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## **Legal intervention associated with marked reduction in psychological distress for people living with mental ill-health, finds new report.**

New research from a joint project run by Northern Community Legal Centre (NCLC) and Mind Australia shows that when legal matters are causing concern for people living with mental ill-health, legal intervention can reduce barriers to their recovery.

We know that those experiencing mental ill-health are more likely than others to experience legal problems, with these legal problems being more likely to cause significant distress.

Describing the impact of legal issues, one research participant stated, 'Because of the legal things, I am always stressed, because I don't know what will happen next.'

However, after receiving support another participant stated, 'I just felt like I had a new outlook on life. Like a whole weight was lifted off my shoulders. It just felt like I had a fresh start.'

The project, which ran from July 2020 to March 2021, aimed to explore and understand the impact of legal intervention on the lives of people with mental health issues. As part of this project, Mind and NCLC built a collaborative partnership to fund legal in-reach to Mind services in the northern suburbs of Victoria.

Mind CEO, Gill Callister said, 'We know that many of the everyday problems our clients experience, such as housing or financial concerns, involve legal issues. The stress of legal problems can negatively impact on mental health.'

'Solving legal concerns with the support of legal professionals, and in the context of ongoing mental health support, reduces psychological distress and enables people to focus on their recovery.'

Fines, family violence and trauma, insurance claims and financial difficulties can all cause stress and negatively impact mental health. Despite this, there are too few partnerships between mental health and legal services to enable legal interventions like the kind explored in this project.

CEO of Northern Community Legal Centre, Jenni Smith, stated, 'A key benefit of this project has been Mind staff and clients having a better understanding of where to access legal support.'

'The project also highlighted the importance of lawyers understanding the extent of distress caused by legal issues, and the important role that mental health practitioners play in identifying and referring clients with legal issues.'

'Our work has confirmed the importance of legal and mental health staff working in partnership to support clients to attain the best level of wellbeing.'

Mind and NCLC are committed to getting our clients access to legal support, and want to see greater funding for integrated health justice partnerships between mental health and legal services so these positive impacts can be realised for more people.

The report is available [here](#).

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