



# Report

**Date:** 28 April 2022

**Security  
Level:**

IN CONFIDENCE

**To:** Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment

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## Update on Flexible Funding for Whānau in Emergency Housing

### Purpose

- 1 This report provides you with an update on some of the Flexible Funding Initiatives for whānau with tamariki living in Emergency Housing.

### Recommended actions

- 2 It is recommended that you:  
**note** the contents of this report which include examples of how the Flexible Funding is being used.

  
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Karen Hocking  
Group General Manager Housing

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
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Hon Carmel Sepuloni  
Minister for Social Development and  
Employment

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Background

- 3 The Flexible Funding Initiative was developed as part of the Ministry of Social Development's suite of initiatives under the Aotearoa Homelessness Action plan.
- 4 The Flexible Fund helps families with tamariki in Emergency Housing with a range of needs, where other government support is not available. It will help keep tamariki connected with school, early childhood education and other activities important for their wellbeing.
- 5 Initial intentions in 2019 were for this fund to be used for one-off needs or payments specific to one tamaiti or family. Over time, this has been adapted to recognise the wider-scale challenges and disadvantage tamariki staying in motels are facing. Flexible funding has covered extra-curricular activities, or activity packs for tamariki during lockdown. The impacts on families and the increased expenses that come from being dislocated from usual networks are wide ranging and always changing.
- 6 Flexible Funding allows for the provision of things 'out of the ordinary' to the usual benefit system that help tamariki engage positively and enable moments of 'normality' amongst the challenges of living in emergency housing.
- 7 For the 2021/2022 financial year, the Flexible Funding budget is \$3M and can be accessed across all Ministry of Social Development regions.

## Flexible Funding Initiatives

- 8 The Flexible Fund can support tamariki in emergency housing build confidence, resilience, connectedness and trust through community activity.
- 9 Initiatives that have been successfully delivered to keep tamariki connected with their education and wellbeing include:
  - After school programmes:
    - Homework groups to support schoolwork and keep tamariki connected to school.
    - Recreation and cultural activities for groups or individuals such as; dance classes, swimming lessons, athletics also winter and summer sports.
  - Holiday programmes:
    - Promoting self-esteem, confidence, life-skills, team building, cultural identity and connectedness.
  - Additional supports used as part of the Flexible Fund:
    - Self-care and/or school readiness packs.
    - Access passes to pool and sports facilities.
    - Safety equipment to support recreational activities like helmets and knee pads so tamariki can use bikes and scooters.

## **Supporting Wellbeing and Education**

### **Waikato**

10 As part of increasing the wellbeing of tamariki aged 5-11 years old living in Emergency Housing a Master Chef holiday programme was run. Approximately 50 tamariki attended the programme which included:

- Tamariki were given the opportunity to direct what they wanted to learn through cooking for their whānau. The tamariki decided they wanted to learn how to cook boil-up and fried bread.
- The provider got someone from the community to show and share their knowledge on how to cook these things and taught the tamariki step by step how to make them.
- The outcome was the tamariki learnt how to work together to cook boil up and fried bread.
- They enjoyed a shared kai and each tamariki was able to pack up a container to take home to their family for dinner that night.

11 An afterschool and evening tutoring programme has been established for tamariki living in Emergency Housing so they can engage with their learning in a safe and supportive environment. Dinner was also provided after each session to help the tamariki develop relationships with each other. Some things to note are:

- During COVID restrictions, tutors created online activities and videos to continue supporting educational needs.
- During Term 1 2022, 106 tamariki have been supported through the programme.
- Outcomes for individuals engaging with the programme have included:
  - Re-engaging with formal writing exercises
  - Increased self-esteem
  - Feeling more confident in their abilities to do schoolwork
  - Feeling more positive about attending school
  - Improvement in core literacy skills.

### **Auckland**

12 As you are aware the impacts of COVID over the last two years has had a significant impact on attendance in education settings. The Auckland region took a two-pronged approach to support tamariki wellbeing and education.

- Tamariki were helped to attend educational holiday programmes which help encourage school attendance through the Flexible Fund.
- Auckland's Regional Commissioner Advisor has been working for a few months alongside the Ministry of Education (MoE) who confirmed attendance has been lower than ever before since students have been allowed back into schools.
- To help with school holidays, parents in emergency housing were informed of a range of school holiday programmes. Which included, but not limited to sport, music and dance programmes. This opportunity gave our tamariki in emergency housing a chance to have fun outside of their motel rooms. They were able to play with other tamariki their own ages and learn new skills,

helping to improve overall wellbeing. We received positive feedback from parents.

- Working through this entire process, allowed for a relationship to be strengthened between MSD and our whānau in EH. Trust was increased, which allowed for conversations around school enrolment and attendance. This meant parents were comfortable to be more open and honest around why their tamariki were not in school and how we could support them in making this happen.
- This information meant a process could be set into place, alongside MoE to get tamariki enrolled and attending school. From doing this, we could ensure more tamariki would be in school for the upcoming new term. Furthermore, we also were able to offer tutoring support to parents so that tamariki can catch up on the school they have missed over the past couple of years of learning from home during this pandemic.
- Having our tamariki engaged and making friends in their community through attending these programmes, we are helping our tamariki to stay engaged in school and having something to do will give them the chance to socialise with peers outside of the emergency housing setting. When they return to school, these tamariki will have these experiences to share with their friends too. The purpose being to give them similar experiences to their peers.
- Outcomes from these programmes are:
  - Tamariki engaging in community activities
  - Tamariki being able to share experiences with their peers outside of emergency housing
  - Whānau being encouraged to keep their tamariki engaged in school
  - Improve overall wellbeing of tamariki in emergency housing.

### 13 Auckland Easter eggs deliveries

- Auckland region organised for over 1500 easter eggs to be delivered to tamariki in emergency housing.
- The Easter eggs were delivered by Regional Commissioner Advisors and Regional Housing Managers across Auckland.
- All the whānau that received Easter eggs were very appreciative.
- By seeing our clients in these settings we were able to connect them to other products and services.
- Outcomes for the event were:
  - Whānau receiving MSD help outside of the traditional channels
  - Whānau and tamariki experiencing awhi at their place of residence

### Next steps

- 14 We will continue to share success stories through the Social Development Employment Update including a new initiative linking housing supports through to employment for Emergency Housing clients. This initiative is in its early stages, but the framework is as follows
- 15 Working together with the labour market team, we created a heatmap of the Auckland region showing available employment and rental properties available on the housing market. This allows MSD to discuss with our clients the opportunities in

the communities that they would like to live or may not have considered, but are now interested in.

- 16 We then use our services such as:
- Career practitioner service to support clients to update their CVs and interview support
  - Dress for Success and the Hair Dressing Academy, where we have established a fit for purpose pathway for our clients to access a new wardrobe and a nice new hair cut to help build confidence and get them excited about their future. Presentation supports both employment and housing opportunities.
  - Referrals to courses that are needed to help upskill clients for the industries they are interested in.
- 17 Work Brokers and Housing Brokers are now one team who work together to find housing and employment in the same location. This means that clients are placed in jobs near where they live, removing the barrier of travel, and find housing when they can afford it with the added income they will receive from their wages.
- 18 Additionally, we ensure our clients are supported in remaining successful during their tenancies through referrals to the Sustaining Tenancies programme.
- 19 By providing a clear pathway for our clients about how housing and employment is linked and focusing the service to target their goals and needs of the client, while assisting them to look and feel their best, we have seen growth in employment engagement in the Emergency Housing space.

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