



HOUSING FIRST

— AUCKLAND —



Briefing for Ministers: February 2021



With backbone support provided by Wise Group



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— AUCKLAND —

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Tēnā koutou	4
Section 1: Our results – working together to end homelessness.....	6
1.1 Our results.....	6
Case study 1.1 A new life for Edna	11
1.2 Whānau stay living in their homes.....	12
1.3 Understanding how we can improve our services.....	12
Section 2: Tāiki – optimising outcomes for Māori.....	12
2.1 Results for Māori.....	12
2.2 Tāiki: how Housing First was adapted for Aotearoa	13
2.3 The interrelationship between Tāiki and Housing First in Aotearoa ..	15
Section 3: Access to housing - the role of CHPs and Kāinga Ora.....	16
3.1 Partnerships with Kāinga Ora.....	16
3.2 Increasing supply through community housing providers	17
3.3 Getting the right homes.....	17
3.4 Our recommendations.....	18
Section 4: The support needs of Housing First whānau.....	19
4.1 Support offered by Housing First Auckland	19
4.2 Connecting the systems.....	19
Section 5: Investing in Housing First to end homelessness.....	20
5.1 Continued investment in the Housing First Auckland backbone	20
5.2 Assertive Outreach	21
5.3 Longer term contracts	21
5.4 Certainty of continued funding for motels	21
Section 6: Summary	22
Appendix 1: Housing First Auckland Overview.....	23
1.1 Brief history of Housing First Auckland.....	23
1.2 How we work together	24
1.3 What drives us	24
1.4 Housing First programme and principles.....	25



Foreword

“It’s a beautiful place. I can’t ask for anything more.”

Those are the words of Edna, one of the 567 people Housing First Auckland (HFA) has helped last year. Edna’s life is looking up now; she’s in a permanent home and is optimistic and planning for the future. But earlier last year things weren’t so positive for the 61-year-old. Before lockdown, Edna spent six months at Women’s Refuge, after fleeing violence in the boarding house where she was staying. Edna’s story demonstrates the difference that Housing First makes to people’s lives, and the important role that community housing providers (CHPs) can play in delivering permanent homes.

Read about Edna’s journey, and the tenacity and courage of our kaimahi (support worker) on page 11.

Of course, no story of 2020 is complete without considering the impact of COVID-19. Having a safe place to self-isolate was vital to the government’s COVID-19 elimination strategy and will be again if there is a further outbreak of widespread community transmission.

HFA supported over 1,000 people in motels during the 2020 lockdowns. This presented a unique opportunity to work closely with whānau, connecting them to housing and support. As the year closed, thanks to government investment, we were still supporting 464 people in motels who need permanent homes.

We were able to act swiftly in March. Within hours of a call from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, HFA was supporting people into motels. Within days, the backbone team built a system to onboard and allocate rooms across the entire city, helping over 500 people off the streets within a fortnight.

Our kaimahi (staff) were walking the streets of Auckland while there was community transmission of COVID-19, risking their personal



HOUSING FIRST

— AUCKLAND —

health to put whānau first, and have continued to support whānau onsite in motels to enable the best outcomes possible.

Now is the time to move from a very successful crisis response to a long-term change where homelessness will be rare, brief and non-recurring. We look forward to continuing to work with government so it can be bold, inventive and long-term in its thinking and planning. We need access to quality, permanent housing supply, and we are ready to deliver some of that supply. We need investment in good quality, well-supported temporary accommodation until permanent homes are available. We must not lose sight of our most vulnerable people when housing is an issue for many.

Alongside ensuring there is enough and the right kind of housing, we must build on our work together to tackle those complex systemic issues related to health - particularly mental health - addiction, poverty, trauma and the effects of colonisation, to address and end homelessness.

Kōkiri ki runga

Kōkiri ki raro

Whakamaua kia tina! Tina! Haumi ē, hui ē! Tāiki ē!



Tracey Moore

Programme Lead

Housing First Auckland



HOUSING FIRST

— AUCKLAND —



Tēnā koutou

Dear Hon Dr Megan Woods, Hon Marama Davidson, Hon Peeni Henare and Hon Poto Williams

Congratulations on your appointments as ministers in housing portfolios.

We are looking forward to working together over the next parliamentary term to ensure that homelessness in Tāmaki Makaurau is rare brief and non-recurring.

Collectively, our organisations have enjoyed working closely with government since 2017 to support some of the most vulnerable people in Aotearoa New Zealand into permanent homes.

Building on these relationships, the 2020 COVID-19 response for homeless whānau showed the strength in our partnership.

Acting with urgency, the government trusted Housing First Auckland to support whānau into motels. The backbone team worked alongside the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to create localised on the ground provider driven processes that worked well in a crisis.

Our ability to work at speed during challenging times can be primarily attributed to one main asset – trust. Trust between government and the collective in our ability to deliver effectively,





HOUSING FIRST

— AUCKLAND —

with the focus more on outcomes than contract requirements, and, most importantly, the trust we have built in our communities at a grass roots level that enabled critical, urgent action.

The issues facing the country in terms of housing are complex, but we are optimistic that working collaboratively across sectors, organisations, and alongside central and local government we will continue to find long term solutions that work for whānau.

Ngā mihi nui, nā



Julie Nelson

Wise Group
Chief Executive, joint
Housing
First Auckland
Project Lead



Chris Farrelly

CEO/City Missioner
Auckland City
Mission



Barbara Browne

Chief Executive,
Kāhui Tū Kaha



Jo Denvir

Chief Executive,
Lifewise



Fiona Hamilton

Chief Executive,
LinkPeople



Lisa Woolley

Chief Executive,
Visionwest

Section 1: Our results – working together to end homelessness

1.1 Our results

Housing First provides housing then offers tailored support for as long as it is needed to help people stay housed and address the needs that led to their homelessness. It is an evidence-based model for ending homelessness.

Housing First Auckland formed as a collective at the end of March 2017 and started reporting our results in May that year.

The collective is supported by a backbone team which plays a pivotal role in leading and coordinating the chief executives to meet bi-weekly and six collective work streams (general manager, practice, property, kaupapa Māori, data and communications). The backbone leads the collective in addressing issues and collaborating to share strengths and ideas.

At December 2020 our collective had supported at total of 1048 households into permanent tenancies through the Housing First (865 households) and Rapid Rehousing (183 households) programmes. Rapid Rehousing is an adaptation of Housing First that supports people who are transitionally homeless, as illustrated (Infographics 1.1 and 1.2).

Additionally, Housing First Auckland supported 1406 people in motels in the nine months from March 2020 to December 2020 (Infographic 1.3).





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— AUCKLAND —

Infographic 1.1

Housing First:

Total whānau housed permanently

May 2017 to December 2020



865

Households



562

Children housed

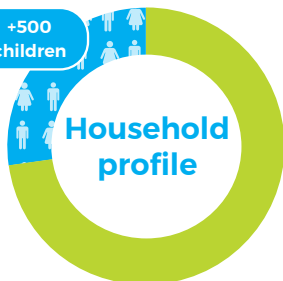


1427

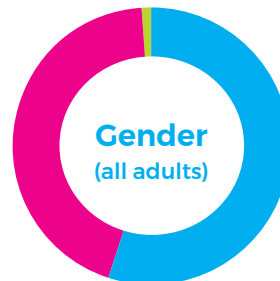
Adults and families
with children



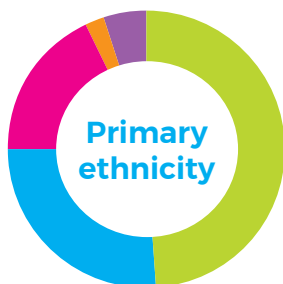
+500
children



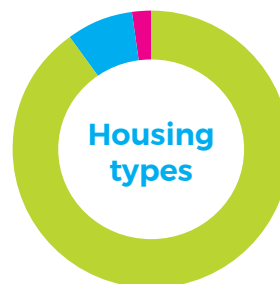
73% Individuals
27% Families



55% Male
44% Female
1% Gender diverse



55% Māori
19% NZ European
18% Pacific
3% Asian
5% Other



89% Private
8% Kāinga Ora
3% Other



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— AUCKLAND —

Infographic 1.2

Rapid Rehousing/Transitionally Homeless:

Total whānau housed permanently

March 2019 to December 2020



183

Households



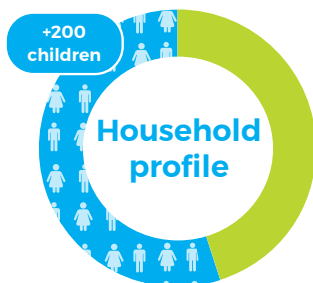
257

Children housed

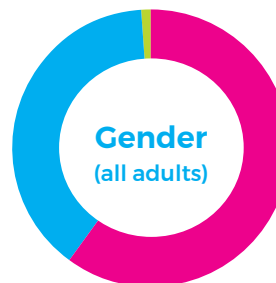


440

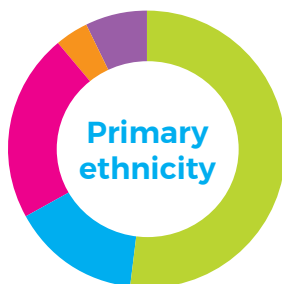
Adults and families
with children



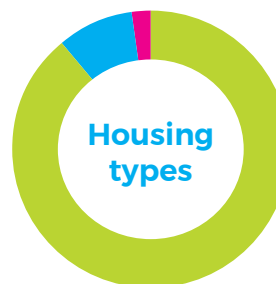
45% Individuals
55% Families



60% Female
39% Male
1% Gender diverse



52% Māori
15% NZ European
22% Pacific
4% Asian
7% Other



89% Private
9% Kāinga Ora
2% Other



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AUCKLAND

Infographic 1.3

COVID-19 motels:

Total whānau supported by Housing First Auckland in COVID-19 motels

27 March to 31 December 2020



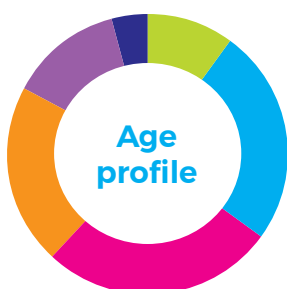
1406

People ever supported



464

Currently supporting



10% Under 20
25% 20 to 29
27% 30 to 39
21% 40 to 49
13% 50 to 59
4% 60 plus



47% Māori
19% NZ European
21% Pacific
4% Asian
5% Other
4% Not recorded



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— AUCKLAND —

Infographic 1.4

Whānau we are currently working with

31 December 2020



796
Housed



1267
Currently engaged



87%
Remain housed

At December 2020 we are working with 1267 households through Housing First and Rapid Rehousing programmes of which 796 have been delivered a housing solution. We are also supporting 464 people in COVID-19 motels (see infographic 1.3).





Case study 1.1

A new life for Edna

Just two months after its opening, a new LinkPeople development at 5 Pantera Way is full, with all 29 units allocated. Many members of this new community were on the streets before the March lockdown. Lockdown gave them an opportunity to move into emergency accommodation. This first step fostered a new belief that maybe they could have a different life in their own home.

Housing First team leader Leonie Kaipo says lockdown gave the former rough sleepers time to think and talk with LinkPeople about next steps.

Edna was one of 200 people LinkPeople housed in emergency accommodation in a matter of days when COVID 19 hit. She stayed at the Manukau Lodge, one of five Auckland motels that LinkPeople worked with.

Edna's now one of the new residents of Pantera Way. Since moving in Edna hasn't looked back, taking on a kaitiaki role when she was one of the first residents to move in on 24 September. Kitted out with a new brush and shovel, Edna enjoys spending time out and about, sweeping the pathways and common areas around the three-building development. "Working around here makes me feel good and healthy," she explains.

Keeping an eye out for who is coming and going, Edna also offers a listening ear for the other tenants. People naturally like talking to her, and Edna says she's quick to refer people to support networks to deal with issues they might have. Whānau get the chance to flourish when they prove to themselves they can care for their own home, and "if you can look after your home and wash yourself and cook, you're not as bad as you think you are," Edna adds.

Edna has no complaints about her new where: "It's a beautiful place...I can't ask for anything more". It has given her stability that she hasn't had for years, and she sees herself living in her unit above the office for many more years – keeping the paths swept and the community connected.



^ Edna at home
in LinkPeople
development
Pantera Way.



1.2 Whānau stay living in their homes

Our results show that 87% of households supported through Housing First Auckland remain in housing once they have been housed. This tenancy sustainment rate is much higher than traditional supportive housing programmes (a single-site building that bundles housing and treatment services under the same roof) with housing success rates at only 33%¹.

1.3 Understanding how we can improve our services

Tenancy sustainment results are encouraging, with whānau well supported to keep their homes. We are committed to using our experience working with whānau, to deepen our understanding of how to ensure more people stay connected to housing and the support they need.

Section 2: Tāiki – optimising outcomes for Māori

2.1 Results for Māori

Housing First is recognised internationally as the leading evidence-based programme designed to end homelessness. However, success rates in Canada where the programme originated varied significantly between indigenous and non-indigenous populations.

It was clear that for Housing First to work optimally in Aotearoa there would need to be a degree of reinterpretation to ensure it aligned with principles of Te Ao Māori and worked for Māori. Housing First Auckland established a Kaupapa Māori group that led the creation and implementation of a kaupapa Māori framework to support kai mahi, which is outlined in Section 2.2.

In Ottawa, the differences between the outcomes were striking, with 78% of non-Indigenous people staying in housing for six months or more compared to 54% among Aboriginal and Inuit adults.²

¹Tsemberis, Sam J., Housing First: the Pathways model to end homelessness for people with mental health and substance use disorders, Hazelden Publishing, 2010.

²Government Funding for Homelessness: Value for Money, or Money for Nothing, or Somewhere in Between?
<https://ifsd.ca/en/blog/last-page-blog/government-funding-homelessness>



HOUSING FIRST — AUCKLAND —

To derive a comparison, when we look at results for those people housed for six months or more, the results for Housing First Auckland are that 72% of non-Māori and 71% of Māori households have stayed in housing for six months or more (infographic 2.1). While this result is encouraging, we know we have further work to understand and address this inequity.

Infographic 2.1:

Housing First Auckland results for Māori

Primary Ethnicity	Currently engaged with HFA*	Remain housed 6+ months	%
Māori	434	310	71%
Non-Māori	362	260	72%
Total	796	570	72%



71%

Remain housed
6+ months

*Note: Excludes whānau who have not yet received housing
Table 2.1 Shows the percentage of whānau currently engaged with Housing First who remain housed for 6 months or more.

2.2 Tāiki: how Housing First was adapted for Aotearoa

Kōkiri ki runga

Kōkiri ki raro

Whakamaua kia tina! Tina! Haumi ē, hui ē! Tāiki ē!

The word Tāiki is commonly heard in formal oratory occasions. It is used to signal the group is united and ready to progress the purpose of coming together.

Tāiki is a kaupapa Māori framework developed by the Housing First Auckland (HFA) kaupapa Māori group, which includes tangata Māori from each of the five provider organisations and is supported by the collective backbone team. Tāiki assumes a Māori-centric position and illustrates the intent of HFA to work collaboratively and cohesively, while enabling individual organisations to maintain their uniqueness and mana (integrity).



Te kōkiri – the spearhead

The Tāiki framework is illustrated with the kōkiri (spearhead). A traditional formation used in military encounters, the kōkiri reflects a position of strength by taking a cohesive and unified approach.

Te ao Māori

A Māori-centric approach is at the point of the kōkiri shape and positions the importance of viewing the framework through a Māori world view.

Housing First principles

These are the five principles that sit within the Housing First model. See infographic 2.3 (page 15).

More information on the Housing First model can be found in Appendix 1 (page 23).

He ara tikanga o Tāiki

Tāiki sets out three ara tikanga (cultural concepts) to guide our collective mahi. These are rangatiratanga, whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga, which are elaborated on below. These concepts drive our practice, influence our behaviours and determine the way we support people.

See infographic 2.3 for more information.

Infographic 2.2

Te Kōkiri





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— AUCKLAND —

Operationalisation

This segment of the kōkiri reflects the uniqueness and mana of each organisation. It is at the discretion of each organisation as to how they adopt and adapt the ara tikanga in practice. Each organisation may use other cultural concepts and values alongside the Kaupapa Māori Framework.

2.3 The interrelationship between Tāiki and Housing First in Aotearoa

The infographic illustrates how Tāiki enhances and enriches the delivery of Housing First in Aotearoa. Using Tāiki alongside Housing First maintains integrity to the model and ensures that it is delivered in a way that works for tangata Māori.

Infographic 2.3

Tāiki and Housing First

HE ARA TIKANGA O TĀIKI

HOUSING FIRST PRINCIPLES

Rangatiratanga

Supporting people's self-determination. Respecting people's right to make choices. Enabling and empowering people to fulfil their choices.

Whakawhanaungatanga

Allowing for the opportunity to initiate, connect, foster and build positive connections, that sustain ongoing supportive relationships. Sense of belonging.

Manaakitanga

Enhancing someone's mana (inherent self-worth) through honouring and respecting by demonstrative acts of generosity and thoughtfulness. Comprised of two words, mana (inherent self-worth) and aki (encourage and uplift).

1 Immediate access to housing with no housing readiness conditions

2 Consumer choice and self determination

3 A harm reduction and recovery-orientation approach

4 Individualised and person-driven supports

5 Social and community integration



2.4 Growing our kaupapa Māori practice

Housing First Auckland has demonstrated success, and we are committed to further improving outcomes for both Māori and non-Māori whānau. Deepening understanding and implementation of Tāiki, and ensuring all new staff are well inducted, are integral to achieving long term results and we have developed a well-received workshop for this purpose.

The role of our Kaupapa Māori Group is critical in providing leadership to guide our collective mahi. The group is supported by the backbone, and in 2021 will have a key focus on working with the Litmus evaluators and to continue to ensure that Housing First works for Māori. We are also focusing on building capability around trauma-informed care, with two of our providers working together to create and deliver workshops. The first one is scheduled for March.

Section 3: There is no Housing First without housing first

3.1 Partnerships with Kāinga Ora

We fully support government efforts to increase social housing stock through Kāinga Ora and we seek a strategic partnership with Kāinga Ora to ensure adequate homes are available for our whānau, particularly those with the most complex needs.

Private rentals comprise 89% of housing outcomes for Housing First Auckland (either directly with landlords or with community housing providers (CHPs) taking on the tenancy). Providers are finding local pools of landlords wanting to engage with Housing First are diminishing, while demand for our services remains high.

With 823 permanent houses currently needed for Housing First whānau, in motels or making their own arrangements, we need more houses than the private market can supply.



3.2 Increasing supply through community housing providers

CHPs can play a vital role in supplementing the volume of public housing provided through Kāinga Ora. CHPs provide safe and secure housing along with wraparound support to meet the complex needs of vulnerable people. Understanding that there are multiple factors impacting housing markets, investing as CHPs as part of an integrated housing strategy has worked very effectively in Western Australia (WA) where their Affordable Housing Strategy exceeded its target of 20,000 new homes from 2015- 2020 by 15,000.

Integral to this was the concept of 'smart partnering' between government, CHPs and the private sector.

This included:

- 5,400 social rentals
- 2,700 discounted private rental homes
- 11,900 home loans and shared equity opportunities for homebuyers on modest incomes.³

We encourage the government to increase its work with us as CHPs to increase social housing supply.

3.3 Getting the right homes

The needs of people who have experienced homelessness are complex. Housing options need to be suited to a variety of needs. CHPs have the flexibility, agility and understanding that enables them to respond to the bespoke housing needs of their communities.

Working as a collective enables us to bring a broad view to housing planning, procurement and management. We can use our collective data to work with housing providers, such as Kāinga Ora and the wider community housing sector to identify current demands and forecast future supply needs.

³Government of Western Australia Community Housing Strategy
<http://www.housing.wa.gov.au/aboutus/affordablehousingactionplan/affordablehousingstrategy/Pages/default.aspx>



3.4 Our recommendations

Prioritising

Housing that meets the specific needs of people currently living in motels.

Investing

In new additional stock through a diverse portfolio, including CHPs. Delivery in the short-medium term will also provide economic stimulus through job creation in the longer term. This will involve looking at some of the enablers of and removing the barriers to CHP development and provision.

Optimising

The opportunities in the market by taking an Auckland-wide approach to securing supply, working across Auckland with key realtors to ensure we take advantage of all opportunities in this market.

Housing First Auckland seeks the support of Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Auckland Council and Community Housing Aotearoa to maximise impact.

Reviewing

The level and type of investment in rental subsidies for individuals and funding for appropriate support. Inadequate housing supply also leads to increased government expenditure. Rents increase due to high demand requiring the government to match this with higher benefits.



Section 4: The support needs of Housing First whānau

4.1 Support offered by Housing First Auckland

The opportunity of housing is the beginning of a person's engagement with our services. Our kai mahi acknowledge the rangatiratanga of whānau to make decisions about their lives at the time and pace which works for them. Support needs include mental health, physical health, addiction, whānau reconnection, community and social integration and family violence.

4.2 Connecting the systems

Many people experiencing homelessness are well known to multiple government agencies, and these interactions have a significant cost to the public purse. Ending homelessness presents the opportunity to reduce government spending on crisis responses and to allow whānau to experience the wellness benefits associated with permanent housing.

Equally as, if not more important than providing housing solutions, is preventing homelessness in the first place. It must be accepted across government that no-one is discharged or exited from government care into homelessness. We know there is a strong connection between homelessness, mental health and family violence and we encourage government and statutory agencies to examine and mitigate the systemic issues that undermine the success and well-being of whānau now and into the future.





The Ending Homelessness in New Zealand: Housing First research programme is evaluating outcomes for the Housing First programme run by The People's Project in Hamilton. Preliminary findings in 2019 show the cohort of 390 people had over 200,000 recorded interactions across a range of services in their lifetime. The most common services were health, justice and income support.⁴

This aligns with University of Queensland evaluation of Brisbane Common Ground which showed that supporting homeless people through a combination of safe housing and targeted services reduces acute, health and police response and generates estimated savings equivalent to \$13,000 (AUD) per person per year.⁵

Section 5: Investing in Housing First to end homelessness

We congratulate government for investing in Housing First as the evidence-based approach to ending chronic homelessness. With four years' experience delivering successful outcomes we also recognise the challenges to delivery. COVID-19 showed the speed and effectiveness with which we can work together with government-delivering results in a high trust environment. We look forward to conversations with MHUD and using what we have learned jointly for greater future success. We seek to highlight to ministers some key opportunities.

5.1 Continued investment in the Housing First Auckland backbone

The backbone is integral to supporting and leading the five Housing First providers to work in a collective impact model. This includes strengthening our responses to whānau needs through a Auckland-wide network, supporting collective workstreams, workforce development, data collection and supporting Māori leadership from across our organisations to ensure our service provision is Māori designed and led.

⁴ N. Perise, et al., Service usage by a New Zealand Housing First cohort prior to being housed, SSM-Population Health, 2019.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352827319300229>

⁵ *Brisbane Common Ground - Evaluation*
<https://issr.uq.edu.au/brisbane-common-ground-evaluation>



5.2 Assertive Outreach

At 31 August 2020 our COVID-19 response had seen over 1000 people brought into motels from the streets. This was a phenomenal result made possible to a significant extent by our knowledge of people and their trust in us, developed through our street outreach work. Of those, 27% left the motel without a positive housing outcome. Through assertive outreach we can continue to engage and to keep people connected with services and ensure their needs are met.

To date, outreach has been part-funded through Housing First contracts, Auckland Council and providers' own charitable incomes. These funding avenues are either at risk and/or are not sustainable in the future and we need to resource this component of Housing First to be effective in maintaining contact with highly transient people and to identify emerging homelessness as early as possible to prevent chronic issues.

5.3 Longer term contracts

To secure sustainable outcomes for whānau, contracts must give certainty to providers. Currently our contracts are renewed annually. Longer contract terms subject to performance allow more reliable planning and more effective and nuanced responses to complex needs, particularly as those needs change over time.

We suggest contracts should be for a minimum of five years, in line with Australian models, and be flexible enough to allow providers to help people through to a suite of options such as Housing First, Transitionally Homeless/Rapid Rehousing, youth housing, transitional housing without the need to navigate allocations or complex funding models. Additionally, streamlining and simplification of the contract model reduces administrative work for providers and creates clarity for front-line workers, enabling more effort to be directed to supporting whānau.

5.4 Certainty of continued funding for motels

Until viable alternatives are available, continued funding for motel placements with wrap-around support is critical to ensuring that whānau remain sheltered and continue to make progress addressing mental and physical health needs, addictions and connecting to the community.



Section 6: Summary

Housing First Auckland is committed to our relationship with government.

We are moving in the right direction, and we believe ongoing success relies on constant learning, fast innovation, and the flexibility to respond to new challenges as they arise. In 2020 we proved we could do this and that our relationships with each other and with you, the government, are strong enough to achieve incredible results during challenging times.

We are confident that we can build on these relationships to create solutions to the current housing crisis and chronic homelessness.

We see key first steps including:

- Support Housing First with strategic access to Kāinga Ora properties
- Fund Community Housing Providers to increase housing supply
- Fund assertive outreach across Auckland.
- Ensure contractual agility, clarity and certainty

We look forward to working with you in 2021 to deliver sustainable solutions to homelessness in Tāmaki Makaurau that will benefit all of Aotearoa.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou



Appendix 1: Housing First Auckland Overview

1.1 Brief history of Housing First Auckland

In October 2016, the Ministry of Social Development invited providers with a track record in the community social housing sector to submit an RFP for a Housing First pilot project in Auckland. Housing First provides housing then offers tailored support for as long as it is needed to help people stay housed and address the needs that led to their homelessness.

The five providers selected were Auckland City Mission and Lifewise working in the city centre, Kāhui Tū Kaha working in central and west Auckland, LinkPeople in south Auckland, and Visionwest in west Auckland. The group agreed that they could achieve more together than individually and formed Housing First Auckland (HFA), with a backbone to provide strategic support services from the Wise Group.

All providers were selected due to their prior experience in working with those who have experienced homelessness, with several providers, including Wise Group, working for some time within a Housing First framework.

The first two-year goal for HFA was to support 472 adults into permanent homes. HFA over-delivered, supporting 512 adult participants and 452 children into homes – meaning there was a total of 964 people benefitting from the programme.

In March 2019 Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern confirmed further investment for Housing First, as the government's primary response for supporting the chronic homeless and those with multiple high and complex needs.

1.2 How we work together



The HFA Chief Executives are all committed to working together using a collective impact model. The HFA backbone team provides the co-ordination, infrastructure, strategy, data analysis and project management needed to bring the organisations together at all levels of delivery, and drive integrity to Housing First. This includes codesigning and sharing resources and professional development opportunities, through workstreams and workshops on practice, property, data and evaluation and kaupapa Māori.

Our governance team comprises representatives from each organisation that makes up our collective.

1.3 What drives us

Purpose

Our purpose is to create a just and caring Aotearoa where all people are well-housed. Our ultimate goal is that homelessness in Auckland will be rare, brief and non-recurring.

Principles/beliefs

- Housing is a human right.
- Housing is fundamental for wellbeing.
- Every person can live well.
- People are their own experts.
- Getting it right with Māori for Māori.
- Housing First is the best approach for ending homelessness.
- We all have a role to play.
- Igniting public conversations for systems change



1.4 Housing First programme and principles

Housing First grew out of the work of Dr Sam Tsemberis, a clinical-community psychologist on the faculty of Columbia University Medical Center's psychiatry department. In 2017 the Housing First Auckland Collective hosted Dr Sam Tsemberis to deliver training to kai mahi/ frontline staff across the collective to support the model's integrity and deepen the understanding of the programme in New Zealand.

Housing First recognises that it is much easier to address complex needs, such as mental health and addiction, once people are housed. Previous models stipulated that people should be sober, or mentally well, in order to be "housing ready". We know that some landlords and housing providers in still have these stipulations.

Housing First sees the need for permanent, secure, appropriate, safe housing as a fundamental human right and people experiencing homelessness need housing provided quickly, with client-led tailored support for as long as necessary.

Housing First providers across the world show integrity to the following principles:

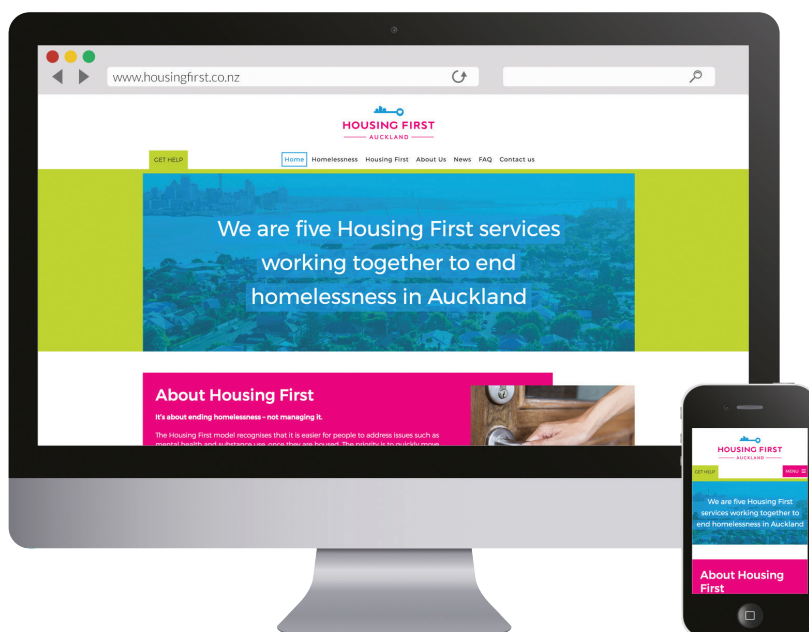
- Immediate access to housing with no housing readiness conditions
- Consumer choice and self-determination
- A harm reduction and recovery-orientation approach
- Individualised and person-driven supports
- Social and community integration



HOUSING FIRST
— AUCKLAND —

Please visit our website

www.housingfirst.co.nz



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Supported by

Housing First Auckland is made possible through funding from
The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and Auckland Council.



**MINISTRY OF HOUSING
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