



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 3

Guidance up-to-date as at 12 August 2020



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Frequently asked Questions for Housing and related service providers at Alert Level 3

New Zealand Alert Levels changed at 12 noon on Wednesday 12 August. Your Alert Level will depend on where you are in New Zealand.

The information within this document is applicable from the date the government dictates that New Zealand, or individual regions within New Zealand moves to COVID-19 Alert Level 3. 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://www.covid19.govt.nz) website; the current Alert Level will be clearly displayed on the landing page of the website.

Organisations providing social services can operate, to some extent, under Alert Level 3 provided they undertake the health measures outlined by the government to keep their workers, the individuals and whānau they support, safe.

[Detailed Alert Level guidance on the NZ Government COVID-19 website](#)

This means:

- people are encouraged to work from home if they can, and providers should continue to deliver services remotely, where possible
- Providers delivering face to face services to individuals or whānau, must maintain hygiene and cleaning standards, as well as following physical distancing requirements. It is highly recommended that you wear a mask or face covering
- Providers should be recording the contact their workforce have with all individuals and whānau to ensure tracing can be done if necessary
- People can move to a new house
- Removal companies can operate following workplace safety protocols (e.g. keeping a minimum of one metre distance between workers, recording who is working together, limiting interaction between groups of workers, disinfecting surfaces, and maintaining high hygiene standards)
- People can be placed in Public Housing and Transitional Housing. HUD recommends applicants should only be matched with vacant properties in the same region.
- Retail outlets are also permitted to operate if they can provide contactless pre-ordered pick up or delivery services (customers cannot enter the stores). This means furniture, whiteware and other household items can be purchased.
- Tradespeople can work on and in people's homes so long as they are following workplace safety protocols which include physical distancing and can be delivered in a way that complies with the health and safety requirements outlined at [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz).
- There is now a new mandatory requirement for all business and services who are operating in Alert Level 3 to "ensure that a copy of the QR code for the business or service is displayed in a prominent place at or near the main entrances to the workplace"

Supporting people experiencing homelessness

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 Alert Level 3?

In locations at COVID-19 Alert Level Three, MSD offices will be closed to the public, but we will continue to support clients online or by phone. During this time regular payments will continue, and MSD staff will help clients over the phone and through MyMSD in most cases. Whether the doors are open or not, MSD staff are working and available to clients and providers.

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

MSD will continue to provide emergency housing support to people with an urgent housing need.

People with an immediate housing need should test their eligibility for emergency housing assistance on-line before contacting Work and Income. See here for more information:

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/eligibility-criteria-for-emergency-housing.html>

Where else can I get advice and support around developing good practice under the 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;

Te Matapihi

wayne@tematapihi.org.nz

Community Housing Aotearoa

DavidZ@communityhousing.org.nz

or projects@communityhousing.org.nz

HUD - Te Kāhui Kāinga Ora

tracey.tangihaere@hud.govt.nz

Transitional Housing

I have a vacant Transitional Housing property; can I continue to make placements?

Yes. Vacant properties can continue to be tenanted. You must maintain physical distancing and personal hygiene practices when making placements into any housing opportunity.

[You can find more information about this on the COVID-19: Rent increase freeze and Tenancy Terminations webpage](#)

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

No. Where places are available that have shared facilities and existing individuals or whānau living in the shared facility we advise not to introduce any new individuals or families because of the risk of 'bursting the bubble'.

You should continue to manage shared facilities with shared kitchens or laundries in accordance with the Ministry of Health guidelines in particular managing physical distancing and appropriate cleaning between uses.

Will Transitional Housing referrals from MSD continue, if so how will these happen?

MSD will continue to refer clients to transitional housing providers, except those that utilise shared facilities, where that can be done safely and efficiently. For pre-tenancing property inspections and interviews, providers and clients need to comply with Ministry of Health guidelines for social distancing and hygiene. We encourage as much phone or video-based interaction as possible.

The support services we offer individuals and whānau at Alert Level 3 looked different, can we now support our clients as we were at Alert Level 1?

No. Alert Level 3 does not allow us to continue business as usual. Physical distancing and contact tracing must be adhered to and where possible people who can work from home should do so. You can find more information about the difference in the COVID-19 Alert Levels [here](#).

You can find the most up-to-date information to keep your staff safe at:

- www.covid19.govt.nz
- www.health.govt.nz
- www.worksafe.govt.nz - [Managing Health and Safety](#)
- www.worksafe.govt.nz – [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#)

I am a motelier delivering Transitional/Emergency Housing, how is Alert Level 3 different for me?

The COVID-19.govt.nz website and Ministry of Health guidelines are 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

I have a vacant Public Housing property; can I make this available and make placements?

Yes. Vacant properties can continue to be tenanted. You must maintain physical distancing and personal hygiene practices when making placements into any housing opportunity.

MSD will continue to support placements into public housing as long as those can be done safely and efficiently.

Staff, providers, tenants and contractors will need to comply with Ministry of Health guidelines for social distancing and hygiene at Alert Level Three.

Movement between regions is restricted, so applicants can only be matched to public housing in their current region. We ask providers to match the highest priority local applicants to their available properties.

Can tenants now access furnishings so they can move into my Public Housing property?

Furniture and appliances can be ordered online with contactless pick-up or delivery. You cannot enter a store.

Will Public Housing assessments continue?

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

I have a potential public housing place which can assist an emergency housing motel client but they are not on the Public Housing Register - what can I do?

MSD can do phone-based public housing assessments. You should contact your regional MSD Housing Manager to organise this.

What MSD services and activities 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 – we'll continue to update assessments when a person proactively tells us of a change that may affect their application
- Initial screening for eligibility for public housing.

Can I undertake an inspection?

Routine inspections of properties cannot take place under Alert Level 3 as they normally would.

Virtual inspections can only happen if the tenants agree. A virtual inspection is a good opportunity for tenants to inform the landlord about any maintenance that is needed.

In person inspections of occupied rental properties can only happen in emergency situations. For example, if a landlord needs to confirm that emergency maintenance is required.

At the end of the tenancy, the landlord and tenant should not do the final property inspection together as would be usual practice. Rather, we recommend tenants take photos of the property's condition before leaving.

Will there be any Income-Related Rent increases?

No, the COVID-19 rent freeze remains in place until 26 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 with the subject line COVID 19 Reduced Income.

Housing Developments and Maintenance

Can construction of my development continue under Alert Level 3?

Yes. During Alert Level 3 most work can be carried out in the building and construction sector. People who can continue to work from home must do so. For those working on site, appropriate health and safety and physical distancing requirements must be met in line with workplace safety protocols. More information can be found at <https://www.building.govt.nz/covid-19/>

Will councils continue building and construction site inspections at Alert Level 3?

Where possible, councils will continue to perform their statutory and regulatory functions with employees working from home. Building and construction site inspections can take place, but with appropriate public health measures in place, and maintaining workplace safety protocols. More information for councils can be found on the Building performance website.

Can tradespeople enter homes with tenants to complete non-urgent general maintenance and repairs?

Yes. Tradespeople can enter homes at Alert Level 1, 2 and 3. However, you must ensure the relevant public health measures are met, this includes physical distancing. We recommend that you only undertake certain types of maintenance to limit person-to-person contact if possible. More information for owners can be found on the Building Performance website.

ENDS