



MINISTRY OF HOUSING  
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

# COVID-19: Housing and related service providers

Frequently asked Questions for Housing and  
related service providers at Alert Level 2

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Guidance up-to-date as at 12 August 2020



## Contents

Supporting people experiencing homelessness .....	4
Transitional Housing .....	5
Public Housing .....	6
Housing Developments and Maintenance.....	7

# Frequently asked Questions for Housing and related service providers at Alert Level 2

All organisations providing social services can operate under Alert Level 2 providing they undertake the health measures outlined by the Government to keep their workers, and the individuals and whānau they support, safe.

This guidance is only applicable from the date that the government dictates that New Zealand – or individual regions within New Zealand – moves to COVID-19 Alert Level 2. Please note that this may not be the same date that the announcement itself was made.

To find out what Alert Level New Zealand is currently at, visit the [covid19.govt.nz](https://covid19.govt.nz) website; the current Alert Level will be clearly displayed on the landing page of the website.

## This means:

- All businesses can open under Alert Level 2 with appropriate health measures to keep workers and customers safe.
- Providers can open their premises and undertake face to face services while practicing appropriate health and safety workplace practices around physical distancing, personal hygiene and surface cleaning. Contact tracing procedures must be followed.
- Providers must be recording the contact their workforce have with all individuals and whānau to ensure contact tracing can be completed
- Trades people can enter people's homes while practicing appropriate health and safety workplace practices around physical distancing, personal hygiene and surface cleaning. Those considered as vulnerable may require special consideration. Contact tracing procedures must be followed.
- Property inspections can occur with appropriate health and safety workplace practices around physical distancing, personal hygiene and surface cleaning in place. Contact tracing procedures must be followed.
- Shared housing facilities can accept new individuals or whānau in to shared accommodation providing they are not displaying symptoms of COVID-19, have not tested positive for COVID-19 and have not been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. It is important that you educate the individuals and whānau you are working with in accommodation with shared facilities, so that they fully understand the importance of physical distancing and maintaining good personal hygiene practices under Alert Level 2. You should continue to manage shared facilities with shared kitchens and/or laundries in accordance with the Ministry of Health Guidelines.
- In a general workplace where contact tracing is possible, then look to maintain a one metre separation between workers and 2 metres with customers, unless other mitigating measures are in place. Follow the workplace guidelines that have been agreed for your sector with WorkSafe, where these exist.

## Supporting people experiencing homelessness

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### **Will the motels the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have brought on to house rough-sleepers still be available?**

HUD will continue to contract with the moteliors that have made places available. HUD will continue to work with the Housing First providers, other community providers, iwi, and Māori Housing Providers to support individuals and whānau to remain in the motels.

### **What services will the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) provide under COVID-19 Alert Level 2?**

MSD offices will be open by appointment only at Alert Level Two. If clients need to see MSD, they will need to phone first to book an appointment. MSD will continue to support clients online or by phone. Whether its doors are open or not, MSD is available to clients and providers.

In locations at Alert Level Two, MSD offices remain open for people with appointments. If clients need to see us, they will need to phone first to book an appointment. During this time regular payments will continue, and MSD will help people over the phone and through MyMSD in most cases.

You can find out more on the [Work and Income website](#).

### **Who can I get advice and support from around developing good practice under different COVID-19 Alert Levels?**

We have been working closely with Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) and Te Matapihi to develop provider guidance. If you would like further support, please contact;

<b>Te Matapihi</b>	<a href="mailto:wayne@tematapihi.org.nz">wayne@tematapihi.org.nz</a>
<b>Community Housing Aotearoa</b>	<a href="mailto:DavidZ@communityhousing.org.nz">DavidZ@communityhousing.org.nz</a> or <a href="mailto:projects@communityhousing.org.nz">projects@communityhousing.org.nz</a>
<b>HUD - Te Kāhui Kāinga Ora</b>	<a href="mailto:tracey.tangihaere@hud.govt.nz">tracey.tangihaere@hud.govt.nz</a>

## Transitional Housing

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### **I have vacant places in Transitional Housing which have shared accommodation facilities, can I take new referrals for these places?**

Individuals and whānau can be placed into housing with shared facilities providing they are not displaying symptoms of COVID-19, have not returned a positive test for COVID-19 and have not been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

You should screen individuals and whānau in accordance with your internal processes to assess your ability to safely house individuals and whānau. You must educate individuals and whānau you are working with to fully understand the importance of physical distancing, relevant hygiene practices and contact tracing.

You should continue to manage shared facilities with shared kitchens and/or laundries in accordance with the Ministry of Health Guidelines, in particular managing physical distancing and appropriate cleaning requirements.

### **What should I do if someone in my shared accommodation shows symptoms of COVID-19?**

If an individual or whānau living within accommodation that has shared facilities is displaying relevant symptoms of COVID-19 then self-isolation guidelines must be followed. That person (or those people) should contact Healthline (0800 358 5453) for further advice and assistance and to arrange a COVID 19 test.

If you cannot find suitable accommodation or need further support please contact us at [Provider\\_Enquiries@hud.govt.nz](mailto:Provider_Enquiries@hud.govt.nz)

### **My Transitional Housing places are currently vacant, how can I get referrals from MSD?**

MSD will continue placements for both public housing and transitional housing. Staff, providers, tenants and contractors will need to comply with Ministry of Health Level 2 guidelines for physical distancing and hygiene.

Providers should get in touch with their MSD regional housing team and let them know about vacancies. MSD is working hard to transition clients from emergency housing into transitional housing.

### **I am a motelier delivering Transitional/COVID-19 Emergency Response Housing, what does Alert Level 2 mean for me?**

The COVID-19.govt.nz website and Ministry of Health guidelines are both regularly updated. Please continue to keep yourself up to date with this information. Further information around cleaning activities can be found on the Ministry of Health website. If you have individuals and whānau staying and are unable to service the room each day due to staffing concerns, you must provide cleaning products to the individual rooms and advise those staying of your cleaning expectations, so rooms are kept clean and hygienic.

# Public Housing

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## Are Public Housing Assessments being completed by MSD?

MSD will continue phone-based public housing assessments at Level Two. People may need to wait a bit longer for their appointment as we support the immediate needs of people in the most-affected areas.

## What MSD services are still on hold?

The following activities are still on hold until further notice:

- Tenancy reviews for public housing tenants.
- Annual reviews of Income Related Rent.
- Any increases in Income Related Rent - there should be no rent increase for any tenant at this time.
- Outbound calling to public housing applicants – MSD will continue to update assessments when a person proactively tells MSD of a change that may affect their application
- Initial screening for eligibility for public housing.

## My tenant needs help with moving costs or rent arrears, how can MSD support them?

MSD has a range of Housing Support Products to assist clients across a range of housing needs which includes assistance for moving. [More information can be found on the Work and Income website.](#)

## How can I move safely under COVID-19 Alert Level 2?

Friends and family can help whānau to move. If they are well known to the whānau, physical distancing procedures are not required. However, we recommend that personal hygiene and surface cleaning is still adhered to along with whānau recording names and contact details of those who helped them move.

At COVID-19 Alert Level 2, professional movers can also assist whānau to move. Physical distancing, personal hygiene and surface cleaning must be adhered to. Contact tracing must also be recorded.

## Will there be any Income-Related Rent increases?

No, the COVID-19 rent freeze remains in place until 25 September and applies to Income Related Rent too. The only changes to IRR will be when a tenant has reduced income and we need to decrease their rent.

## Public Housing tenants experiencing a decline in income

Where a public housing tenant has experienced a decline in their income, we encourage them to contact MSD on 0800 559 009 to discuss their situation. Where a housing provider becomes aware that a tenant's income has reduced affecting their ability to pay rent, please email the details to:

[GNL\\_Provider\\_Support@msd.govt.nz](mailto:GNL_Provider_Support@msd.govt.nz) with the subject line *COVID 19 Reduced Income*.

## Can I undertake a tenancy inspection?

Yes. Routine inspections of rental properties can take place under Alert Level 2. Landlords and tenants should adhere to physical distancing, personal hygiene and surface cleaning rules and should keep records for contact tracing purposes.

Tenants cannot unreasonably refuse an inspection, however for those who are considered vulnerable, that could be reasonable grounds for refusal. [The list of health conditions that are considered vulnerable and at most risk of severe illness from COVID-19 can be found on the Ministry of Health website.](#)

## Housing Developments and Maintenance

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### **Are there any changes for the construction sector under Alert Level 2?**

During COVID-19 Alert Level 2, most work can be carried out in the building and construction sector, but physical distancing remains in place. More information can be found on the [Building.govt.nz](https://www.building.govt.nz) website.

### **Are there any changes for scheduled maintenance under Alert Level 2?**

As with Alert Level 4 and 3, maintenance can be completed under COVID-19 Alert Level 2.

**ENDS**

