



21 January 2025

Tēnā koe

### **Official Information Act request**

On 7 January 2025, you advised the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) that you were seeking copies of policies regarding Social Housing and Transfer Register applications.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Before I respond to your request, I have provided you with some helpful information in relation to the Ministry's role in assisting individuals with housing needs, specifically Public Housing, below.

### **General information on the Ministry's role in relation to Public Housing**

Demand for housing across New Zealand is growing and more people are experiencing a severe and immediate need. This demand is generated by a shortage of affordable housing driving up house prices and rents. People on low incomes are most affected by rising housing costs and many seek financial help through the Ministry.

When New Zealanders need Public Housing, their needs are recorded on either the Housing Register or the Transfer Register. The Housing Register shows people who are currently not in the Public Housing but who have been assessed as eligible for Public Housing. The Transfer Register shows people already in Public Housing who have applied to be rehoused. The combined registers are referred to as the Public Housing Register (the Register).

While the Ministry manages the Register, Kāinga Ora and Community Housing Providers match prospective tenants (provided by the Ministry through completed housing assessments) with houses. Kāinga Ora and Community Housing Providers also assist with starting and ending tenancies, manage tenancy agreements, transfer tenants, and manage and maintain houses to an agreed standard. Responsibility for funding and supply of Public Housing sits with the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development and Kāinga Ora, respectively.

The Register is dynamic rather than static, and it changes as people's circumstances and situations change. Placing people and families into houses is about matching them with the right house in the area they want to live. This includes ensuring the family has the right number of bedrooms, is close to essential services as schools, and that the accommodation meets any disability needs if

appropriate. Those assessed as having greater need for housing will be prioritised higher. As people's needs change, their priority on the Registry may change also. As such, the length of time spent on the Register awaiting housing can vary significantly.

Further information regarding the assessment of a client's housing need, housing need priority ratings and the calculation of overall priority ratings can be found on the work and Income website, here: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/assessment-of-housing-need-01.html).

I will now respond to your request.

Some information you have requested, is publicly available at the following links:

- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/transfers-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/transfers-01.html).
- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/client-requests-a-transfer-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/client-requests-a-transfer-01.html).
- [www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/public-housing/irrs-tenancies.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/housing-providers/public-housing/irrs-tenancies.html).

Please refer to the attached **Appendix** which contains the remaining documents, from the Ministry's intranet, identified in scope of your request.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp.



Magnus O'Neill  
**General Manager**  
**Ministerial and Executive Services**

## Social Housing (also known as public housing)Transfers

This page outlines the process when current tenants may need to move (transfer) to another social housing (also known as public housing) property.

On this Page:

### Overview

A current social housing tenant may request to move (transfer) to another social housing property because they believe the property they are living in is unsuitable or unsafe. For example, if they've had a general change in circumstances or if they have a change in their circumstances that means they need at least two extra bedrooms.

All clients who wish to transfer to another social housing property will have to be screened. A conversation should be held up-front about the client's need for a transfer.

Generally the tenant will need to apply for a transfer and have their need to 'other' social housing assessed using the same criteria and process we use for new applications (book an appointment for an assessment to be completed).

If the client has concerns with the property they are living in e.g. cold, damp or mould, or the property is too large or too small, they will need to be referred to the Centralised Unit Housing (CUH). More information about the referral process is below.

[MAP - Transfers \[http://doogole/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/transfers-01.html\]](http://doogole/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/transfers-01.html)

[Booking an assessment appointment \[http://doogole/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/social-housing/screening-and-assessment/social-housing-screening.html#Bookinganassessmentappointment4\]](http://doogole/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/social-housing/screening-and-assessment/social-housing-screening.html#Bookinganassessmentappointment4)

### Current tenant requests to transfer

There are three types of transfer requests:

[General property management issue \[#general-property-issue\]](#)

[Client initiated transfer - change of circumstances \[#client-initiated-transfer\]](#)

[Housing concern - overcrowding, underutilising or cold, damp and/or mouldy \[#housing-concerns\]](#)

### General property management issue

In these situations you should suggest the client speaks to their housing provider. The housing provider may be able to address the reason the tenant thinks they need to move, eg doing maintenance on the property, arranging the required modifications, or moving them to more suitable property within their own housing stock.

Housing providers are responsible for maintaining the property - refer to the MBIE website for advice on Tenancy Repairs.

**Note:** a housing provider can at any time ask the Ministry to assess a tenant's housing needs (requirements). The housing provider will contact CUH to request this.

### Client initiated transfer – change of circumstances

Where the client has a significant change in circumstances that means they're at risk or have a serious housing need, they'll need to have an assessment to determine their eligibility to be allocated other social housing – this uses the same criteria and process we use for new applications (an appointment for an assessment to be completed).

#### Action required:

Load the request for a social housing needs assessments into the S2P queue called 'Housing Assessment', and a Case Manager will call the client back.

Record in the 'Reason for contact' section of the task that the client is a current tenant, the assessment is for a transfer and the reason for the transfer.

Let the client know it might take us a few weeks to get back to them. We will try phoning, and if we are not able to get hold of them, we will send them a message advising we will try calling them again soon.

If they're eligible (priority A or B) they'll be treated as current applicants and placed on the register. If they're ineligible, they will not be placed on the register.

### No significant change in circumstances

When a client has requested a transfer you should determine whether the reason is good and sufficient. Where the client's need to move is not due to a significant change in circumstances, for example the client only needs one additional bedroom, you should explain that it is unlikely their housing need will get them on the register, eg rate as priority A or priority B at assessment.

In these situations, it's important you manage the client's expectations. Talk to the client about their circumstances and the fact that their need for 'other' housing is assessed in the same way that a new applicant for social housing is assessed. Discuss any options with them, eg their concerns or issues may be able to be addressed by other means, for example their housing provider, local council or Citizens Advice Bureau, etc.

Note: if a client insists on having an assessment, we can't refuse to complete this even if it's unlikely they will qualify. You should record this conversation into the Client Event Note eg advised client it is unlikely they will qualify for transfer, but client requested an assessment.

## **Housing concerns – overcrowding, underutilisation or cold, damp or mouldy (for HNZ tenants)**

In situations where a client living in a HNZ property has concerns with cold, damp and/or mould, overcrowding or underutilisation, you will need to email CUH who will send a referral to HNZ on the client's behalf.

Examples are where the property:

is too large or too small (eg they require two or more additional bedrooms or have at least two bedrooms more than they need)  
is cold, damp and/or mouldy  
requires maintenance to fix cold, damp and/or mould.

Examples of maintenance issues that can contribute to making a property's cold, damp or mouldy can include:

rotten timbers or framing  
holes both internal and external  
leaks both internal and external  
no source of heating  
gas heating affecting health  
hot water tank insufficient for basic family needs  
asbestos ceiling damaged from repaired roof leak  
not enough space underneath the house to insulate  
on-going health problems verified by health professionals.

**Note:** general maintenance issues that do not contribute to cold, damp or mouldy properties still need to be referred to the tenant's landlord/housing provider.

**Action required:** Please email CUH [[mailto:GNL\\_CUH\\_Client\\_Query@msd.govt.nz](mailto:GNL_CUH_Client_Query@msd.govt.nz)] using the following template.

Subject: Overcrowding, underutilisation or cold, damp or mouldy housing concern

Hi

The following client has [cold, damp or mould concerns /overcrowding/better utilisation]. Please review the client's application and make referral to HNZ if appropriate?

Client's name:  
Client number (SWN):  
Date of birth:  
Contact number:

Address:  
People in the household (include names):  
Bedroom need:  
Situation:  
Comments: *(include any information that HNZ should be made aware of e.g. health issues)*

Please copy and paste the email template into a client event note using the short description: Utilisation and Housing Concerns Referral.

CUH will ensure the request is valid and refer directly to HNZ. If the client's concerns relate to overcrowding or underutilising and the client is undergoing a tenancy review, CUH won't refer to HNZ, they will email the case manager housing (CMH). The CMH will take the appropriate action as part of the tenancy review process.

When HNZ receive the referral, they will either contact the tenancy manager (for cold, damp or mould), or check business rules for overcrowding and underutilisation and respond to CUH (via original email) within 10 working days to advise us of the outcome and include any other identified issues.

**Note:** HNZ will contact the client to advise them of the outcome e.g. accepted onto HNZ's register (BIT), not accepted onto their register, property intervention or no other property intervention required.

## **Housing providers can move tenants within their own housing stock**

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In some situations, a housing provider may be able to accommodate the tenant's need to move by transferring them to a more suitable property.

Currently Housing New Zealand can require a tenant to move (transfer) to another suitable property for business reasons, eg a property requires major repairs or there has been earthquake damage.

[Housing options and advice \[http://doogole/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/social-housing/options-and-advice/social-housing\\_options\\_and\\_advice.html\]](http://doogole/resources/helping-clients/procedures-manuals/social-housing/options-and-advice/social-housing_options_and_advice.html)

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