

Summary of Questions from Community Housing Collective Housing Hui for disabled people and their families

February 28th 2020 Otahuhu Town Hall

Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities

Questions

1. Why does Kāinga Ora not have a goal of 100% accessible new housing builds using Universal Design by 2040?

Kāinga Ora has an initial target of at least 15 percent of its public housing new builds meeting its universal design standards is just that – a starting point. Our Accessibility Policy sets out that we will begin by benchmarking the target in 2020/21, and then reporting against it in 2021/22. The purpose of benchmarking the target and then reporting against it is to help us get an accurate sense of what our current state is, and where we are starting from.

The strong feedback from our stakeholders as we developed our Accessibility Policy was to set an achievable starting target that can be monitored and increased over time as circumstances allow.

As we build more new public homes meeting our universal design standards, we will continue to learn about the costs and feasibilities, especially for different types of homes built across New Zealand, and in areas with varied geographical features.

We are pleased we will have the opportunity to build the recently announced 6,000 extra new public homes, as part of Budget 2020, which are in addition to the number of public housing new builds we are already focused on building. These additional 6,000 homes will be included in Kāinga Ora's initial target of at least 15 percent of our public housing new builds meeting its universal design standards.

2. Why does Kāinga Ora not have transparent access to waiting lists from MSD so they can find housing more quickly for disabled people and their families? Can Kāinga Ora request this?

Kāinga Ora works closely with MSD to find the right housing for people in the Social Allocation System (the housing register).

During the needs assessment, MSD collects information about a person, their household and circumstances etc. This is gathered into an application that Kāinga Ora receives from MSD when we request waitlists for our homes. Sometimes this information is a brief overview from the tick box of an assessment and we only see 'yes' or 'no' as the answer but most of the time there are detailed notes to accompany this. For example, the notes might tell us that a person is physically disabled and requires a single-level property with a walk-in shower, or

perhaps a person is physical disabled, uses a wheelchair and needs a fully modified property.

When Kāinga ora has the application from MSD, we also do a pre-placement interview to get the most up-to-date information for more of a holistic view of that person's life and disability to enable best placement for the household. These pre-placement interviews are held with all applicants who we (Kāinga Ora) are finding homes for, not just those identified as disabled.

3. What happens when old state houses are broken down to erect new builds i.e is it sold to private buyers – how is it allocated to people on MSD waiting list?

Most of the time, when Kāinga Ora demolishes any of its existing homes, it already owns the land the homes have been built on. Kāinga Ora continues to own that land and uses it as part of redeveloping the community, and building modern, warm, dry, safe and suitable homes.

Kāinga Ora may sell its homes for a variety of reasons, including the property being old and too expensive to maintain, no longer meeting customer needs, not performing financially, or it not being in the right place to meet demand. Any homes Kāinga Ora chooses to sell would be done in a fair and equitable way.

Kāinga Ora allocates our new homes to people on MSD's housing waiting list in the same way as any of our other homes. We work with MSD to find suitable homes for eligible people with the highest priority housing needs.

Where we're removing a house and replacing it as part of a redevelopment, we also offer places to our customers who had previously lived in those houses, within that community to ensure that they continue to have a good home to live in.

4. Why are not all Kāinga Ora houses made with wet rooms?

Kāinga Ora has set a starting target of at least 15 percent of our public housing new builds meeting our full universal design standards. These standards include having a bathroom that is suitable for conversion to a 'wet area' bathroom as needed.

Sometimes it is not possible to include a 'wet area' bathroom in a newly-built home. This might be because it is an apartment above the ground floor level.

Many of our current, existing homes were built over 40 years ago and were not designed with bathrooms that were big enough to allow them to be converted into 'wet area' bathrooms. As part of our retrofit pilot, we are investigating options for adapting and updating bathrooms in our existing homes to make them easier to use. The retrofit pilot will

help us to understand the best and most effective ways to make previously unsuitable bathrooms fit for use by disabled people.

5. Why isn't every Kiwi buildhouse built to a universal design?

We have worked with our colleagues at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development on this answer.

Universal design is not a mandatory requirement for KiwiBuild homes, or for public housing either. We have no mandatory requirements over and above the Building Code and associated documents as the focus of the programme is to facilitate the construction of affordable homes. Universal design can add some cost, particularly as many KiwiBuild homes are quite small.

KiwiBuild homes are designed by their respective developers and are not commissioned by Kāinga Ora. However, some developers have indicated that their developments include universally designed units. When making decisions on whether to underwrite a particular KiwiBuild development, the government does consider design and any steps a developer has taken above those required by the Building Code, including whether any homes are accessible or universally designed.

6. Why is there no consideration for the storage of equipment inside or undercover outside in new builds or retrofitting?

Kāinga Ora is aware that a lack of appropriate storage for disability-specific equipment can be an issue for many people. We are looking at ways we can provide this storage in retrofit situations, and how we can change our standard housing designs and plans for new builds to accommodate this need. We know the provision of secure space is very important and needs to be included in our designs.

7. Why is suitability of doorways and hallways for wheelchairs, particularly bathrooms, not included in current designs? Bathrooms need to be 900mm minimum for commodes.

The Kāinga Housing Standard: Design (M-255) outlines our new build design requirements. This is split into two sections Housing Typical (the majority of our new homes) and Housing Diverse, where more mobility-accessible features are required.

The Kāinga Ora Housing Standard: Design (M-255) includes the following relating to interior doors and circulation:

Housing Typical:

- Interior Doors: 860mm wide
- Halls/Circulation areas: 1050 wide

Housing Diverse (Additional for accessible):

- All interior spaces are suitable for a wheelchair user
- All rooms have a turning-circle that is at least 1.5m in diameter.

- The opening side of all doors are at least 300mm clear from internal corners.

Kāinga Ora Standard Plans:

- Most internal doorways and circulation paths within the current standard plan range align with M-255. We have identified a few minor exceptions.

8. Regarding the 15 % target for the new build of Kāinga Ora stock to be accessible, who is responsible for the accountability of that and what is the mechanics to support and monitor that target?

How did we arrive at a target of “at least 15 percent”?

Answer:

We have set ourselves an initial target of ‘at least 15 percent’ of our public housing new builds meeting full universal design standards as we consider that this is an achievable first step that we will improve on over time. Finance modelling indicated that costs could be met within existing budgets.

We don’t know what percent we are currently delivering to universal design; however, this will be confirmed with the implementation of benchmarking reporting.

When will the ‘at least 15%’ target be implemented by?

Answer:

The timeframe for implementation is by 2021/2022. The target will be set out for the 2021/22 Statement of Performance Expectations (SPE). The initial ‘at least 15 percent’ target will be measured as at the end of the 2021/2022 financial year at a national level, and reported on in the Annual Report.

How will Kāinga Ora know that we’ve reaching our target of ‘at least 15 percent’?

Answer:

A system for baseline reporting from 2020/21 is being developed. A formal monitoring and reporting mechanism for 2021/22 will be developed.

What are the next steps in terms of the Accessibility Policy and reporting on the ‘at least 15 percent’ target?

- We will develop criteria and tools that allow our people to apply the standards more consistently.
- We will review the standards in light of the Accessibility Policy to ensure they remain fit for purpose. This may include considering a mandatory bathroom on the entry level.
- We will consider some new or modified Standard Designs to provide for universal design options across the range of types of homes Kāinga Ora builds.

9. When you say “accessible” please extrapolate on that, is it flat level entry and downstairs bathroom or universal accessibility?

What are the features of a universally-designed new build?

Answer:

Kāinga Ora’s public housing new builds with full universal design features are listed below. This is close to the Lifemark approach whereby Lifemark-rated homes are universally designed to be usable and safe for people of all ages and stages. They are easy to live in for a lifetime. Features include:

Access:

- Wide paths from car-parking area and street, step-free where possible or the ability to install a ramp at a future date if required
- Wide paved access to external service areas (rubbish, storage and clothes drying)
- Sheltered landing with level threshold at entry door
- 1050mm wide internal hallways and stairs with wide 860mm internal doors suitable
- 1500mm min turning circle to kitchen

Usability:

- Door and cabinetry handles easily used (lever or bow)
- Light switches aligned with door handles to enable easy location and at an accessible height
- Electrical sockets 500mm minimum above floor level to minimise bending
- Include a bedroom and bathroom on the same entry level as the main living area, or be adaptable to include these two features at a later stage

Safety:

- Slip-resistant flooring to bathrooms and kitchens
- All stairs have handrails

Adaptability:

- Bathroom size suitable for conversion to be fully accessible if needed in the future

What are the features of a Kāinga Ora accessibly-designed property?

Answer:

As well as universally-designed properties, Kāinga Ora also provides properties to an accessible housing standard, which are purpose-built for people with different accessibility needs. An accessibility-designed property incorporates our full universal design standards. These properties are not built for specific individuals.

For example, Kāinga Ora’s accessibly-designed properties should include:

Access:

All universal design features included plus:

- Step-free access in and around building including ramps and handrails to suit land contour
- Step-free threshold at all external doors
- 1200mm wide internal hallways with 300mm gap on leading edge for improved access to door handle
- 1500mm minimum turning circle to all rooms
- Larger 12m² minimum accessible bedroom

Usability:

All universal design features included plus:

- Kitchen bench continuous (not galley)
- Light switch by bedhead
- Adjustable height hanging rail to wardrobe
- Direct-stick carpet to minimise the chance of stretching under the action of wheel chairs, which could be a trip hazard

Safety:

All universal design features included plus:

- Safety flooring to wet area accessible bathrooms
- Grab rails installed in the shower and toilet of fully-accessible properties

Adaptability:

All universal design features included plus:

- Bathroom walls lined to enable future fixing of grab rails
- Space for fully accessible kitchen to suit specific customers' needs
- Smoke detectors adaptable to visual/vibrating to suit customers' needs.

Kāinga Ora also provides public housing properties that are built to a **customised** accessible housing standard.

All universal design and accessible design features included plus:

- Adding drawers to kitchen units to minimise bending and ease of access for wheelchair users
- Side opening wall oven
- Oven and fridge have minimum of 300mm clearance to walls/corners to facilitate access

Note: the above features are drawn from Kāinga Ora's M255 Housing: Diverse Standard.

10. Regarding current Kāinga Ora stock, of the total, what % of it is accessible? What checks and balances are in place to audit that the tenant does in fact still require an accessible property?

Kāinga Ora does not currently hold information about which of our current or planned properties meet universal design or other accessible standards, and our systems do not currently allow us to record the information. For this reason, at this time, we cannot provide the number of current or planned public houses that have universal design.

Kāinga Ora is committed to increasing the accessibility of our public homes through our Accessibility Policy. Accessibility is about our customers living in our homes as their circumstances change; to have family, whānau and friends visit; and to be part of the wider community they live in without barriers. For some people, Kāinga Ora will need to provide homes that are modified to address a disability or specialised needs. For all others, we should provide homes that meet universal design standards that allow a building to be adapted over time to meet customers' changing needs.

There are significant changes to our housing portfolio underway, with a large proportion of homes earmarked for development or upgrade over the next 25 years. This represents the perfect opportunity to create significant change in our portfolio to better meet the needs of our customers as they change over time.

Over the next 12 months, Kāinga Ora plans to build approximately 2,000 new homes for public housing tenants. At least 15 percent of these will meet our full universal design standards, and the rest will meet as many of our universal design standards as possible.

11. When private developers are building to spec for Kāinga Ora how are they being educated and incentivised towards universal accessibility, please?

Kāinga Ora actively encourages accessible options in all new Acquisition New Build contracts — contracts for new homes, where we contract a developer to build the homes for us — through design and specification reviews for those contracts we have from the beginning of the development process. We communicate it is Kāinga Ora's preference, as the client, and actively encourage developers to incorporate into their schemes, subject to factors such as site constraints.

Although not all development sites lend themselves to have accessible units or homes built on them, Kāinga Ora is nonetheless currently attempting to get at least 20% of all units within developments to be fully accessible, where we are able to discuss and negotiate with developers from the beginning of the development process.

While Kāinga Ora supports the development community by picking up private developments after they have been consented, or they are at least part way through construction, these kinds of developments are unfortunately unable, in most cases, to be reconfigured for accessibility in an economic or practical way.

12. If social housing is no longer a forever home, what future security do impaired people have in the way of housing security?

We recognise the need for our customers to have stable and secure housing. We also recognise the need for stable and secure housing is particularly important for many of our disabled customers. Kāinga Ora's vision for our current and future customers are that they live well, with

dignity and stability, in connected communities. For Kāinga Ora, providing stability for our customers means that public housing provides stable accommodation for customers that need it.

For our customers to live well with dignity and stability in their homes, it is essential for us to focus on understanding their needs and take a tailored, customer-focused approach to tenancy management. Kāinga Ora will continue to improve our understanding of the diverse needs of our customers with accessibility issues, and put their needs at the centre of our decisions and actions.

Understanding our current and future customers will shape the decisions we make today about the types of homes and communities we build, and the way we deliver services. We acknowledge the role the community and other social services play in supporting our disabled customers to sustain stable housing, and to live well and connect with their communities.

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)

Questions

1. Can the building code be amended for minimum access for disabilities, taking into consideration the needs of the population who require bigger doorway widths e.g. minimum 800mm, shower minimum 1400mm?
2. Will the disability community be asked for input into the building code to ensure future buildings meet the needs of the disability community?
3. New subdivisions, footpaths and accessibility related
4. Can the building code be amended so that multi storey homes (ie two levels or more) have a bathroom on the ground floor.
5. Can the building code be amended so that multi storey buildings are required to have level access for people with disabilities and the requirement for lifts is tightened so that three storey buildings with multiple tenants have lifts?

Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Questions

1. Do we have a target for accessible housing, not just social housing? What is it? If we don't have one we need one!

As you know, Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities have a target to have 15 percent of new public housing to meet full universal design standards that will allow a home to be adapted over time to meet customers' changing accessibility needs.

While there is not a target for accessible housing more broadly, work is underway across the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and Kāinga Ora to increase accessible housing in New Zealand.

HUD and Kāinga Ora have been working together with the Office for Disability Issues on the development and implementation of three key actions for the Disability Action Plan 2019-2023:

- Action One: Kāinga Ora has recently developed an accessibility policy which provides the opportunity to increase the number of public housing new builds that meet universal design standards that will allow a home over time to meet customers' changing accessibility needs.
- Action Two: Officials will explore options for incentivising the provision of accessible rental properties and ways to make it easier for disabled people to find existing rentals
- Action Three: Officials will consider how housing delivered through Kāinga Ora can support the needs of disabled people. This will work to support long-term planning and a joined-up approach to accessible housing.

Officials at HUD, along with other government agencies, are currently progressing actions in the Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. We know that disabled people are overrepresented in statistics on homelessness and disability can be a driving factor in homelessness.

HUD and other agencies will work to ensure that disabled people are included in the implementation of the actions in the New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. This will specifically include developing options for actions that are targeted at reducing and preventing homelessness for disabled people.

2. What options are there for the disabled and mentally impaired if they want to own their own secure home as either on an individual bases or as a group of impaired people wanting to live in and own the house?

There are several government support products already available to assist first home buyers to access home ownership, including:

- The First Home Grant scheme available to existing KiwiSaver members who are looking to build or buy their first home and meet certain eligibility requirements. The scheme offers each individual buying a home up to \$5,000 for existing properties, or up to \$10,000 for new properties. People buying together can also combine their First Home Grants to put towards the purchase of the same property;
- KiwiSaver members may also be able to withdraw their savings (less \$1,000 which must remain in the account) early to buy their first home; and
- The First Home Loan scheme that assists banks to make loans available to eligible home buyers to purchase a home with only a 5 percent deposit, rather than a 20 percent deposit that is commonly required by banks.

The government announced changes in September 2019 to enable groups of people or family members to collectively purchase a home

using their first home grants. These changes removed the cap on multiple buyers for the First Home Grant which has made the scheme fairer as each buyer in a household is now eligible to receive the maximum amount of grant available.

If any individuals or groups of people wish to join together to purchase a home, they should get in contact with Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities to discuss the housing related supports that may be available to them. You can contact them on 0508 935 266, or through their website at: <https://Kāingaora.govt.nz/ways-we-can-help/>

That said, homeownership should not be the only way to get the benefits of a secure home. The Government considers that every New Zealander should have a safe, secure, warm, dry home to call their own – including if they're renting.

To this end, the reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 will improve the security of tenure for renting households by:

- removing the ability for landlords to end a periodic tenancy unilaterally, for any reason and without the requirement to tell the tenant why, often referred to as a “no cause” termination. The legislation will provide for a range of reasons to end tenancies where there is a legitimate business need to do so.
 - mandating that fixed-term tenancy agreements will become periodic tenancy agreements upon expiry unless specific termination grounds are used by the landlords, the tenant chooses to leave, or both parties agree to a subsequent fixed term. This will mean that just cause is required to move a tenant on at the end of a fixed-term agreement.
3. How do the disabled and mentally impaired go about it when the disabled aren't able to get lender's approval because they are not able to work so aren't able to get a loan?

Banks and other financial institutions have a number of significant statutory and regulatory obligations for how they operate. This includes how they make lending decisions. Banks and other financial institutions must make responsible lending decisions to ensure that the decision to lend will not result in significant hardship for the prospective first home buyers.

This may mean, in some circumstances, that prospective home owners with insufficient income are unable get a commercial mortgage of the size to purchase a house. The government cannot direct banks or other lending institutions to change their mortgage or lending policies within the statutory and regulatory obligations, as they are private commercial companies that set their own policies.

That said, on 4 September 2019, the Government announced that it will be making \$400 million available to support more New Zealanders into home ownership by increasing support for progressive home ownership

products, such as shared equity and rent-to-buy schemes. These schemes will help households to purchase their first home by reducing the barriers posed by deposit requirements and/or the ongoing costs of servicing a mortgage. By reducing the mortgage serviceability barrier, this will help some people on incomes previously unable to secure a mortgage to buy a home. This may include some disabled people, depending on their individual circumstances.

HUD officials are currently working on design options for progressive home ownership schemes, and announcements are expected to be made in the near future.

4. Why isn't every KiwiBuild house built to a universal design?

There are no mandatory requirements over and above the Building Code and associated documents as the focus of the programme is to facilitate the construction of affordable homes. Universal design can add some cost, particularly as many KiwiBuild homes are quite small.

KiwiBuild homes are designed by their respective developers and are not commissioned by Kāinga Ora. However, some developers have indicated that their developments include universally designed units. When making decisions on whether to underwrite a particular KiwiBuild development, the government does consider design and any steps a developer has taken above those required by the Building Code, including whether any homes are accessible or universally designed.

5. Some people have funded a house for their adult disabled children to live in, but this is not an option for everyone. Where are the homes going to come from?

The government is committed to ensuring that every new Zealander has a warm, dry place to call home and is working to ensure that this is available across a range of tenures. The government is focusing on building as many homes as possible, as fast as possible in the right places. This includes a range of KiwiBuild homes, community housing, state housing, and market homes delivered as part of the Government Build Programme.

Each month we will release a dashboard of housing statistics so New Zealanders can easily measure our progress, which you can access at: <https://www.hud.govt.nz/news-and-resources/statistics-and-research/government-build-programme-housing-dashboard/>.

As previously mentioned, HUD and Kāinga Ora have been working together with the Office for Disability Issues on the development and implementation of three key actions for the Disability Action Plan 2019-2023. As part of Action Three, Officials will consider how housing delivered through Kāinga Ora can support the needs of disabled people. This will work to support long-term planning and a joined-up approach to accessible housing.

Ministry of Health

Questions

1. We need more co-dependency / sheltered housing especially for people with FASD so they can live fulfilling lives. What is the Ministry of Health doing to provide this through Residential Care?
2. We need better trained support workers in residential care homes particularly for vulnerable people with intellectual and physical disabilities. What is Ministry of Health doing to lift the capacity in this area?
3. What is the MoH doing to avoid younger people with disabilities going into rest homes?
4. Funding for residential providers does not seem to be popular with recent Governments. How will Governments in the future, ensure that our adult children's needs are met?
5. The IF model is great, at the moment, while we are still young enough to manage it for our adult daughter. At some stage, we will not be able to do this. What happens then?
6. What options is there for a person to gain and manage a support house to house a group of disabled people of a maximum of 5 individuals?

See letter from Hon Jenny Salesa dated 24 June, sent directly to Disability Connect.

Ministry of Social Development

Questions

1. Can MSD please share the waiting lists of people with disabilities, including emergency housing, with Kāinga ora so they can ensure suitable accessible warm dry single level homes are available?

MSD is responsible for assessing people's need for public housing, including any requirements that people with a disability may have for a modified property. MSD shares information on the needs of individual applicants with Kāinga Ora and registered Community Housing

Providers to enable them to make well-informed placement decisions that see people with disabilities matched to properties that meet their needs. MSD also shares public housing register information with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, which is responsible for the development of the Government's Public Housing Plan, which outlines the locations and types of properties (including modified properties) where additional public housing is required.

2. We need a plan in place to support someone with a disability from transitional housing to independent living. Can MSD please update us on the process?

Transitional housing provides housing and support to vulnerable households, and supports them to transition to long-term housing. The specific nature of the support and intensity of this support, for each household, will vary according to the characteristics and needs of the household. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for the management of the Transitional Housing programme and questions on the programme should be directed to them. The Ministry of Health provides Housing Modification Funding for eligible people with serious disabilities to enable them to have essential alterations made to their home to meet their specific needs and allow them to live independently. MSD administers the income and asset test for applicants on advice from MOH's contracted providers.

3. Can we please have more accessible housing for emergency housing?

MSD does not contract emergency housing, rather we provide financial assistance to eligible people to meet the cost of short-term commercial accommodation. Where a person with a disability approaches MSD with an urgent housing need our staff will, in the first instance, explore alternative long-term housing options such as private rental accommodation, public or transitional housing. Where those options are not available our staff will work with the client to identify a suitable emergency housing option, for example motel accommodation that meets their accessibility and other needs. Questions relating to the supply of accessible transitional housing should be directed to HUD.