



# Social housing changes

The Government is reforming social housing services. The Ministry of Social Development is now handling applications and assessments for social housing. This was previously done by Housing New Zealand.

## What has changed?

The main changes:

- extend the availability of the income-related rent subsidy to registered community housing providers (to date the income-related rent\* subsidy has only been available to Housing New Zealand)
- transfer the responsibility for assessing people’s social housing need from Housing New Zealand to the Ministry of Social Development (including Work and Income, Senior Services and StudyLink).

## What roles do the Ministry of Social Development, Housing New Zealand and community housing providers have?

The Ministry of Social Development, Housing New Zealand and registered community housing providers are responsible for the following functions:

Ministry of Social Development	Housing New Zealand and community housing providers
<p>Managing all social housing applications, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessing eligibility</li> <li>• assessing a person’s need for a house</li> <li>• managing the social housing register</li> <li>• supporting people with a serious housing need who can’t be referred immediately to a housing provider</li> <li>• helping people find the right housing option for their situation</li> <li>• calculating and reviewing income-related rent</li> <li>• referring people to approved social housing providers</li> <li>• paying income-related rent subsidies to housing providers</li> <li>• fraud investigations and legal actions</li> <li>• income-related rent debt recovery</li> <li>• reviewing decisions on eligibility, needs assessments and income-related rent</li> <li>• tenancy reviews.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenancy management including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- matching prospective tenants to houses</li> <li>- starting and ending tenancies</li> <li>- preparing and managing tenant agreements</li> <li>- tenant liaison and landlord duties</li> <li>- charging rent (based on income-related rent or market rent as appropriate)</li> <li>- tenant transfer</li> <li>- collecting rents, debt for overdue rents and damage charges.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Buying, selling and developing properties.</li> <li>• Management and maintenance of houses to an agreed standard.</li> </ul>

\* Income-related rent is a subsidised rent payable by a tenant. It’s based on a percentage of a tenant’s income and is less than the market rent of the property. The income-related rent subsidy paid to the housing provider by government is the difference between the income-related rent and the market rent.

The individual roles of the registered community housing providers will vary. Many community housing providers also offer other wraparound social services.

Housing New Zealand continues to be the landlord for state tenants, but applicants are assessed by the Ministry of Social Development.

## Why has the Government made these changes?

These changes are part of a wider programme of reform to improve the diversity of social housing in New Zealand, making it more accessible for people in most need.

Over time, this will see a greater choice of housing and landlord for people eligible for income-related rent.

Adding the housing assessment functions to other financial and employment support currently provided through Work and Income, Senior Services, Child, Youth and Family and StudyLink makes it easier for clients and gives the Ministry of Social Development a single, more comprehensive view of people's needs.

Moving the assessment to the Ministry of Social Development also has meant decisions on a person's eligibility for social housing are made independently of any housing provider.

## When are the changes happening?

The changes happened on 14 April 2014, when the Ministry of Social Development took over responsibility for assessing people's eligibility and housing needs, and calculating income-related rents.

## Have existing tenants and people on the social housing register been informed about the changes?

Tenants have been kept informed as decisions have been made. There is information available on the Housing New Zealand and Ministry of Social Development websites. Existing Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants on the social housing register have received information about the changes and how these will affect them.

## For more information

More information can be found at:

- Ministry of Social Development – [www.msd.govt.nz](http://www.msd.govt.nz)
- MSD Housing Assessment – [www.housing.msd.govt.nz](http://www.housing.msd.govt.nz)
- Housing New Zealand – [www.hnzc.co.nz](http://www.hnzc.co.nz)