



HUD2025-006802

s 9(2)(a)



Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

On 31 March 2025 Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (the Ministry) received your request for the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Under the OIA, I request a copy of HUD2025-006051 Youth Homelessness and recent changes to emergency housing.

This is released to you, with some information withheld under Section 9(2)(a) of the Act, *to protect the privacy of natural persons*, and Section 9(2)(f)(iv), *to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials*.

In terms of section 9(1) of the Act, I am satisfied that, in the circumstances, the decision to withhold information under section 9 of the Act is not outweighed by other considerations that render it desirable to make the information available in the public interest.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on the Ombudsman's website at: [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

As part of our ongoing commitment to openness and transparency, the Ministry proactively releases information and documents that may be of interest to the public. As such, this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on our website.

Ngā mihi

Laura Miller  
**Policy Manager, Responding to Severe Housing Needs**  
Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

**Annex A: Document schedule**

<b>Documents released – HUD2025-006802</b>			
	<b>Date</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Section of the Act applied</b>
1	11 February 2025	HUD2025-006051 Youth Homelessness and recent changes to emergency housing.	9(2)(a) 9(2)(f)(iv)



## Aide mémoire

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS AND RECENT CHANGES TO EMERGENCY HOUSING			
To Minister	Hon Tama Potaka	Portfolio	Associate Minister of Housing
Date	11 Feb 2025	Priority	Medium
Tracking number	HUD2025-006051		
CONTACT FOR DISCUSSION			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Laura Miller	Manager	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Anna-Marie Miller	Senior Policy Advisor	04 830 6921	
OTHER AGENCIES CONSULTED			
Ministry of Social Development (MSD); Oranga Tamariki (OT); Ministry of Health (MOH).			



## Purpose

1. This paper summarises and provides responses to the concerns raised in the December 2024 Kick Back report *Denied – The Growing Cost of Denying Young People Access to Shelter* (the report).
2. It also provides you with initial information on ‘Duty to Assist’ legislation, which the report advocates for.

## Background

3. Kick Back is a youth development organisation that responds to youth homelessness. They have three key areas of focus: Education, Advocacy, and Innovation. Kick Back also operates *The Front Door*, a drop-in centre in central Auckland, offering support to young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.
4. The report focuses on the experiences of some young people with accessing emergency housing (EH) since changes to the policy settings for eligibility were implemented by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) in August 2024. Kick Back structures the report around four key concerns:
  - i. the system is not responsive to crisis;
  - ii. the system is not trauma informed;
  - iii. apparent confusion and variance in the system regarding EH eligibility; and
  - iv. growing concern about the risk of suicide for our young people.
5. In the report, Kick Back advocates for ‘Duty to Assist’ legislation based on the Welsh model. According to Kick Back, this legislation is needed in New Zealand to clarify the responsibility of government agencies, health professionals, and community social services to provide support to people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.
6. The report follows previous communication from Kick Back’s co-founder, Aaron Hendry, to Hon Chris Bishop in October 2024. It highlights concerns that the EH reform was increasing youth homelessness, advising Minister Bishop of the launch of the petition calling on the Government to implement Duty to Assist Legislation<sup>1</sup>, and requesting a meeting. This correspondence was passed to your office to respond. We previously provided advice to your office recommending that the meeting request be accepted [HUD2024-005590 refers].

### *Responding to youth homelessness*

7. The underlying causes of homelessness for a young person can be complex and result from a range of interacting factors. A system-wide approach is often required,

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<sup>1</sup>This petition was launched by Auckland Action Against Poverty, Action Station and Kick Back.



including through income, employment, health, disability, and housing services and supports. Each young person and their experiences leading up to homelessness varies, and there is no linear movement through the system of supports available to young people with an immediate housing need.

8. Our preference is for young people to have safe, stable and appropriate housing. Government agencies and non-government organisations work together to support young people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness to address both their housing and other needs, including social and health. However, EH will likely be necessary where there is no other option available, including transitional housing.
9. Recent data emergency housing relating to youth is included at **Annex A** and an overview of services and supports focused on youth homelessness is included at **Annex B**.

### Concern one: The system is not responsive to crisis

10. The report provides examples that demonstrate significant gaps in the system for young people needing support. These examples focus on the experience of young people with an immediate housing need who seek support from MSD after, or near the end of regular working hours<sup>2</sup>.
11. MSD has advised that Work and Income is neither intended, nor resourced, to be a crisis line.
12. s 9(2)(f)(iv)

### Concern two: The system is not trauma informed

13. The report says that MSD kaimahi seem to lack sufficient knowledge about trauma, mental health and addiction, disability, and youth homelessness to operate in a trauma-informed manner. It also states that they are not all well-equipped to carry out meaningful assessments, and consequently some young people at significant risk of harm are being denied support.
14. MSD have advised that their staff receive training on practicing in a trauma informed way and that MSD client-facing staff are required to complete training to support an empathic case management approach. Compulsory training topics include courses in

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<sup>2</sup> Work and Income has 122 service centres throughout New Zealand. These are open from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday except for Wednesday when the opening hours are 9.30am to 5pm. The call centre (0800 number) is open from 7am to 6pm on Monday to Friday and from 8am to 1pm on Saturday.



empathy, bi-cultural awareness, unconscious bias, and conflict de-escalation. MSD also advises that the completion of compulsory training modules is closely monitored.

### **Concern three: There appears to be confusion and variance in the system regarding eligibility for emergency housing**

15. The report says that there seems to be genuine confusion within the system regarding the new eligibility criteria for EH.
16. Kick Back says it has been informed by some MSD case managers that EH is not available for single people at all as a matter of government policy. However, Kick Back also notes that the online information provided by MSD, your own public kōrero about EH eligibility, and MSD's Auckland Regional Director is clear there is no such policy.
17. The report (both in this section and earlier in the report) says that some young people have been told by MSD:
  - they are not eligible for EH because they are single;
  - MSD does not provide EH at all anymore;
  - they need to apply for alternative housing (private and transitional housing) themselves before seeking EH;
  - they are not eligible because they are to blame for their own homelessness;
  - MSD does not accept walk-ins for EH;
  - they are not actually homeless as an existing tenancy is adequate.
18. Each of these points are discussed further below (except MSD not providing EH). MSD consider that in general the changes to the eligibility criteria are operating as intended. MSD's view is that the changes provide more consistency and less discretion for front-line staff with the aim of ensuring the Emergency Housing Grant (EHG) is only made to those in genuine need, who have met their obligations.

#### *Single people and families are eligible for emergency housing*

19. In considering eligibility for EH, MSD has said that they do not prefer EHG's to go to families over single people<sup>3</sup>. MSD confirms that eligible single people should have access to EH, and that a decline solely on the basis that a person is single does not align with policy settings.
20. However, they also note that staff are required to consider what other adequate options exist. While other options such as Boarding Houses may be adequate for single people, they are unlikely to be so for families with children.

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<sup>3</sup> As indicated in Annex A, MSD data shows that as at 31 December 2024 there were 9 singles aged between 16-24 without children living in Emergency Housing in Auckland.



### *Need to apply for alternative housing first*

21. MSD advises that this is contextual and that it recognises that people experiencing homelessness or other crises generally have limited capacity to look for alternatives, including applying for private rentals. Whether alternate options are available will also depend on who is seeking an EHG (as discussed above, some forms of accommodation may be suitable for a single person but not suitable for a family with children).

### *Contributed to own housing need/to blame for own homelessness*

22. MSD has discretion to decline an EHG when people seeking access to EH have contributed to their own housing need. MSD provided examples of when people have previously not met their responsibilities while in EH due to damaging the premises, or those who have declined offers of adequate alternate housing, for example a place in transitional housing<sup>4</sup> or an offer of a private tenancy.<sup>5</sup>
23. MSD have said that they that recognise responses to crises can often be counter-productive and self-destructive. Therefore, in appropriate cases, an EHG can still be made.

### *Walk-ins*

24. MSD advises that their general approach is that if a person walks-in to an MSD service centre before close of business presenting an immediate need and there is an available staff member to help, MSD will try sit down with the person and assess what supports might be available to address their needs. However, centres can face capacity issues and as a result walk-ins may need to be refused if there are no available staff members.

### *Adequacy of existing accommodation*

25. MSD advises that the standards for acceptable alternative accommodation for EH is a lower threshold than typical for other housing supports, with 'adequate' accommodation meaning it is safe and meets essential needs in the short-term. For example, while overcrowding may indicate unsuitable long-term accommodation, it may still be providing shelter, a place to sleep, and basic facilities, and therefore, should be accessed over granting EH. An example of adequate options that would be acceptable for EH but still indicate housing need would be sleeping on a friend's couch.
26. For the example given in the report of a fire at an existing tenancy, MSD have said that whether the property would have still been adequate would depend on the state of the property.

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<sup>4</sup> MSD's priority is to support clients into other forms of accommodation, for example transitional housing when it is available, before resorting to EH.

<sup>5</sup> MSD advises that there is a not prescriptive list of rentals that need to be applied for before granting access to EH, rather it needs to be clear that the person has made an effort to find their own accommodation before the application will be accepted.





## Concern four: There is growing concern about increasing risk of suicide for young people

27. The report says that the system is putting increasing pressure on young people, exacerbating mental illness, and increasing the risk of trauma, abuse, and harm, including suicide. Kick Back notes in the report that it is observing increased instability for young people since the changes to EH, and have noted a marked difference in their ability to gain and maintain shelter for young people.
28. We know that a young person experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness often needs more than just a home. For example, a young person may be experiencing family breakdown, family violence or sexual violence, mental health or addiction, trauma, injury, or other physical health issues. **Annex B** details key services available to help youth at risk of, or who are, experiencing homelessness. These span a range of services beyond connecting someone with accommodation.
29. Under the new policy settings introduced last year, MSD front line staff are no longer required to consider whether the refusal of an EHG would worsen the applicant's position, cause serious hardship, or increase or create any risk to the life or welfare of the applicant or their immediate family. We do not currently have evidence as to whether this change relates to the issues raised in the report.
30. The importance of acting early, and in the right way, is an especially important consideration for the work HUD is leading under the EH target delivery plan (see para 39 below) s 9(2)(f)(iv)

## Kick Back is advocating for 'Duty to Assist' legislation

31. The report says that Duty to Assist legislation would clarify the responsibility of government agencies, health professionals, and community social services to provide support to people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.
32. Duty to Assist legislation was enacted in Wales in 2014,<sup>6</sup> putting a duty on local authorities to support anyone experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. Similar legislation has since been introduced in England and Scotland, and Canada is in the process of introducing it to address youth homelessness.
33. Kick Back has been working with Auckland Action Against Poverty and Action Station to campaign for this. As of 11 February 2025, their online petition has collected 658 of the 800 target signatures.<sup>7</sup>
34. Initial information on the international use of Duty to Assist legislation is included in Annex C. We cannot make any recommendations on this approach without further analysis but will look at it further s 9(2)(f)(iv)

<sup>6</sup> Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

<sup>7</sup> [Demand the Government support people experiencing homelessness! | OurActionStation](#) [accessed 7 Feb 2025].





## We recognise there are challenges and gaps in addressing youth homelessness

35. As discussed above, young people are a diverse population group, and the drivers of homelessness for young people are broad. The services that support young people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness are also varied and delivered across a range of government agencies and community organisations. These services are detailed in **Annex B**.
36. The system of supports is complex, there may be gaps or inconsistent practices, adult services may not be appropriate for young people, and it can be difficult to navigate. The combination of these factors can result in young people not receiving the supports they need when they need them.
37. In Kāinga Kore: The Stage One Report of the Housing Policy and Services Kaupapa Inquiry on Māori Homelessness, the Tribunal found that the Crown has failed to take vigorous action to protect homeless rangatahi. It also noted that rangatahi have particular needs and vulnerabilities who are not properly catered for by an adult system.
38. As part of the early interventions and transitions from state care and custody work under the EH Target delivery plan,<sup>8</sup> we are working with relevant government agencies<sup>9</sup> to identify and better understand system 'pain points.' From this, we will identify opportunities to improve how the system operates to better support people, and prevent them from needing EH s 9(2)(f)(iv)

## Next steps

39. We suggest you consider sharing this aide memoire with the Hon Louise Upton, as this content relates directly to the operational activities of the Ministry of Social Development.
40. You will be meeting with Kick Back's Aaron Hendry on 3 April 2025 during your upcoming visit to Auckland. HUD will provide you with further information and key messages prior to the visit.

## Annexes

Annex A: Recent data on emergency housing relating to youth

Annex B: Key supports available to help youth at risk of, or are experiencing homelessness

Annex C: Initial information on the international use of 'Duty to Assist' legislation

<sup>8</sup> Early interventions and transitions from state care and custody workstreams.

<sup>9</sup> The agencies involved in this work include the Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Justice, Oranga Tamariki, Police, Te Puni Kokiri, and Whaikaha.

## Annex A – Recent data on emergency housing relating to youth

**Table 1: The number of clients aged 16-24 years in emergency housing as at 31 January 2024 and 31 December 2024.**  
*by emergency housing region*

As at date	Auckland	Total
31 January 2024	144	501
31 December 2024	9	72

**Table 2: The number of clients aged 16-24 years in emergency housing as at 31 January 2024 and 31 December 2024 <sup>10</sup>**  
*by emergency housing region and household composition*

As at date / Household composition		Auckland	Total
31 January 2024	Couple no children	S	21
	Couple with Children	15	51
	Single no Children	51	213
	Single with Children	78	216
	Total	144	501
31 December 2024	Couple no children	0	S
	Couple with Children	0	S
	Single no Children	9	54
	Single with Children	S	12
	Total	9	72

**Table 3: The number of Emergency Housing Grants declined for clients aged 16-24 years during the period 1 September 2023 and 31 December 2023 <sup>11</sup>**  
*by MSD region, month and age group*

**Table 4: The number of Emergency Housing Grants declined for clients aged 16-24 years during the period 1 September 2024 and 31 December 2024**  
*by MSD region, month and age group*

Month				Total	Month				Auckland Metro	Total
September 2023	16-17 years	0	S		September 2024	16-17 years	0	S		
	18-24 years	12	60			18-24 years	18	63		
				Total		12	63	Total		66
October 2023	16-17 years				October 2024	16-17 years	S			S
	18-24 years					18-24 years	S	57		72
	Total					Total	6	57		75
November 2023	16-17 years				November 2024	16-17 years	S			S
	18-24 years					18-24 years	18	51		45
	Total					Total	15	54		45
December 2023	16-17 years				December 2024	16-17 years	S			S
	18-24 years					18-24 years	S	27		66
	Total					Total	S	30		69
Total					Total	39	204		87	258

<sup>10</sup> Due to privacy concerns, numbers for some categories of clients have been suppressed. Suppressed numbers have been replaced by an 'S'



## Annex B – Key supports available to help youth at risk of, or who are, experiencing homelessness

INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION	TARGET POPULATION	FURTHER INFORMATION
<b>Initiatives that include an accommodation component.</b>			
<b>Transitional Housing (HUD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interim housing for people with an immediate housing need who have no appropriate alternative</li> <li>Social services to support a move to stable housing and once in stable housing, to maintain that housing</li> <li>Properties are sourced by the social service provider from Kāinga Ora, community housing providers (CHPs), and private market (cannot use social housing properties); in some instances motels are leased by HUD.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16+ years</li> <li>Immediate housing need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Originally anticipated to be an average stay of 12 weeks, and support is available for a further 12 weeks once in stable housing, but in practice stays are often longer</li> <li>Some longer stay transitional housing, for example Te Whare Hinatore (Auckland City Mission) and Whakamaru (Wellington City Mission), are for intentionally longer stays, providing interim housing and trauma-informed social services for at least 1 year</li> </ul>
<b>Youth Transitional Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As for transitional housing, but with on-site support services</li> <li>Young people are provided with access to youth focussed social and health support services, education and employment support to enable independence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16-25 years</li> <li>Immediate housing need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 12 months and support is available for a further 12 weeks after leaving youth transitional housing.</li> <li>293<sup>12</sup> places (includes 150 places in Auckland).</li> </ul>
<b>Rangatahi Supported Accommodation (HUD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As for youth transitional housing but support is more intensive reflecting the needs to the target population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16-25 years</li> <li>Immediate housing need</li> <li>Support needs are high and persistent and would not be addressed through other housing interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As long as needed, and support is available for a further six months after leaving rangatahi supported accommodation.</li> <li>45 places<sup>13</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Housing First (HUD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social services to support people experiencing chronic homelessness for at least 12 months over the past three years into stable housing</li> <li>Ongoing support to maintain that housing and to access as needed, to address issues such as trauma, mental health, and addiction contributing to, or as a result of chronic homelessness</li> <li>Primarily housed in social housing (CHPs and Kāinga Ora), some private rentals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18+ years</li> <li>Have been sleeping rough, in cars, or other places not designed for habitation for at least 12 months over the previous three years, who have high or complex support needs and require intensive on-going support maintain housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As long as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Rapid Rehousing (HUD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social services to support people who are experiencing homelessness into stable housing</li> <li>Ongoing support to maintain that housing and to access as needed, to address issues contributing to, or as a result of homelessness</li> <li>Primarily housed in social housing (CHPs and Kāinga Ora), some private rentals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18+ years</li> <li>Experiencing homelessness but don't meet the Housing First criteria because of duration of homelessness or because support needs are not quite as high or complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 12 months as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Young Parent Homes (Oranga Tamariki)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social services provided through supported housing for young parents to enable them to provide a safe parenting environment in interim housing.</li> <li>Group living environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>young parents between 13-25 years of age</li> <li>child/children and/or parents at risk of serious adverse outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently 15 placements available (3 providers with 5 placements each available in Gisborne, Auckland and Whangarei).</li> <li>As long as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Supported Accommodation (Oranga Tamariki)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social services provided through supported housing to enable young people to develop the life skills needed for living independently.</li> <li>Group living environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care and youth justice systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18 TSS supported accommodation providers (ten are kaupapa Māori organisations, and six are iwi-led kaupapa Māori organisations) funded for 136 supported accommodation places.</li> <li>The Oranga Tamariki contracts do not specify the length of time the supported accommodation is available, however some providers do specify this based on their model of support (i.e. it is a one year programme).</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup> These numbers were originally lower. Since a successful pilot, funding (and numbers) have increased.

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Social support initiatives			
<b>Transitions Support Service (Oranga Tamariki)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support to navigate adult services, advice and assistance (which may include financial assistance)</li> <li>Supported accommodation (see above)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15-25 years</li> <li>young people who have been on a care or custody order for 90 consecutive days from the age of 14 years and 9 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationwide</li> <li>The full cohort of eligible young people under the Oranga Tamariki Act (aged 15-25) is around 5,200. The number of eligible young people is around 550.</li> </ul>
<b>MSD youth service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services and mentoring support to improve the well-being and outcomes of young people including tailored individual plans, goal setting and confidence, parenting, budgeting, attaining NCEA qualifications, life and social skills, literacy and numeracy, driver's license, and access to other social services such as counselling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>young people aged 16 or 17 years who have had a family breakdown and can no longer live with their parents or caregivers.</li> <li>young parents aged 16-19 years who are the primary caregiver for a child</li> <li>young people aged 16-17 years who are not in education, employment or training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationwide</li> </ul>
<b>Housing Education programme (Oranga Tamariki)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A prevention programme to better support rangatahi to find and sustain suitable living situations prior to their transition out of Oranga Tamariki care or custody.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationwide</li> <li>Available to 90 young people in pilot stage and 600 young people per year in subsequent years (40 workshops/year).</li> </ul>
Initiatives that support health/mental health			
<b>Integrated health services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated health and homelessness services that provide easily accessible services together in the same place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People experiencing homelessness facing barriers and difficulties accessing support, such as health services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An example of this in practice in New Zealand is Downtown City Mission's provision of support services to people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.</li> </ul>
<b>Mobile Health Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interventions that provide accessible and responsive primary health care.</li> <li>Mobile health clinics go to places where health services are needed, such as emergency or transitional housing. The healthcare provided is more comprehensive than outreach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobile health services can be targeted at different groups e.g. people experiencing housing instability or homelessness where access to health services can be challenging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are examples of mobile health services in New Zealand for wider cohorts and services.</li> </ul>
<b>Hauora Māori health and housing connections initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This new service provides Kaupapa Māori pathways and holistic support and connections to Māori health and housing providers. Māori experience far higher acute bed stays and emergency housing use and homelessness than non-Māori, and this initiative seeks to support people to transition from health/mental health and addiction services.</li> <li>This initiative is resulting in reduced homelessness and EH use, as well as reduced emergency department use and acute hospitalisations. Other outcomes include increased engagement with primary and community health services and increased connections with social services.</li> <li>This initiative is funded (for four years) as part of Action 10 of the Emergency Housing Reset and Redesign (previous Government initiative).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted to Māori with high hospital readmissions and need for housing and wider health and social support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Auckland</li> <li>Scale – dependent on intensity of services, approx. 50 people a year and to be confirmed as part of design work</li> </ul>
<b>Mental health and addiction services and support for youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a range of mental health and addiction services for young people including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Access and Choice programme (primary mental health support, for those with mild to moderate mental distress) - available in general practice (in 605 locations) and via youth-specific service providers (83 locations)</li> <li>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, for those with severe mental distress - available in each region</li> <li>School based services such as School-based Health Services (available in 300 schools) and Counselling in Schools</li> <li>Gumboot Friday - provides short-term free counselling to people aged 25 or under</li> <li>Phonelines (such as 1737) and app-based support (such as Auntie Dee)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some services are universally available, while other services target specific cohorts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Access and Choice programme also offers whānau-centred Māori (63 locations) and Pacific (14 locations) services, which include tamariki and rangatahi.</li> </ul>





<b>Suicide prevention supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kia Piki te Ora kaupapa Māori suicide prevention services</li><li>• Māori and Pacific Suicide Prevention Community funds</li><li>• National Māori and Pacific suicide prevention programmes</li><li>• Mental Wellbeing &amp; Resilience for Asian communities and Rainbow communities</li><li>• Family and whānau information service</li><li>• Suicide bereavement peer support service</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suicide prevention programmes and supports can be accessed by anyone including young people. There is a targeted focus on groups who are at greater risk of suicide including Māori, Pacific, rainbow communities, and young people.</li></ul>	
<b>Initiatives that include financial support</b>			
<b>MSD housing support products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vulnerable households may be eligible for financial assistance to help them obtain or maintain a tenancy via MSD's Housing Support Products such as providing rent in advance or bond grants.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing support products are only granted to people who can afford to regularly pay the rent and live at the property.</li></ul>	



## Annex C – Initial information on international use of ‘Duty to Assist’ legislation

<b>What is Duty to Assist legislation</b>	<p>Duty to Assist legislation is an umbrella term for legislation that creates an obligation for specified authorities to take steps to either alleviate homelessness or prevent it before it occurs.</p> <p>A Duty to Assist can incorporate temporary housing solutions but the end goal is always permanent, settled housing, either in social housing, affordable rentals, or private rentals.</p>
<b>International context</b>	<p><b>Housing (Wales) Act 2014</b></p> <p>Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act) requires local housing authorities to take reasonable and timely steps to prevent or end homelessness.</p> <p>The type of assistance given to households varies depending on whether they are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. The Act specifies three main stages each with distinct obligations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Stage 1: Help to prevent.</b> Local authorities must offer resources to help people at risk of homelessness</li><li>• <b>Stage 2: Help to secure.</b> If the situation is not resolved in step one, local authorities must help secure accommodation within 56 days.</li><li>• <b>Stage 3: Duty to secure.</b> If steps one and two fail, step three places an absolute duty on local authorities to secure accommodation. Households in priority need are also entitled to interim accommodation.</li></ul> <p>People seeking help must meet minimal eligibility requirements, and the legislation sets out parameters for establishing categories of ‘priority need’ for groups such as vulnerable people (including youth) and families. However, Wales is currently considering the removal of priority groups and a reduction in eligibility criteria.</p>





	<p><b>Similar legislation: England, Scotland, and Canada</b></p> <p>England and Scotland have similar legislation to Wales. Both have added clauses to address prevention through inter-agency collaboration, which was noted as a gap in the Welsh law.<sup>14</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The English <b>Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)</b> introduced an additional element ‘<i>duty to refer</i>’, requiring specified public authorities to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to local authority housing teams. It also eliminated priority groupings.</li><li>• The <b>Housing (Scotland) Bill 2024</b>, which is currently being debated, builds on other housing legislation and requires public bodies to ask individuals about their housing situation and take action where required.</li></ul> <p>Canada is also in the process of adopting similar legislation to address youth homelessness and is basing their approach on the Welsh statute.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation presents a mixed picture of effectiveness: duty to assist is not enough on its own</b></p>	<p>An evaluation undertaken one year after the adoption of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 found that overall individuals got more meaningful help earlier, with fewer households moving into homelessness.</p> <p>Other research found that there were potential longer term annual savings in addressing homelessness. This was predicted to be in the range of between £32 and £212 million in relation to people who were homeless in temporary accommodation and, based on the average saving related to prevention, a further potential saving of around £100 million.<sup>15</sup></p> <p>An evaluation of the English Homelessness Reduction Act (2017), undertaken in 2024, also found positive results.<sup>16</sup> It noted that while progress was made against all intended outcomes of the act, the duty to prevent homelessness had the greatest impact.</p> <p>However, it should also be noted that Duty to Assist legislation has not been enough to combat homelessness alone. As early as 2015 a paper on the Welsh legislation</p>

<sup>14</sup> [Duty to Assist Involves More than Just the Homelessness Sector | HomelessHub](#)

<sup>15</sup> [phw.nhs.wales/files/housing-and-health-reports/a-case-for-investment-report/](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Evaluation of the Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report](#)





noted the need to reorientate funding away from temporary accommodation and towards prevention strategies. This led to the adoption of the Welsh Government Programme for Government 2021 – 2026 which commits to legislative reforms that are strongly focused on prevention and rapidly housing people in stable housing with support as needed.<sup>17</sup>

Evaluations of the Welsh and English legislation also noted that:

- Duty to Assist legislation does not address structural and systemic barriers such as a lack of affordable housing supply
- data sharing and collaboration and coordination among agencies, especially the frontline delivery, can be challenging.

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<sup>17</sup> [Evaluation of homeless interventions: final report](#)