

17th June 2020

Kāhui Hauora Tūmatanui – Public Health Association of Aotearoa New Zealand Strategic Plan 2020-2025

New Zealand College of Midwives

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The New Zealand College of Midwives is the professional organisation for midwifery. Our members are employed and self-employed and collectively represent over 90% of the practising midwives in this country. There are approximately 3,000 midwives who hold an Annual Practising Certificate (APC). These midwives provide maternity care to, on average, 60,000 women and babies each year. New Zealand has a unique and efficient maternity service model which centres care around the needs of the woman and her baby.

Midwives undertake a four-year equivalent undergraduate degree to become registered followed by a first year of practice program that includes full mentoring by senior midwives. The undergraduate curriculum meets all international regulatory and education standards. Midwives are authorised prescribers in relation to their Scope of Practice as determined by the Midwifery Council.

Midwives provide an accessible and primary health care service for women in the community within a continuity of carer model as Lead Maternity Carers. Midwives can also choose to work within secondary and tertiary maternity facilities, providing essential care to women with complex maternity needs.

The College offers information, education and advice to women, midwives, district health boards, health and social service agencies and the Ministry of Health regarding midwifery and maternity issues. Midwives interface with a multitude of other health professionals and agencies to support women to achieve the optimum outcome for their pregnancies, health and wellbeing

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The New Zealand College of Midwives (the College) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Kāhui Hauora Tūmatanui – Public Health Association of Aotearoa New Zealand Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

Midwives in Aotearoa New Zealand work in partnership with women to give them the necessary skilled support, care and advice during pregnancy, birth, labour, and the post-birth period. Partnership is a key concept for the midwifery profession and midwives engage with women and their families in relationships of trust, shared decision making and responsibility, negotiation and shared understanding. It is this quality relationship that supports the midwife-woman connection and which fosters trust and meaningful dialogue about a range of concerns and issues. Midwifery has a role in public health and is both a preventative and acute response front-line health service which impacts positively on maternal, infant and child wellbeing, both short and long-term.

The College supports the vision statement of health equity in Aotearoa. We also support the aims, and objectives outlined in the strategic plan. The College supports a vision which involves fostering and developing partnerships, with a Tiriti o Waitangi framework, and a human rights, equity and community led focus.

Feedback on the Kāhui Hauora Tūmatanui – Public Health Association of Aotearoa New Zealand Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is below. Although the College realises that the aims and objectives outlined in the strategic plan are by necessity broad public health statements, we also feel that some specific additions to the document would reinforce the critical importance of more key population health issues.

1. The College proposes the specific addition of women's health and wellbeing, particularly maternal mental health, and recognition of the importance of the First 1000 Days of life, to the public health aims and objectives.
2. We recommend that the aims include recognition of the social, political and corporate determinants of health and their significance to public and population health.
3. The College has some concerns about the absence of the health and wellbeing of refugee, migrant and asylum seeker populations in Aotearoa. As Aotearoa is about to increase the refugee quota from 1,000 to 1,500 people per year, effective from July 2020, and is also expanding the resettlement locations, we feel that the needs of these populations should be identified and be part of a public health strategic plan.
4. The health workforce is predominantly women and the gender inequities that continue to face women in the workforce represent an urgent priority for action. The Kāhui Hauora Tūmatanui – Public Health Association of Aotearoa New Zealand Strategic Plan 2020-2025 provides an opportunity to consider the effects of gender inequality, while also recognising and addressing economic and social inequalities that affect health and wellbeing. Specifically mentioning gender issues within the strategic plan draws attention to the serious implications related to gender equity and health.
5. A framework for identifying and mitigating the equity harms of COVID-19 policy interventions was recently released.¹ This framework identifies potential physical and psychological health harms that may have resulted from policy interventions, and which may have not only exacerbated pre-existing inequities but generated new ones. Harms such as anxiety, depression, food insecurity, loneliness, stigma and violence were repeated across many groups and exacerbated by several COVID-19 policy interventions. Identifying policy interventions that may have generated inequitable adverse effects and mitigating policy and practice interventions by systematic examinations of evidence was recommended.
6. There is also a need to examine and address the wider environmental picture within public health. This encompasses water quality, climate crisis and food security, because concerns about climate change and experiences of climate change effects have a significant negative effect on mental health and wellbeing, and climate change must be considered as a significant

¹ Glover, R. E., van Schalkwyk, M., Cl., Akl, E. A., Kristjansson, E., Lofti, T., Petkovic, J., Petticrew, M. P., Pottie, K., Tugwell, P., & Welch, V. (2020). A framework for identifying and mitigating the equity harms of COVID-19 policy interventions. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, doi: 10.1016/j.jclinepi.2020.06.004

threat to human health, as well as pandemics. Building sustainability and sustainable health practices into the public health system is essential.

7. Pandemics will continue to be a risk to health globally, and to avoid future catastrophe Aotearoa New Zealand needs to urgently address factors that exacerbate ill health such as institutionalised racism, poverty, inequity, and the social, political and commercial determinants of health, fairness and justice. The College agrees strongly with the statement about capacity building within the public health sector to identify and disrupt institutional racism.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Ngā mihi

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New Zealand College of Midwives

Te Kāreti O Nga Kaiwhakawhanau Ki Aotearoa