

Proposal for funding the scoping of an Auckland Housing Help Centre

*“Te tiro atu to kanohi ki Tairawhiti ana tera whiti te ra
kite ataata ka hinga ki muri kia koe”*

*Turn your face to the sun and the shadows
fall behind you*

January 2019

Proposal

Lifewise would like to request \$10,000 from the Waitemata Local Board to scope the development of a Housing Help Centre for Central Auckland.

Lifewise proposes to develop a Housing Help Centre in partnership with other agencies in Auckland central. The Centre will be a universal service, available to all people experiencing housing related issues. It is envisaged that this will be primarily a face to face information, advice and navigation service. The Centre will utilise a self-help approach for people who can solve their own housing needs as well as provide in depth advice and support with problem-solving for people with multi-faceted issues.

We propose that coordinated access function for youth housing (which is currently in development) will be co-located with the Housing Help Centre. Lifewise initiated and leads a collective of Youth Housing providers which is focused on developing a co-ordinated systems approach to responding to youth homelessness based young people's particular needs. It would be beneficial to co-locate the youth service with the Housing Help Centre to share resources, increase the profile of both services and enable young people to have easier access to support and housing options.

We will closely monitor, evaluate and review our approach. We will be able to provide robust data on the needs of people with housing issues in Auckland central as well as system gaps. The Housing Help Centre will not be a social service to house people or to provide wrap around support.

Whilst we have done some preliminary exploration, the scoping process will help us gain a deep understanding of the experience and unmet needs of people requiring information and support with housing issues before we establish the Housing Help Centre. The scoping process will ensure that the Housing Help Centre is designed to meet the specific needs of the people who are likely to use the service. We will also be able to identify gaps in current service and support provision.

Background

Lifewise is committed to making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. The government and Auckland Council have also adopted this goal. Homelessness has been increasing in Auckland over a long period. Homelessness is a complex issue. In order to achieve the goal of making homelessness rare, brief and non-reoccurring, a systems approach is needed.

Cities such as Brisbane and Calgary that have achieved coordinated action against homelessness refer to a 'homeless serving system'. Such a system has a range of preventative tools and strategies; some outreach, some emergency places and other agreed referral pathways; a coordination process to access housing and support; and sufficient housing and support options to maximise choice for people experiencing homelessness.

International evidence suggests that a Housing First approach across this system can substantially reduce homelessness and deliver a high housing retention rate over time. Key to this is ensuring people access the housing and support most likely to be effective for their circumstances. This includes advice and advocacy for those who do not require intensive support, and information on where to access more intensive support for those seeking it.

Nan Roman the CEO of the American National Alliance to End Homelessness suggested at a Community Housing Aotearoa Conference in 2017 that 80% of Americans at risk of homelessness resolve their own housing issue. Providing timely information and advice to this group is a critical piece of preventative work.

The current Auckland Homeless Serving System

Auckland Council has developed *Kia Whai Kāinga Tātou Katoa* a draft Homelessness Strategy with the aim of marshalling a collective response to making homelessness in Auckland rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The current proposal for the Housing Help Centre aligns with all priorities in the *Kia Whai Kāinga Tātou Katoa* plan:

- Prevent everyone (particularly more vulnerable populations) from entering pathways to precarious housing
- Intervene early to support people who are vulnerable to homelessness, back to pathways to stable housing
- Provide support for people experiencing homelessness to minimise harm, and assist them onto pathways to stable housing
- Establish the foundations and enablers for effective and sustainable system changes

It is closely aligned with these specific focus areas of *Kia Whai Kāinga Tātou Katoa*:

- Focus Area 5: Provide information about service entitlements and access
- Focus Area 11: Provide education and support for people with at-risk tenancies
- Focus Area 18: Streamline homelessness collaboration and coordination mechanisms across the region
- Focus Area 21. Collect, analyse and apply quality data to inform effective development and delivery of initiatives.

Council is clear that their role is facilitation and that the strategy will belong to all signatory agencies. Council has funded Auckland's first Point in Time homeless street count and also funds services such as homeless outreach, and a coordinated response to youth homelessness.

The Independent Statutory Māori Board has developed *Kāinga—a strategic action plan to improve housing outcomes for Māori* which includes housing navigation and brokers, the development of a Māori Housing Commission along with a Māori Housing Centre to support it.

Government has announced a commitment to ending homelessness and has allocated new resources to Auckland. This includes significant access to Ministry of Social Development Special Needs Grants funded emergency placements, increased

transitional housing, tenancy sustainment work and extra resources for Housing First programmes.

In the city centre new resources have been allocated across a range of activities. This includes the Auckland city centre Housing First contract (funded to work with 93 people with another 200 over the next two years), the extension of James Liston Hostel, the planned build of the Auckland City Mission HomeGround accommodation and the redevelopment of Greys Avenue.

The case for a central service

Homelessness services are targeted predominantly at the chronic rough sleeper and families without shelter. In Auckland there is no single place where people can go to get assistance with housing issues. Lifewise has spoken to the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Auckland Community Law Centre, Auckland City Mission, Tenants Protection Association (Auckland), Mangere Budgeting Services, Auckland University Student Association Advocacy services, Housing New Zealand, Housing First Auckland, Community Housing Aotearoa, Work and Income and De Paul House.

Representatives from these agencies reported that the need for advice, advocacy, information and navigation around housing issues has sharply increased. It was noted that people with simple problems are able to navigate to good solutions with some support, but that people with multi-faceted issues, with a number of challenging issues in contributing to the risk of becoming homeless, need quite high levels of face to face support to analyse their issues, map and weigh up potential solutions. In addition, Lifewise has identified that landlords need access to advice and support to enable them to take preventative measures when they are faced with challenges that threaten to lead to evictions.

In September 2018 Auckland conducted its first count of people without shelter and in emergency or temporary accommodation. The high level results show that 336 people were found to be without shelter across the Auckland region. Following the post-count validation exercise the minimum number of people living without shelter in the Auckland region is estimated to be 800.

The largest proportion of people without shelter (38 per cent) are in the Waitematā Local Board area which encompasses the city centre. A further 2,874 people were in some form of emergency or temporary accommodation on the night of the Point in Time Count across the region. Auckland Council estimates that 24,000 people are severely housing deprived across the Auckland region in 2018 (Auckland Council, 2018).

The agencies we spoke to are interested in exploring how we can make any door the right door into the housing system in order to make sure that people get the right support at the right time. Both the Citizens Advice Bureau and Community Law have offered to either partner with Lifewise or to closely collaborate. The Independent Māori Statutory Board is eager to ensure that there is alignment between the Māori housing centres proposed in Kāinga plan (most likely to be located in suburban areas of Auckland) and our proposal for the city centre so that we can share learnings and insights.

Ongoing funding

Lifewise has made an application to Foundation North to support the establishment of a Housing Help Centre in the Auckland City centre. After the scoping process is completed we will be in a position to approach Auckland Council and government agencies to part-fund the Housing Help Centre.

Proposal

We anticipate that the scoping process will take up to two months. At this point we will be confident regarding what is needed to most effectively support people with housing related issues in Auckland central as a core part of a developing housing system.

Key tasks will include:

- Co-ordination with current service providers in Auckland Central, for example, CAB, Community Law, Work and Income, Auckland City Mission
- Explore the needs of the Youth Housing Collective
- Explore unmet user needs
- Map of existing and planned service provision
- Securing a location for the Housing Help Centre (which may involve co-location with an existing service in the city centre).

The following groups of people will be involved in the exploration of unmet needs. In particular, the focus will be on the support and information needs for people in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. We will talk to people who:

- Are not accessing or aware of current services such as the CAB
- Have difficulty paying rent
- Need support to understand their housing rights, responsibilities and entitlements
- Struggle to maintain their tenancies
- Are finding it hard to find or secure suitable housing
- Are landlords who want to know how to get support for their tenants when they are struggling.

Budget

Lifewise will contract a suitably qualified and experienced person with the appropriate networks to undertake the scoping process. We are requesting funding from the local board to fund the contracting role over a 6 to 8 week period.

Budget Item	Time	Hourly rate	Total
Contractor	125 hours	\$80.00 per hour	\$10,000.00

Lifewise will provide in-kind support by covering the costs for administration, information technology support and equipment, office space, travel and consumables.

What you would see in the city centre

- A centrally located shop front location with a staffed front reception operating set hours during weekdays.
- Some meeting spaces for scheduled partners and staff employed by the Centre to meet with people who are seeking advice and support.

- Access to computers and Wi-Fi for people to search for housing/rentals and to access websites with the information they need

Outcomes the Centre could deliver

We expect that the activities of the Housing Help Centre will contribute towards:

- People will have better access to the right kind of housing information, advice, support or advocacy at the right time
- People will feel empowered, better supported and more able to take action on their own housing issues
- Decision-makers and the public will have better data and information about housing needs and systems gaps in central Auckland

Ultimately the activities of the Housing Help Centre will influence and contribute towards:

- Fewer people losing their tenancies/less people becoming homeless
- More people will get access to housing
- The development of more effective responses to housing needs for Central Auckland.

Appendix Two: Housing Help Theory of Change

