



# Frequently Asked Questions

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN

Phase One 2020-2023

Working together to prevent  
and reduce homelessness

## How is homelessness defined in New Zealand?

New Zealand's official definition of homelessness is broad and covers people who are without shelter, in emergency and temporary accommodation and living as a temporary resident in a severely overcrowded private dwelling.

## How many people are homeless in New Zealand?

The 2013 Census estimated there were approximately 41,000 New Zealanders in severe housing deprivation. Of those identified as homeless:

- around 10 percent were without shelter - living in cars, sleeping rough or in uninhabitable housing
- 20 percent in temporary or emergency accommodation – living at campgrounds or night shelters (including MSD and HUD funded accommodation)
- 70 percent were sharing accommodation with another household- living in overcrowded situations or couch surfing.

While we do not currently have an up to date estimate of homelessness across New Zealand, given the rising levels of demand for emergency housing and public housing over the last few years, it is expected that the levels of homelessness under the official definition are higher.

## What causes homelessness in New Zealand?

Homelessness is driven by structural issues and system failures (such as poverty, a lack of affordable housing and limited supply, discrimination, welfare support issues, and a lack of employment opportunities).

There are many pathways into homelessness. A change in personal circumstances, such as a change in relationship status, loss of income, serious illness or mental health and addiction needs, can lead to a loss of tenancy and homelessness.

People may have to leave their homes due to rent increases, following an illness or accident or disagreement with landlords or time in the criminal justice system. It can be difficult to find a new place for a range of reasons, such as high rents, prior involvement with the Tenancy Tribunal, discrimination, debt and accessibility issues.

Changes in family composition can have an impact and lead to overcrowding.

## Who is experiencing homelessness in New Zealand?

People on the margin of the rental market, on low incomes or benefits, are at risk of homelessness. People who experience homelessness often face multiple forms of disadvantage that mean they are more at risk of homelessness.

Māori are overrepresented in areas of unmet housing needs and homelessness. Nearly 60 percent of households currently receiving emergency housing support are Māori.

The 2013 Census showed that 38 percent of Pacific households lived in crowded households. The high proportion of Pacific households in the private rental market means that they are particularly vulnerable to increasing rental costs and insecurity of tenure.

Other groups particularly at risk of homelessness and overrepresented in homelessness statistics include refugees, older people, rainbow community/takatāpui, disabled people, and people with mental health and addiction needs.

Young people make up a high proportion of our overall homelessness statistics with more than half younger than 25.

### **What is the purpose of the action plan?**

The action plan is our next step in achieving our vision that homelessness is *prevented where possible or is rare, brief and non-recurring*.

The purpose of the action plan is to drive actions that aim to improve the wellbeing and housing outcomes of individuals, families and whānau who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. This includes people who are without shelter, in emergency and temporary accommodation and living as a temporary resident in a severely overcrowded private dwelling.

The action plan:

- sets out new immediate actions to be put in place in 2020 to improve wellbeing and housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness
- provides an overarching framework for communities, Iwi, providers, private sector, local authorities and government agencies to continue to work together to prevent and reduce homelessness
- provides a road map for long-term solutions over the next four years to continue to build on and support the local work already underway around New Zealand.

### **What will the New Zealand homelessness action plan deliver?**

The action plan delivers a balanced and comprehensive package of 18 immediate and a number of longer-term actions to address homelessness. These are supported by over \$300 million in funding and will support over 10,000 individuals, families and whānau.

The action plan sets out a balanced and comprehensive package of actions to address homelessness with an increased focus on prevention, alongside supply, support and system enablers.

Actions address critical points in our homelessness response and put in place foundations for a longer-term approach. This includes significantly increasing supply in the short-term, providing additional support for people in emergency housing, and focusing on at risk groups at critical points as they transition from the care of government (such as prison, hospital and Oranga Tamariki care).

### **How will the action plan work to reduce homelessness?**

Through the action plan, the government, sector, Iwi and Māori providers, NGOs and wider community partners will work together to prevent and reduce homelessness. The action plan puts in place immediate actions that will provide support to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

These actions strengthen the response to homelessness, and are centered across four key action areas:

- **Prevention:** Individuals, families and whānau receive the support they need so that homelessness stops happening in the first place.
- **Supply:** All New Zealanders have a place to call home, the use of motels for emergency housing is reduced.
- **Support:** Individuals, families and whānau experiencing homelessness move quickly into stable accommodation and access wider social support to address needs.
- **System enablers:** The system supports and enables our vision and together we address homelessness.

### What is the long-term aim for the action plan?

The future state that we are working towards through the action plan and associated work would see:

- people at risk of homelessness accessing the support, advice and appropriate housing needed to help prevent homelessness
- enough permanent, adequate and appropriate housing for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and rare use of motels as emergency housing
- a system of support that responds flexibly, quickly and appropriately to people's needs
- a responsive and resilient system in which government agencies work effectively together, and with the wider sector.

### What are the guiding principles of the action plan?

- Whānau-centred and strengths-based.
- A focus on stable homes and wellbeing.
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Embedding kaupapa Māori approaches.
- A joined-up approach across agencies and communities.
- Supporting and enabling local approaches.

### What funding is available to support the implementation of the action plan?

Immediate actions are backed by over \$300 million in new funding, over three years. More information can be found in the supporting fact sheets document.

### Why are we focusing on homelessness?

Too many New Zealanders are currently experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Becoming homeless can be a devastating experience and worsen physical health, mental health and addictions.

Once an individual, family or whānau experiences homelessness it can result in other long-term issues that can worsen over time. It can increase the use of coping mechanisms such as drugs and alcohol. In addition, homelessness can have a negative impact on mental health and often, health issues can go unnoticed and untreated.

Homelessness has a severe impact on children. It can impact on a child's growth and development as it can take children outside of familiar environments and may involve moving schools and school absences, as well as impacting on mental health.

### **How does this new funding build on previous investments made to address homelessness?**

Funding for new actions build on previous substantial investments to increase public housing and the Housing First programme, which supports people with multiple, high and complex needs experiencing homelessness. Budget 2018 and 2019 increased efforts to increase supply and supports through:

- an additional 6,400 public housing places (an average of 1,600 per year).
- maintaining 2,900 transitional housing places
- funding Housing First to support up to 2,700 individuals and whānau (1,103 households have been placed as at 31 December 2019).

It also builds on recent investment in August 2019 of \$54 million for initiatives to support individuals, families and whānau to stay in their existing tenancies and provide wrap around services and navigators for those in emergency housing.

### **When will actions be implemented?**

The action plan emphasises the urgent need to act and the importance of home, community and place in creating a sense of belonging and positive wellbeing. Immediate actions will be put in place in 2020 to improve wellbeing and housing outcomes.

The action plan also identifies longer-term work to be undertaken in 2020, which will build on and improve existing responses and support local work already underway around New Zealand. Longer-term actions will be delivered over 2020-2023.

### **Who will benefit from this plan?**

Individuals, families and whānau at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness will benefit from the actions. Actions will also provide support for people at risk of homelessness and those living in emergency accommodation.

More support is being made available to improve housing and wellbeing outcomes and prevent and reduce homelessness. This includes immediate actions that focus on at risk groups at critical transition points including:

- extending housing support for young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care to provide supported accommodation options

- improving transitions from acute mental health and addiction inpatient units to support people into suitable accommodation
- supporting women who are leaving prison by providing safe and stable accommodation with reintegration support services.

Communities, Iwi, providers, private sector, local authorities and government agencies will benefit from the additional support and funding provided, the overall framework and commitment to continue to work together to prevent and reduce homelessness.

### **How will the action plan address homelessness in my region?**

The action plan recognises that some of the drivers of homelessness may be different across the country, and that different regions are already thinking about, or developing their own locally appropriate responses to homelessness.

The action plan will focus on meeting need in high demand locations, whilst also ensuring that homelessness solutions are available nationwide. Actions include changes to national policy settings, and initiatives that will be implemented in specific areas.

This includes a local innovation and partnership fund to support regions to develop local responses to homelessness. Further details of the fund and application process will be made available shortly.

### **How will the plan improve outcomes for Māori?**

Enabling the housing aspirations of Māori, building on successful Māori led approaches, and placing whānau at the centre of all that we do will be critical to the success of the action plan.

Kaupapa Māori principles underpin the development of the plan, and will drive the design and delivery of actions to seek measurable change for whānau, hapū and Iwi. This means that actions will work to improve outcomes for Māori experiencing homelessness and work to prevent and reduce homelessness for Māori.

The action plan includes targeted actions to improve outcomes for Māori experiencing homelessness and increase the number of Māori providers. These include:

- partnering with Iwi, hapū and marae to prevent homelessness through whenua-based initiatives
- supporting Māori Community Housing Providers and other Māori and Iwi providers to increase supply
- building the capacity and capability of Māori providers to enhance their ability to provide services and support new and potential Māori Community Housing Providers
- supporting kaupapa Māori approaches to deliver actions in a way that demonstrate Māori principles.

### **How will we know if the actions in the plan are working?**

Outcomes will be measured and reported on regularly, and along with improvements to data on homelessness, this will help to measure impact made across the action plan. A set of indicators is

currently being established to help measure progress in achieving the outcomes in the plan. Indicators and measures will be built on and improved over time.

It will take time to measure progress against the key outcomes. Progress on this action plan will be publicly reported on every six months with a full progress update and review of the action plan in 18 months.

### **How will the action plan be monitored and evaluated?**

All actions in the plan will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated and reported on regularly. This will help government, providers and support services to better understand how effective an action is, why it was effective and what actions work well for different people.

Evaluations with Māori will adopt the key principles of kaupapa Māori research (such as whakapapa, rangatiratanga, use of te reo and tikanga).

### **How was the plan developed?**

The action plan has been developed through engagement with key stakeholders across New Zealand and informed by international evidence and New Zealand research. This includes findings and case studies from evaluations of emergency housing and Housing First, and international and local plans and strategies.

The engagement approach included building cross-agency consensus, having targeted conversations with sector experts and national sector bodies, and Māori housing providers, and holding workshops across New Zealand with representatives from housing providers, Non-Governmental Organisations, service providers, Iwi, local government, community groups and research institutions.

### **What government agencies have been involved?**

This is the first time in New Zealand that a comprehensive central government-led and cross-agency plan has been developed to prevent and reduce homelessness.

This plan has been developed and is jointly owned by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the Ministry of Social Development, Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities, Ministry of Health, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ara Poutama Aotearoa/Department of Corrections, New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children, with support from other government agencies.

### **What engagement has taken place?**

Nine workshops were held around New Zealand, during September and October 2019. Workshops were held in Northland, Hamilton, Rotorua, Napier/Hastings, Wellington, Auckland (South and Central), Christchurch and Nelson/Marlborough.

A wide range of people attended these workshops including representatives from housing providers, NGOs, service providers, Iwi, local government, community groups and research institutions.

Discussion is underway with providers in other locations. This engagement will continue.

## **How has the Government engaged with Māori in developing this plan?**

We recognise that the Crown's Treaty partners, Māori, are disproportionately represented in all areas of housing need and homelessness driven by the ongoing impacts of dispossession of land, and subsequent displacement, and the resulting disconnection from whānau, hapū and Iwi.

Engagement Māori has been an important part of developing responses to homelessness. The engagement approach included conversations with a range of sector experts and national sector bodies, Māori housing providers, and Iwi.

## **Will you be doing further engagement with the homelessness sector after the action plan is done?**

Yes. The homelessness action plan is an ongoing conversation, so we will be talking with the sector again in the next couple of months and beyond as needed.

## **Where can I provide feedback on the action plan?**

The homelessness action plan is part of the ongoing conversation and we will be talking with the sector again. In the meantime, the Ministry welcomes feedback. In the first instance email us at [Homelessness@HUD.govt.nz](mailto:Homelessness@HUD.govt.nz).