

## Lower Hutt Homelessness – Homelessness Strategy Report

Report No: PRC2018/5/316

### Purpose of Report

1. To seek the agreement of the Policy & Regulatory Committee to the proposals from the homelessness strategy work thus far and agreement for officers to continue work required with regard to implementation.

### Recommendations

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- (i) agrees to the proposed strategic approach to homelessness:

#### Summary

Working together to end homelessness: Ending homelessness doesn't mean that no-one will lose their home again. It means that we have a response in-place to prevent homelessness whenever possible and that if homelessness occurs, **it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.**

#### Guiding principles

**Housing is a basic human right:** everyone has the right to housing that is habitable, affordable, suitable, and secure.

**Person-centered:** to give people control and enable them to set their own aims and goals for the future.

**Culturally appropriate:** an approach and service delivery that meets the needs of all our people.

**Collaborative action:** working together and taking action.

#### Priorities

1. Preventing homelessness
2. Improving the supply of suitable accommodation and support for people experiencing homelessness
3. Ending rough sleeping - help people who are street homeless or living in their cars move into and retain settled accommodation
4. Increasing the supply of affordable homes to rent and buy

## 5. Improving data on homelessness in Lower Hutt

- (ii) agrees that officers consult on the strategic approach and priorities;
- (iii) agrees to officers continuing working with partners to develop actions and options for the role of Council in contributing to the response to homelessness; and
- (iv) agrees to the development of a housing strategy to address housing needs in Lower Hutt.

For the reasons:

We have engaged with a range of partners on the proposed approach and priorities and there is agreement that a more effective response to homelessness in the city is needed. This should include addressing the immediate homelessness needs as well as the critical housing supply issue.

Officers have been discussing Council's role in responding to homelessness alongside its Government, local government, and third-sector organisation partners. Such an approach fits with taking coordinated action on homelessness and would see Council working with its partners at both governance and practical levels.

Contributing to the response to homelessness will assist Council with its work to "*empower brighter futures for those most in need in the city*" and deliver the integrated vision and key strategies.

Suitable housing supply is needed to address homelessness. This has been a key message from both the research and the strategy development work. Officers are therefore recommending that Council agrees to develop a housing strategy to address housing needs.

## Background

2. Following the research into homelessness in Lower Hutt (May 2018) Council directed officers to develop a homelessness strategy for the city. At the homelessness research workshop in May 2018 Councillors spoke about council being in a good position to lead the work and contributing to responding to homelessness in the city.
3. Responding to homelessness effectively will assist Council in its work “to empower brighter futures for those most in need in the city” and in achieving our strategic aims that Lower Hutt is a safe and healthy city in which all residents can prosper in strong and inclusive communities. (Council priorities 2018 – 2021 and Long-term Plan 2018-2028)
4. This work began in July 2018 and has included engagement with a range of organisations, individuals and people with lived experience of homelessness in Lower Hutt. Organisations have expressed an interest in working with council and to assist in shaping the response to homelessness.
5. The aims were to:
  - further explore some issues that did not emerge in detail during the research in early 2018;
  - explore the responses required; and
  - explore how Council could contribute to the homelessness response.
6. This paper presents the proposed approach for responding to homelessness in the city. Discussions with government and partners in terms of implementation and Council’s role in providing resources are continuing.<sup>1</sup>

### What is homelessness?

7. The Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness is: *‘Living situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing: are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing.’*
8. For some people, homelessness means sleeping rough on the street, or living in cars or vans. For others, it means sofa-surfing or temporarily sharing housing with friends, family, or acquaintances. Homelessness means people are living in insecure and often unsafe circumstances and may experience a number of moves between friends, family, temporary accommodation, or rough sleeping.<sup>2</sup>
9. Homelessness is caused by a combination of structural and individual factors. The structural factors include poverty, inequality, lack of affordable housing supply, and welfare and income policies. The individual level circumstances that can make people more vulnerable to homelessness include poor physical or mental health, alcohol and drugs issues, age, bereavement, financial problems, and relationship breakdown.

---

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 includes some further data and information from the engagement undertaken and information on the nature of homelessness in Lower Hutt is included in the report presented to Council in May 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Homelessness in Lower Hutt (May 2018)

10. Council’s research locally again demonstrated that homelessness affects a wide range of households. In Lower Hutt there are families with children, young people, older people, couples, and single people who are homeless.<sup>3</sup>
11. There are clear and long-term social and economic costs to homelessness. There is extensive literature in relation to the effects of homelessness on individuals and society as a whole. Homelessness has a detrimental effect on people’s health and wellbeing, education, employment opportunities and income, as well as family relationships. <sup>4</sup>
12. Homelessness in Lower Hutt is increasing and people remain homeless, in emergency accommodation and insecure and unsafe situations, for extended periods of time. This is a result of increasing difficulty accessing housing in social, private renting or homeownership sectors, over several years.

### Housing Context

13. People in Lower Hutt are experiencing difficulty all along the housing continuum. Restricted supply and increasing house prices have continued to reduce access to homeownership. The private rented sector in the city is particularly competitive and has seen considerable rent increases during the last few years. There is also a growing need for social housing in the city.

#### *Housing continuum*



14. Housing Register numbers have increased across all territorial authorities. The Government’s Public Housing Plan 2018 – 2022 identifies two areas in the Wellington region which are among areas that have seen significant increases in the number of households on the register between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2018:
  - Porirua City (up 127 percent)
  - Lower Hutt City (up 85 percent)
15. The number of households who are at most risk and have severe and persistent housing needs that should be addressed immediately, i.e. those in Band A, continues to increase and 255 households, or 71% of those on the register in the city, were in Band A.
16. House prices have increased markedly in in the city over recent years. In the year to June 2018 median sale prices increased at city level increased by 8%. This is in addition to a 25% increase in the two years from June 2015 to June 2017. The housing market means that more households will be renting for longer periods than has historically

<sup>3</sup> Homelessness in Lower Hutt (May, 2018)

<sup>4</sup> Homelessness Lower Hutt (May 2018)

been the pattern. At ward level, prices have increased strongly, particularly in the central, northern, and Wainuiomata wards.

17. Rents have increased across the city in the period since 2015 and there have been particular increases in some local areas. Between June 2017 and June 2018 rent costs increased by 10% at a city level. Areas which have historically been more affordable have become considerably more expensive for households. In 2017-2018 rents increased by:
  - 13.5% in the central ward;
  - 12% in the northern ward; and
  - 11% in the eastern ward
18. There is little turnover of tenancies. The rental market is the main source of homes for many households and the increasing competition for tenancies means that more and more households find themselves locked out of the sector. The level of competition means that those with the greatest needs are at particular disadvantage.<sup>5</sup>

### Prevalence of homelessness

19. In terms of homelessness, the needs in some respects – such as emergency housing need – are more acute than those in neighbouring areas. Data available from local agencies, transitional housing places, and the level of Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EHSNGs) indicate the local needs but do not fully quantify the problem.
20. The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has increased the number of transitional housing places with support that are available in the city but the level of needs mean that households who are eligible for assistance are still placed in hotel accommodation either in Lower Hutt or neighbouring areas, and more needs to be done to reduce dependence on this type of accommodation.
21. The number of homeless households in Lower Hutt increased by 41%, from 646 people to 913 people, between the census in 2006 and 2013. This means that the city has a homelessness prevalence of 9 per 1000 population and has had the second highest prevalence per 1000 population in the region during the period from the 2001 census.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2: Categories of severe housing deprivation in Lower Hutt 2013**

Lower Hutt - housing situation	Households
Without habitable accommodation – including people living rough or in mobile dwellings	42
Non-private accommodation – including night shelters, women’s refuge accommodation, other types of temporary accommodation, and also hotels, motels, and boarding houses	196

<sup>5</sup> Government’s recent consultation on the reform of the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 also sets out the challenges of more New Zealanders finding and retaining homes in the rented sector.

<sup>6</sup> Amore K. Severe Housing Deprivation in Aotearoa/New Zealand 2001 – 2013, (University of Otago, 2016). <http://www.healthyhousing.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Severe-housing-deprivation-in-Aotearoa-2001-2013-1.pdf>

Temporary resident in a severely overcrowded permanent private dwelling	672
---	-----

22. Homelessness and housing hardship in the city have been increasing in the period since 2013 and both the data available and the consensus amongst organisations is that the situation overall has worsened during the last 5 years.

*Transitional and emergency accommodation*

23. MSD has increased the number of transitional housing places in the city, from 44 in December 2017 to 61 in October 2018. Transitional housing provides households with accommodation and support for three months. This accommodation is often full and as households have difficulty finding settled accommodation they remain in transitional situations beyond the three month period. The data available only shows the use of transitional housing and partners report there is considerable unmet need for this accommodation.<sup>7</sup>
24. Some of the additional needs for accommodation are indicated in the number of Emergency Housing Grants paid to households. During the September 2018 quarter, 45% of EHSNGs grants in the region were paid to households in Lower Hutt. 55% of the cost of EHSNGs – \$771,567 of \$1,388,355 – in the region during this quarter was spent on grants to households in the city.<sup>8</sup> The number of grants made in the city has increased each quarter since early 2017.<sup>9</sup> Households can receive more than one grant. MSD officers at local office level report high needs for temporary accommodation in the city and regularly use hotel accommodation in Lower Hutt, Upper Hutt, and Porirua as emergency accommodation. People are in this emergency accommodation for extended periods.

**Table 4: Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants 2017 – 2018**

Period	Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants	Number of distinct clients receiving grants
March quarter 2017	234	69
June quarter 2017	315	83
September quarter 2017	348	94
December quarter 2017	225	83
March quarter 2018	411	116
June quarter 2018	440	Not currently available
September quarter 2018	600	Not currently available

<sup>7</sup> Transitional Housing Factsheet, (Ministry of Social Development, August 2018)

<sup>8</sup> See Homelessness in Lower Hutt (May 2018) for further data

<sup>9</sup> See Homelessness in Lower Hutt (May 2018) and data in Appendix 1 for further information.

25. In a New Zealand and international context homelessness is disproportionately experienced by indigenous populations and ethnic minority groups. At a local level the data on EHSNG indicates that homelessness in the city disproportionately affects Māori. The majority of distinct clients for EHSNG are Māori. Between 49% and 60.2% of clients were Māori in each quarter between March 2017 and March 2018.

#### *Rough sleeping*

26. We are unable to provide the number of people sleeping rough or in cars/vehicles, or improvised shelters in the city but, as part of work under the strategy in the future, we would consider conducting a point-in-time rough sleeping count as well as improving agencies' monitoring of this aspect of homelessness. There are individuals and families sleeping rough or in cars/vehicles, and improvised shelters in locations across the city, including Wainuiomata, the east and west ends of Petone foreshore, Waterloo, as well as instances in the Lower Hutt CBD, north-east areas of the city, and Western Hills.
27. It is also difficult to quantify the number of households living temporarily with whanau or friends and moving between such accommodation as well as other insecure and unsafe situations.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Homelessness likely to increase in the short-term*

28. The indications are that homelessness and housing hardship is likely to continue and increase in Lower Hutt in the short-term. There is a limited supply of affordable homes and making a considerable difference on this aspect is expected to take around three to five years. Pressure on rented housing is therefore likely to continue. As well as increasing housing supply, actions are required to improve the response to immediate needs during this period.

#### **Strategy proposal**

29. We have conducted engagement with a broad range of individuals, non-governmental agencies, and, Government teams. The engagement has also included people who are or have experienced homelessness. These discussions included the current situation in the city, what is needed to improve our response, and possible ways of working together in terms of the responses required.<sup>11</sup> The work identifies that the problem can be divided into two broad categories:
- a) Lack of housing supply: Access to housing is the main problem and the main reason that people are homeless. Low level of housing supply over many years means that there is a high level of unmet need and it will take government and its partners time to deliver the supply required. The need for temporary housing continues to outstrip the supply of suitable accommodation available and families often spend lengthy periods in hotels in Lower Hutt or other cities in the region.
  - b) The immediate situation: Reports from organisations and the available data indicates the current problem for people in the city, and we expect the need to

---

<sup>10</sup> Homelessness Lower Hutt (May 2018)

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix 1 and Homelessness in Lower Hutt (May 2018) for further information.

continue. In this situation we also need to focus on delivering an effective response to the current homelessness situation. This response includes:

- Preventing homelessness – helping people retain accommodation and avoid the costs to them, families, and community more broadly. This includes advice and advocacy, support services, and improving poor services or disjointed processes that contribute to and perpetuate homelessness.
- Focussing on ending rough sleeping and how Council can contribute to Government initiatives such as Housing First in this context.
- Improving the supply of suitable accommodation and support for people experiencing homelessness – including emergency and transitional accommodation.

30. A homelessness strategy aims to improve the current response to homelessness. A targeted plan with clear priorities and commitment can help prevent homelessness, end rough sleeping, and ensure that our response is effective so that we minimise the harm that homelessness causes to individuals and families in the city.

31. Insufficient housing supply is at the root of homelessness and, in conjunction with responding to the immediate homelessness issues, Council should develop a housing strategy to address housing needs in the city. The delivery of supply needs to include homes that are affordable to people on lower incomes, using different delivery methods and including social housing and non-market solutions, and accessing land for affordable housing. Even where Housing First and other targeted interventions such as Housing First have been working well, the environment in terms of housing supply has caused homelessness overall to continue.

32. Wider employment, health, social security and anti-poverty approaches are needed to have an impact on structural factors such as income level and poverty.<sup>12</sup>

#### *A homelessness prevention approach*

33. Preventing homelessness is more cost-effective for individuals and society than trying to deal with its effects. We can take action to address some structural factors such as lack of affordable homes by actively working on delivering housing supply. We can also support central government work to reduce poverty, improve security and conditions in the private rented market to reduce the insecurity and risk of homelessness. Poor services or disjointed processes, cultural barriers and discrimination, cause and perpetuate homelessness e.g. when people are refused assistance including support and temporary accommodation or at points when people are discharged from hospital or released from prison. We can work at a local level to improve linkages between referring agencies and services within the housing continuum, in order to collectively better target the needs of known vulnerable populations such as those with mental health problems, or those in the justice system. There are opportunities to improve early intervention including picking-up people at risk of eviction and providing coordinated support in partnership with other agencies to prevent people becoming homeless again

---

<sup>12</sup> Smith, C. Tackling Poverty NZ – the nature of poverty in New Zealand and ways to address it, Policy Quarterly, Volume 14, Issue 1, February 2018

*Working together to end homelessness*

34. Ending homelessness doesn't mean that no-one will lose their home again. It means that we have a response in-place to prevent homelessness whenever possible and that if homelessness occurs, **it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.**
35. During our engagement with partners officers proposed that homelessness in Lower Hutt should be rare, brief, and non-recurring. There was broad endorsement of this aim, primarily because it would be a considerable step forward from the current position of increasing homelessness and households being homeless for extended periods, and because it reflects the reality of responding to often complex cases where a broad range of factors and circumstances result in people becoming homeless. It is an aim proposed by Auckland Council, one we've discussed with colleagues at Wellington City Council, and one which is used internationally.
36. Partners also felt that we should be working toward 'ending homelessness' and that '*as tangata whenua no Māori should be homeless*'.
37. In New Zealand, the UK, and US the debate about ending homelessness is described as taking steps to ensure that if homelessness occurs at all, it is rare, has a quick solution, and is prevented from re-occurring.

New Zealand

*'Housing First aims to end homelessness for people not just manage it. The goal is that homelessness should be brief, rare, and non-recurring.'*<sup>13</sup>

UK

*'What we mean by ending homelessness*

*Ending homelessness doesn't mean that no-one will ever lose their home again. It means it rarely happens, and that there's a quick solution when it does. This plan shows how to ensure that:*

- *no one sleeps rough: whether they are in tents, cars or, at worst, on the streets*
- *everyone has a safe, stable place to live: so that nobody is in emergency accommodation like a hostel or night shelter without a plan to quickly move into housing*
- *where we can predict homelessness, we can prevent it: so that no-one leaves their home or is forced to leave a state institution like prison with nowhere to go.'*<sup>14</sup>

US

*'What Does Ending Homelessness Mean?*

*An end to homelessness means that every community will have a comprehensive response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or if it can't be prevented, **it is a rare, brief, and one-time experience.***

*Specifically every community will have capacity to:*

- *Quickly identify and engage people at risk of and experiencing homelessness.*
- *Intervene to prevent people from losing their housing and divert people from entering the homelessness services system.*
- *Provide people with immediate access to shelter and crisis services without barriers to*

<sup>13</sup> Public Housing Plan 2018 – 2022, (New Zealand Government, August 2018)

<sup>14</sup> CRISIS (UK) - <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/the-plan-to-end-homelessness-full-version/executive-summary/>

*entry if homelessness does occur.*

- *Quickly connect people experiencing homelessness to housing assistance and services tailored to their unique needs and strengths to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.’<sup>15</sup>*

38. Ending homelessness in Lower Hutt means we should prevent homelessness occurring where possible, and if it does happen, it is rare, has a quick solution, and does not happen again. Many people experience homelessness as a result of losing their jobs, changes in income, health problems, and other vulnerabilities. If we had support and services available that people could access if they were at risk of homelessness we would more often prevent homelessness being a consequence of these issues.
39. Similarly, if an individual or family has to flee a house where they are not safe and stay in refuge or other temporary accommodation setting, they will be homeless. What is required at this point is the services and accommodation to make sure that they can be quickly and sustainably resettled.

### *Guiding principles*

The proposed guiding principles for the strategy are:

40. **Housing is a basic human right:** everyone has the right to housing that is habitable, affordable, suitable, and secure. Homelessness is the clearest manifestation of the failure to provide adequate housing and the unambiguous right of everyone to have a safe place to live should underpin our response.<sup>16</sup> At a local and practical level this means working with our partners to address homelessness effectively and prioritise the delivery of suitable housing.
41. **Person-centred:** to give people control and enable them to set their own aims and goals for the future. The individual or family should be at the centre of the services and support provided, and services should work with people to help them make decisions and set their own goals.<sup>17</sup>
42. **Culturally appropriate:** an approach and service delivery that meets the needs of all our people. This means supporting people in line with their values and worldview. For Māori, understanding tiro ā-Māori ki tōna ake ao is needed to help respond effectively to homelessness.
43. Homelessness amongst Māori is similar to the experiences of other indigenous populations whose way of life has been radically affected by the cultural, social, and economic repression of colonisation. Alongside factors such as poverty, inequality, and low income, and the individual level problems that can cause homelessness, other complexities and unique factors affecting Māori include disconnection from land and whanaugatanga.

<sup>15</sup> United States Interagency Council on homelessness - <https://www.usich.gov/goals/what-does-ending-homelessness-mean/>

<sup>16</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations 1948, article 25  
[http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr\\_booklet\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf)  
[https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/9214/2388/0508/HRNZ\\_10\\_right\\_to\\_housing.pdf](https://www.hrc.co.nz/files/9214/2388/0508/HRNZ_10_right_to_housing.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Bewley, C. et. al., Person-Centred Support: a guide for service users,  
<http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/health-and-life-sciences-documents/centre-for-social-action/the-standards-we-expect/person-centred-support-guide-service-users.pdf>

44. Effectively engaging with Pacific Peoples requires an understanding of Yavu (foundation and belonging), connection to family and kinship, and the importance of the collective above the individual. <sup>18</sup> *'If individualism is the essence of the mainstream culture then 'being part of a family: aiga, anau, magafoa, kaiga, kainga and kawa' is the essence of Pacific Islands cultures.'* <sup>19</sup>
45. **Collaborative action:** working together and taking action. The issues of housing hardship and homelessness intersect with the responsibilities of a range of organisations e.g. Health, Education, Criminal Justice, and Housing. Responding effectively to homelessness requires organisations to work closely together to reduce system barriers and find effective solutions.

#### Priorities

46. **Preventing homelessness.** This includes providing people who are at risk of homelessness with the support to retain homes and includes working effectively to prevent homelessness from happening through some of the major system routes such as when people are discharged from hospital/health care, released from prison, or preparing to leave other services. It also means improving the services and processes when people approach organisations, such as WINZ, for assistance.
47. **Suitable accommodation** and support for people experiencing homelessness – including emergency and transitional accommodation.
48. In the current situation of high need it is worth exploring the options to improve temporary accommodation. When Housing First is implemented, probably in early 2019 in the Hutt Valley, it will target those in greatest need of settled housing and support therefore reducing the need for emergency provision. However, housing supply may be an issue in the early stages. During the engagement there has been support for increasing the provision of suitable emergency accommodation with support, for households. Given the current needs, a number of people support establishing a night shelter in the city. The current view of officers is that we would prefer to increase the support/resources available to Housing First to increase the supply of housing for people in the most need. While it is seen as an immediate solution it may not be in line with current Housing First thinking and working on longer-term solutions. Our thinking does not preclude considering a night shelter as a seasonal response, for example if Government repeats its approach from winter 2018 when calling for additional emergency solutions. Officers are discussing improving the provision of

---

<sup>18</sup> Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese, Tafaoimalo Loudeen Parsons, Ginny Sullivan and Charles Waldegrave, A QUALITATIVE STUDY INTO PACIFIC PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURAL OBLIGATIONS AND VOLUNTEERING – A Research Project Carried out by the Pacific Section and The Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit (2010) <http://www.familycentre.org.nz/Publications/PDF%27s/Cultural%20Obligations%20and%20Volunteering%20Main.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Emele Duituturaga ("For the Family First: "A study if income allocation within Pacific Island Families in

New Zealand Chapter Five Family Violence: A Pacific Perspective" 1995 pp.73-74. Quoted in Su'a Thomsen, Jez Tavita and Zsontell Levi-Teu, A Pacific Island Perspective on the Living Standards Framework and Wellbeing, (New Zealand Treasury Discussion Paper 18/09, August 2018) <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-08/dp18-09.pdf>

temporary accommodation with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and further discussions may yield some options for the interim period.

49. **Ending rough sleeping.** Rough sleeping is the most dangerous form of homelessness and we should not accept anyone sleeping on the streets, vehicles, under buildings, or in improvised shelters.
50. One of the key approaches in ending rough sleeping is Housing First. Housing First is an outreach intervention programme focussing on people with complex needs to provide housing as quickly as possible along with tailored support.<sup>20</sup> The approach recognises that having settled housing makes it easier for people to address problems with their health and wellbeing, addictions, and other needs. Wrap-around support is provided to the individual to help them retain their home and address issues that led to or contributed to them becoming homeless. The intervention focusses on breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness for individuals.

#### *Housing First Principles*

- Immediate access to housing with no housing readiness conditions
  - Personal choice and self-determination
  - A harm reduction and recovery-orientation approach
  - Individual and person-driven support
  - Social and community integration
51. Housing First is delivered by a partnership of organisations with expertise in supporting people and helping them retain housing. It is funded by the Ministry of Social Development and in several areas in New Zealand it is also supported by local councils. Two Housing First programmes are being funded to deliver services in Wellington and the Hutt Valley and proposals to MSD about the delivery of these two programmes are expected imminently. One programme will be delivered by a collective of organisations led by Downtown Community Ministry and the other will be delivered by Kahungunu ki Poneke Community Services. We have been discussing the Housing First intervention with MSD and will look to support them and providers in this work.
  52. Other people may need short-term assistance and practical support, such as help with deposit payments and so forth, to access housing.
  53. Increase the supply of affordable homes to rent and buy.
  54. Council needs to explore how it can do this both individually and with partners. A housing needs assessment as part of developing a housing strategy will help determine the type of housing required, affordability for different households, and how to deliver on the needs identified. A focus on the building of a range of homes to rent or buy and including market and non-market housing should be explored.
  55. Improve the data on homelessness in Lower Hutt
  56. Improving data on homelessness in the city, including data from agencies, point in time homelessness counts, and so forth. Good data is needed to assess needs for services, identify trends over time, and help indicate the impact of changes.

---

<sup>20</sup> Pleace et. al. There are other interventions. Housing First is supported by evidence from several countries as well as from cities in New Zealand where it is already being implemented.

## *Governance and implementation*

57. Given the multi-agency response required to address homelessness in the city and neighbouring areas, effective oversight and coordination of the work is needed. Rather than establishing a new governance group for the city or adapting existing groups, we believe it is more effective to work with government and neighbouring councils to develop a governance/leadership group that will oversee the response to homelessness in the region, including Housing First. Working with its local and government partners puts council's response to homelessness in a broader context with one group of decision makers providing coordinated oversight of the system response to homelessness. This group is linked to the Housing First programme proposals and discussions about governance are at an early stage. The group is likely to include Iwi, Mayors, Government, and non-government organisations.

### **Role of Council**

58. If Council agrees to the strategic approach proposed, officers will continue to work with partners to develop an action plan in line with the identified priorities.
59. Implementing a strategic response to homelessness requires a coordinated approach by a range of partners. Organisations in the city do not have the capacity to effectively address the current level of needs, and these needs are likely to increase in the short term.
60. Taking a proactive role in contributing to an effective homelessness response is in line with Council's overall strategic approach to making Lower Hutt a safe and healthy city in which all residents can prosper in strong and inclusive communities. Officers will continue to explore how Council can collaborate with Government and local government partners to improve the immediate response to homelessness. As noted, officers have been discussing working in partnership with Wellington City Council and MSD, and now HUD, to develop a systems response to homelessness. Such an approach fits with taking coordinated action on homelessness, taking action on the priorities we have found in the city, and interventions including prevention, housing first, and emergency / temporary accommodation. This approach would include Council funding alongside its partners and being part of a Governance group overseeing homelessness interventions at a regional level. Contributing to Housing First for example, is an opportunity for Council to contribute directly to ending acute homelessness in the city. Collaboration with HUD on transitional housing and the support required is also being discussed.
61. Delivering the strategy will require joint-working and resources and Council will need to consider its role in contributing to delivering an effective response to homelessness and the allocation of resources to do this. We currently consider that Council working alongside Government and local government partners offers a good opportunity to begin working on the priorities identified.
62. In several other urban areas Councils are providing support to homelessness plans and services. Wellington City Council provides funding to organisations through its Te Mahana homelessness strategy.

**Table 3: Wellington City Council contract funding 2017-18** <sup>21</sup>

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>NZD</b>
Wellington Night Shelter Trust	\$97,389
Wellington Night Shelter Trust	\$55,000
Wellington Women's Refuge Group Inc	\$36,526
Wellington City Mission (Anglican) Trust Board	\$37,931
Te Whakamura Ai Te Ahi - Downtown Community Ministry	\$141,131
Te Whakamura Ai Te Ahi - Ngati Kahungunu ki Poneke Community Services Inc.	\$102,378
Te Whakamura Ai Te Ahi - Suzanne Aubert Compassion Centre Wellington Ltd (Soup Kitchen)	\$74,494
Te Whakamura Ai Te Ahi - Ngati Kahungunu ki Poneke Community Services Inc.	\$152,250
<b>Total funding</b>	<b>\$659,168</b>

63. Christchurch City Council provides \$600,000 funding over three years to support the implementation of the Housing First programme.

#### **Consultation**

64. Officers have conducted a broad programme of engagement in developing the proposal. This has included one to one meetings and a series of workshops with individuals and organisations. We will consult further with partners on implementation options.

#### **Legal Considerations**

65. Not applicable

#### **Financial Considerations**

66. Not applicable for this report.

#### **Other Considerations**

67. In making this recommendation, officers have given careful consideration to the purpose of local government in section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002. Officers believe that this recommendation falls within the purpose of local government in that it:
- a. Sets out to deal appropriately with a matter which has major impacts on the lives a range of households in the city and in which council can take a lead locally and work alongside Government and partners on improving the response to the immediate homelessness issue, whilst also focussing on housing supply.

---

<sup>21</sup> Wellington City Council <https://wellington.govt.nz/~media/services/community-and-culture/funding/files/current-contracts.pdf?la=en>

- b. Responding effectively to prevent homelessness and intervening to ensure that if homelessness occurs it does so rarely, is only a brief experience for the household, does not reoccur, and is cost-effective. Homelessness has a range of costs for the individuals and households affected and society more broadly both in the short and longer-term.