

Our Customer Strategy

2018

Summary



Chief Executive's Foreword

Kia ora tātou

The government has asked service providers to join together to provide all New Zealanders with access to warm, dry, and safe homes.

As New Zealand's biggest residential land owner and manager of one of the Crown's largest asset portfolios, Housing New Zealand is stepping up to respond. We know that where we provide a decent home we are offering a foundation for healing, growth and dignity.

As we strive to become a world class public housing provider, we are going to do more to help New Zealanders by ensuring that our customers live well, with dignity and stability, in connected communities - empowering them to live stable lives and reach their goals.

To achieve this vision we must put protecting and improving the wellbeing of our customers at the centre of our thinking. We will create meaningful change to be a more empathetic landlord. We need a compassionate community response and the wide-ranging support of the health and social sector.

This change presents a challenge for Housing New Zealand's current operating model, and an exciting opportunity to work more innovatively to improve the services we provide to all of our customers. It requires us to enhance our relationships with our customers, moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach to delivering services and towards a more personalised approach.

To create positive outcomes, we need everyone's insights, intelligence and connections to develop community- and customer-based solutions together. We acknowledge that we do not have all the answers yet, and must work in partnership with the social sector to find them.

Our Customer Strategy provides us with a clear direction on our priorities through this time of change. It provides a platform for maximising outcomes by ensuring our services are tailored to our customers' needs. We are already transitioning our policies and operational practices to be more caring, compassionate and responsive.

We will continue to serve our customers in a culturally-appropriate manner, support them to remain in their homes as long as they need to, and connect them to other services they may need. We will work with other service providers to help them improve their circumstances and live more independently.

This Strategy also acknowledges the need to increase our focus on building communities. We must expand our current community development work beyond new homes, and support all of our homes and communities where there is need.

Finally, it outlines our role in stepping up to help lead and support the rest of the Government and the social sector so that we can work towards a common goal.

We are privileged to be playing a role in providing homes for people in need and building stronger healthier communities.

We can all be proud of this.

Ngā manaakitanga



ANDREW MCKENZIE | Chief Executive

This Customer Strategy sets the direction for the services and housing that Housing New Zealand provides for its customers. It outlines how we will achieve our vision for our customers: living well, with dignity and stability, in connected communities.



The role of this Strategy – a Starting Point

This is the first iteration of our Customer Strategy. It provides the foundation from which we will continuously improve.

To develop this Strategy, we have consulted with our frontline staff, analysed our customers' needs, and researched best practice approaches to providing housing. We will update this Strategy as we gather more information about what our customers need, and the impact of our services on their lives.

The Strategy's main purpose is to provide a deeper understanding of our customers and how we can help them, so we can create meaningful change. We see it as a starting point for us, service providers, service funders, policy makers and the wider community. Together we can begin thinking and talking about how to better respond to the needs of New Zealanders in state housing and our communities.

It also provides clarity about our goals and principles to the operational parts of our business, and service providers. It shows the scale and type of change we intend to deliver to our customers and communities.

The context for this new Strategy

We provide housing services to approximately 184,000 people - 4% of the New Zealand population. We manage more than 63,000 properties and own one of the Crown's largest asset portfolios.

Housing New Zealand's vision is to build lives and communities by housing New Zealanders – he pukenga wai, he nōhanga tāngata; he nōhanga tāngata, he putanga kōrero.

Our core role is delivering public housing for people who need it, for as long as they need it. We work to sustain tenancies and, where we can, help people move towards housing independence.

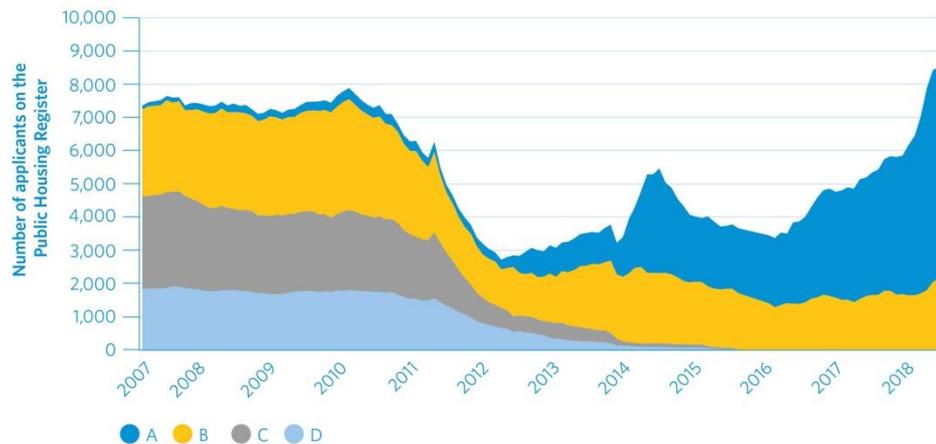
To perform our core role, we must provide services and homes that deliver more than just a roof over people's heads. We must ensure our customers get the support and homes they need so they can live stable lives with dignity. We cannot do this alone; we must work as part of the public sector and in collaboration with the social sector.

We want to be a great public housing landlord – world class. We need an operating model that is deliberate, compassionate and focused.

The changing requirements for public housing

Over the past few years demand for public housing has increased dramatically at the same time as fewer people are leaving state housing, partly as a response to supply constraints in the housing market. While our build programme is responding to increased demand, the Ministry of Social Development's housing eligibility assessment is prioritising applicants with high housing needs.

The growing number of Priority A applicants means we are housing a higher proportion of households with high and complex needs than before. Key social trends and issues give context to the range of needs and issues facing New Zealand society. These issues are likely to be more prevalent across our customer base.



Approximately 82,000 of our household occupants are under the age of 20, and 39,000 are under the age of ten: a critical time in child development. More than 30% of our tenancies belong to sole parents. Helping parents and caregivers live well will have intergenerational benefits and stop the cycle of disadvantage.

We also have an ethnically diverse customer base and this diversity continues to grow. The ethnic diversity of our customer base means cultural awareness and responsiveness needs to overlay everything we do, enabling all of our customers to prosper and thrive.

The nature and extent of customers' needs

All of our customers have goals and aspirations for their futures, and we must make sure we are doing what we can to help out customers achieve them.

For our customers that are relatively independent or have low requirements, we must continue providing fit-for-purpose service and housing responses that enable them to live well in their homes and communities. This means responding to advances in our knowledge, technology, relationships, and working with our customers on an ongoing basis to ensure we continue to meet their needs.

Some of our customers need more support to live well. We have prioritised eight types of service or housing needs among our customers that we will address with tailored services and housing solutions:

- Mental health
- Addiction and substance misuse
- Victims of violence and whānau harm
- Risk to others
- Mobility and access
- Large whānau (including multi-generational whānau)
- Lonely and isolated
- Formerly homeless / at risk of homelessness

Our early research estimates that about 30% of our new customers have one or more of these needs. Anecdotes from our frontline suggest that as many as 50% customers may face these challenges. We must better understand the extent and scale of these needs, and their demographic and geographical distributions.

Over the next year, we will develop a more detailed understanding of these needs and the best way to respond. Then we can make informed choices about the service and housing response we provide, how we collaborate with service providers and funders, and the amount of resource we allocate.

Our strategy - vision, goals, and guidelines

Our vision for this Customer Strategy is simple: Our customers live well, with dignity and stability, in connected communities. Better supporting our customers and communities through the services and homes we deliver will help us achieve Housing New Zealand's overall vision of building lives and communities.

Our customer vision is supported by:

- the **outcomes** we are striving to achieve which drive our service levels and investment decisions;
- our **goals and guiding principles** which drive our decision making and outputs; and
- our **commitments** to our customers and the sector, to provide clarity about this transformational shift in our service.



OUTCOMES

We are developing an outcomes framework as part of the review of our Strategic Plan which will support all of our activities – with the overriding goal of improving the wellbeing of our customers.

The Government is currently exploring a broad range of wellbeing factors which shape this framework. For now, we have focused on the three key outcomes we directly influence through our role as a public housing provider:

- **Stability:** State housing provides stable accommodation for customers that need it.
- **Safety and Security:** Our customers feel safe and secure in their homes and communities.
- **Connection and Participation:** Our customers are connected to their communities, and participate in community life.

GOALS

This Strategy establishes the following five strategic goals for how we will work with our customers and social sector:

- Goal 1: We understand the needs of our customers and anticipate the needs of our future customers
- Goal 2: Customers are trusted, feel empowered, and are involved in our decision making
- Goal 3: We build trust and connections between our customers and their communities
- Goal 4: Our tenancy services and homes meet our customers' needs, now and in the future
- Goal 5: We work collaboratively with the social sector to enable the delivery of services to our customers

When we meet them, we will be able to provide the service levels that our customers, communities, and the broader sector need. These goals represent a step towards best practice public housing and will help us to deliver targeted and tailored responses based on identified needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To guide our decision making, we have identified the following principles that underpin our behaviours and aspirations as we deliver our services and housing:

- Trust
- Dignity
- Cultural Respect
- Accessibility
- Adaptability
- Empowerment
- Sustainability

COMMITMENTS

Creating enduring change in the lives of our customers and communities requires us to take responsibility for achieving our customer vision. We therefore make the following commitments to our customers and the sector:

OUR COMMITMENTS TO OUR CUSTOMERS

We respect and care about you

We commit to offering you a service with empathy, compassion, dignity, and respect at all times.

We value your opinion and want to learn from you

We will listen to you, and where we can give you the choice to determine what is best for you.

Your safety and wellbeing is our priority

Your safety and wellbeing is our number one priority and we are committed to ensure that you feel safe and secure in your home, neighbourhood and community. We will support you to reach your housing goals and aspirations.

We will provide you with the right home and the right support

Together we will ensure the home you are in and the services you receive from us and the broader sector meet your needs.

We will be responsive

If something in your home is broken or is not meeting your needs, we will respond quickly and work with you to get things sorted.

We will keep you informed

We will keep you up to date with the right information at all times and you will have a say in the decisions that might affect you.

We continuously learn and innovate

We will keep learning and trying different things to improve the services and homes we provide. This also means we will be open and honest when a disappointing outcome occurs.

OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE SECTOR

We will work with you

We recognise that you are often well placed to help our customers in ways that we cannot. We will work with you to form enduring relationships to enable better outcomes through holistic approaches. By working together we will transform our service offerings to improve the wellbeing of our customers and communities.

We will provide leadership

Our scale and expertise can be used to support the government's public housing response. We will continue using our experience to influence performance in the provision of services to our customers and communities, and the broader housing sector.

We will keep learning and work differently

The diversity and size of our customer base affords us opportunities to think differently about how we can deliver services in innovative ways to better meet the needs of our customers. We will continue to learn and innovate, and test new models to ensure we are achieving the best outcomes.

How we will deliver this Strategy

This Strategy recognises that a tailored approach to service provision and housing is required to better meet the needs of all of our customers.

To achieve the outcomes we, and the Government, have set for ourselves and the broader sector we will investigate the following initiatives:

- **Enhanced service assessment** to ensure we make great placement decisions and service referrals
- **Formalised referral pathways and partnerships** to help customers navigate services and ensure they are linked with support
- **More comprehensive and empathetic tenancy management** that responds to our customers' needs
- **Housing modifications and a broader range of homes** to ensure our customers have the right homes
- **Enhanced community development and investment** for better communities
- **Innovation and improvement** to ensure we continue to change with our customers

The level of change proposed is transformational, but will be taken in small steps. Some changes can be implemented in the short- to medium-term, but others (such as the transformation of our homes and communities) will take decades.

Implementing this Strategy requires a comprehensive work programme. We will:

- engage with our customers, contractors, service providers and service funders;
- review our service delivery model;
- improve our information;
- quantify demand for tailored responses;
- establish the capacity of the sector to support delivery, and;
- analyse funding and policy implications.

The next steps to implement and improve this Strategy

- To improve our Strategy we will invest in collecting more information about our customers' needs, preferences and circumstances. This will include investing in data collection tools, and regularly talking to our customers, contractors, service providers and service funders as we work to improve our knowledge.
- We have developed a plan that sets out the short- and medium-term steps we will take to improve our Strategy.