



22 JAN 2021

On 4 December 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Current guidance, forms or documents Work and Income use as a basis for conducting housing assessment interviews? If this guidance has changed since September 2017, please also provide earlier versions of these documents.*
- *The current prioritisation framework used to assess relative housing need for those applicants assessed as eligible for social housing and who are waiting for a state house. If this is a points system or similar, provide a breakdown of the criteria used to judge relative need and what this means in terms of how soon someone will be housed. If this framework has changed since September 2017, provide information which sets out what those changes were.*

The two parts of your request will be addressed in turn.

- *Current guidance, forms or documents Work and Income use as a basis for conducting housing assessment interviews? If this guidance has changed since September 2017, please also provide earlier versions of these documents.*

The public housing assessment process which Work and Income use can be found on the Work and Income website at the following link: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/introduction.html>

In response to the first part of your request the Ministry has located the following two documents in scope. Further information about each of these documents is provided below.

- *Public Needs Housing Assessment Form*, undated
- *Public housing assessment*, dated 3 September 2019

The Public Needs Housing Assessment is completed in the Single Client Management System (SCMS), which Ministry staff use to manage public housing applications. The *Public Needs Housing Assessment Form* version provided to you for your reference is to be used in the event SCMS is unavailable. The manual assessment form mirrors the questions exactly as they appear in SCMS.

The Ministry's guidance for staff on how to complete the public housing assessment is available through the Ministry's intranet. The following intranet pages have been identified as being within scope of your request and are titled under *Public housing*

*assessment*. This information is already publicly available online at the following links and as such your request for information is partially refused under section 18(d) of the Act.

[www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2020/november/20201120-reuest-for-the-state-house-waiting-liste-criteria-that-applied-in-2017-and-the-state-housing-waiting-list-criteria-that-is-currently-being-used-part-1.pdf](http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2020/november/20201120-reuest-for-the-state-house-waiting-liste-criteria-that-applied-in-2017-and-the-state-housing-waiting-list-criteria-that-is-currently-being-used-part-1.pdf).

[www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2020/november/20201120-reuquest-for-the-state-house-waiting-list-criteria-that-applied-in-2017-and-the-state-housing-waiting-list-criteria-that-is-currently-being-used-part-2.pdf](http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2020/november/20201120-reuquest-for-the-state-house-waiting-list-criteria-that-applied-in-2017-and-the-state-housing-waiting-list-criteria-that-is-currently-being-used-part-2.pdf).

All new staff are provided with training in the use of this information, and in November 2019 the Ministry held additional refresher training sessions in main service centres throughout the country for existing staff conducting housing assessments. The basis of this information presented to staff, was information contained within the *Public housing assessment* intranet pages.

- *The current prioritisation framework used to assess relative housing need for those applicants assessed as eligible for social housing and who are waiting for a state house. If this is a points system or similar, provide a breakdown of the criteria used to judge relative need and what this means in terms of how soon someone will be housed. If this framework has changed since September 2017, provide information which sets out what those changes were.*

Information about the Ministry's assessment for housing need is publicly available, as such this is refused under section 18(d) of the Act on the basis that the information requested is publicly available.

This information is available online at the following link: [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).

There are five criteria used to establish the priority rating for a client. Each criterion can be rated from one to four, with the maximum priority rating being A20. The criteria are as follows:

- **Adequacy** - focuses on whether the client needs accommodation or needs to move from their current accommodation due to not currently living in any accommodation or living in emergency housing for the time-being; the physical condition/structure or lack of basic facilities of the accommodation, over-crowding or lack of security of tenure of their current accommodation. You can read more information on this at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/adequacy-of-current-housing-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/adequacy-of-current-housing-01.html).
- **Suitability** - focuses on needing to move due to: medical, disability or personal needs or family violence or neighbourhood tension (including tension within the household) or other violence relating to the client's current living situation ability to access, afford and sustain alternative housing (that is, the capacity to rent in the private market). You can read more information on this at the

following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/suitability-of-current-housing-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/suitability-of-current-housing-01.html).

- **Affordability** - focuses on the ability to afford alternative, suitable housing in the private market. You can read more information on this at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/risk-rating-for-affordability-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/risk-rating-for-affordability-01.html).
- **Accessibility** - focuses on the ability to access and afford suitable and adequate housing as a result of discrimination, lack of financial means to move and availability of alternative, affordable suitable housing in the private market. You can read more information on this at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/risk-rating-for-accessibility-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/risk-rating-for-accessibility-01.html).
- **Sustainability** - focuses on financial management difficulties and difficulties in social functioning and lack of social skills. You can read more information on this at the following link: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/suitability-of-current-housing-01.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/social-housing/assessment-of-eligibility/suitability-of-current-housing-01.html).

As you may be aware, the Public Housing Register is not a time-ranked waitlist. Rather, those with the most urgent need for housing will be given priority in being matched to a suitable property, as opposed to the length of time they have been on the register.

Priority rating is just one of the factors used to match available properties to appropriate applicants. The availability of public housing in the letting areas a person is wanting to live in and that meets their individual requirements for the property will also contribute to how long they may need to wait to be matched to a suitable property.

You also asked whether the prioritisation framework had changed since 2017. From 2 November 2020, the residential qualifications for public housing (formally known as social housing) changed to include people who:

- are refugees or protected persons
- hold a Christchurch Response Visa
- receive payments under the Christchurch Mosques Attack Assistance, and/or
- receive payments under the Domestic Violence Special Needs Grant Programme.

You can read more information about qualifying for public housing here: [www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/legislation/notice-of-change/2020/instrument-amending-social-housing.pdf](http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/legislation/notice-of-change/2020/instrument-amending-social-housing.pdf).

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

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 this response regarding current guidance, forms or documents that Work and Income use as a basis for conducting housing assessment interviews, 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Hocking', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Hocking  
**General Manager**  
**Housing**