
- Champions values-based leadership and promotes a positive organisational culture that supports wellbeing, performance, and service excellence.

Matters which must be referred to your manager

- Employees are expected to escalate matters early to ensure patient safety, service, continuity and compliance with organisational and legislative requirements.

Relationships

External	Internal
• Peer and Lived Experience networks • Relevant non-government organisations and other providers of mental health, addiction and support services • Unions • Relevant workforce education providers and training institutions • Regional and national networks for peer support, lived experience and family/ whānau advisory services including NAMHSCA • Other relevant stakeholders regionally and nationally	• General Manager SMHS • Lived Experience and family-Whānau Advisory Team. • Te Kaihapai • Director of Allied Health & Allied Health Leaders • Director of Nursing & Nursing Leaders • Chief of Psychiatry and Clinical Directors • Patients Safety and Quality Team • Divisional Finance Team • People and Culture team • Te Korowai Atawhai Consumer counsel

About you – to succeed in this role

You will have

Essential:

Qualifications and Experience

- Direct personal lived experience of accessing, receiving or navigating specialist mental health and/or addiction services, together with experience of recovery or wellbeing and the ability to use this expertise safely, strategically and credibly in a senior leadership context.

- Experience working within, or closely alongside, specialist mental health and/or addiction services, preferably in a lived experience role.
- A relevant tertiary qualification, or equivalent senior-level experience, in health, social services, leadership, lived experience practice, Māori health, public policy, organisational development or a related field.
- Senior leadership experience in health, mental health and addiction, social services, government, community or another complex system environment.
- Experience contributing at senior leadership and/or governance level and influencing organisational strategy, priorities, investment and system change.
- Demonstrated ability to embed lived experience, family-whānau partnership, recovery-oriented practice, co-design and equity in organisational decision-making and service improvement.
- Strong understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the ability to apply it in practice to strengthen Māori partnership, equity and culturally safe service delivery.
- Highly developed strategic, analytical, communication, negotiation and advocacy skills, including the ability to advise on complex and sensitive matters.
- Sound judgement, resilience and integrity, with the ability to lead through complexity, provide constructive challenge and maintain trusted relationships.

Desirable:

- A postgraduate or specialist qualification in health leadership, public policy, lived experience practice, Māori health, organisational development, mental health and addiction or a related field.
- Experience in regional or national leadership, advisory, governance, policy, regulatory or sector development roles.
- Experience contributing to clinical governance, service redesign, system transformation or large-scale organisational change.

You will be able to

- Deliver results through effective planning, sound judgement, and personal accountability.
- Build trusted relationships and works collaboratively to achieve shared goals.
- Communicate clearly and adapts their approach to different audiences and situations.
- Demonstrate curiosity, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Maintain high standards of professionalism, integrity, and ethical behaviour.

- Contribute to a positive, inclusive, and safe working environment.
- Take responsibility for their own development and supports the development of others where appropriate
- Apply Te Tiriti o Waitangi in practical and meaningful ways to strengthen Māori partnership and advance equitable outcomes.
- Translate lived experience and family-whānau perspectives into strategic advice, organisational priorities, governance decisions and measurable improvements.
- Lead through influence and build trusted relationships across clinical, operational, cultural, community and sector boundaries.
- Navigate complexity, ambiguity and competing priorities while maintaining focus on equity, service quality, access, experience and organisational performance.
- Provide courageous, balanced and evidence-informed advice on sensitive matters, including constructively challenging existing practice.

ⁱ Salary band reference is for internal benchmarking and role sizing purposes only. The salary band designation is not a term or condition of employment and may be changed by the HNZ. Changes to the salary band will not affect an employee's current salary or remuneration.

ⁱⁱ The Children's Act 2014 makes provisions for the protection of children and helping them thrive, achieve and belong. At Health New Zealand, we safety check every children's worker. The purpose of this safety check is to reduce the risk of harm to young people and is a legal requirement for those employed in work that involves contact with children and young people including face-to-face, over the phone, or email contact. It is part of our commitment to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. Your continued employment with Health NZ is conditional on a satisfactory safety check.