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Memorandum of Understanding – Auckland Homeless Steering Group

Between:

Ministry of Social Development  
Housing New Zealand Corporation  
Auckland District Health Board  
Waitemata District Health Board  
Auckland City Mission  
Lifewise  
NZ Police  
St John New Zealand  
Department of Corrections  
The Salvation Army New Zealand  
Te Puni Kōkiri  
Accident Compensation Corporation  
Auckland City Council



# Memorandum of Understanding: An interagency approach for ending rough sleeping in Auckland city

## Introduction

The Auckland Homeless Steering group comprises senior representatives from central, local and non-government agencies to streamline processes and practices so that homeless people are placed in long-term accommodation with effective support services to maintain them in their homes. Homelessness, for the purposes of this document concentrates on those homeless who are without shelter, otherwise known as 'rough sleepers'.<sup>1</sup> This memorandum is an interagency response by the steering group to reduce the number of street people without shelter. Its ultimate aim is to end rough sleeping in Auckland city.

The Auckland Homeless Steering Group provides governance and strategic direction for central and non-government agencies and advocates for improvements in homeless outcomes. The steering group has a leadership focus and concentrates on improving systems and services to prevent clients becoming homeless as well as providing homeless people with a pathway out of homelessness. The focus of work is on prevention, intervention, integration, and independence for homeless people.

To achieve this focus each agency has staff working at an operational level. Agency staff collaborate closely so that streamlined services support clients to move out of homelessness. This operational group is referred to as the Homeless Taskforce Group.

There are four areas of work undertaken by this interagency approach. They relate to prevention, intervention, integrated support and independence. The strategies under each of these areas are as follows:

1. Preventive work encompasses a variety of strategies including:
  - Government agencies having homeless champions who are responsible for ensuring that systems and practices are in place to identify clients who are homeless
  - Timely referral systems that prevent the likelihood of rough sleeping
  - The appropriate use of a cultural framework for Maori, Pacific Island and migrant clients as well as supportive and integrated casework practices
  - The development of homeless policy so that better outcomes for homelessness are recognised at a government level to prevent an increase in homeless numbers
  - The collation of statistical data that demonstrates successful interventions have prevented homeless people being discharged from institutions into rough sleeping situations

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<sup>1</sup>Statistics New Zealand approved the official definition of homelessness in 2009. There are four levels of homelessness defined including people without shelter, people in temporary accommodation, people sharing accommodation and people in uninhabitable housing.

'Without shelter' is defined as living situations that provide no shelter, or makeshift shelter. These include living situations such as living on the street and inhabiting improvised dwellings, such as living in a shack or car'. Statistics New Zealand, New Zealand Definition of Homelessness, Wellington, 2009.p 6

2. Intervention work encompasses a variety of strategies including:
  - Assessment of homeless clients using a cultural framework that supports whanau wellbeing when appropriate as well as an interagency casework approach
  - Client plans demonstrates a pathway out of homelessness that involves a multi-agency approach that supports whanau involvement
  - The establishment of a 24/7 service hub incorporating emergency accommodation, meal provision and case management services
  - The establishment of a Special Circumstances Court
  
3. Integrated support work encompasses a variety of strategies including:
  - The development of accommodation for homeless and other marginalised people
  - Access to support services that reflect a cultural framework for Maori, Pacific Island and migrant clients and reinforces housing options rather than street options
  - Services and programmes that prepare for independence with whanau support where appropriate
  - The completion of the Mission in the City building
  
4. Independence work encompasses a variety of strategies including:
  - Clients in long-term accommodation have continued and appropriate supports to live independently
  - Clients in long-term accommodation have continued access to whanau support and cultural identity

Services from all agencies are collaborative and reflect a common use of cultural and casework practices that are comprehensive and streamlined.

#### **A Parties to the Memorandum**

The parties to this Memorandum of Understanding (“the Memorandum”) are:

Ministry of Social Development  
 Housing New Zealand Corporation  
 Auckland District Health Board  
 Waitemata District Health Board  
 Auckland City Mission  
 Lifewise  
 NZ Police  
 St John New Zealand  
 Department of Corrections  
 The Salvation Army New Zealand  
 Te Puni Kokiri  
 Accident Compensation Corporation  
 Auckland City Council

#### **B Purpose**

The purpose of this Memorandum is to:

- outline the respective roles of the parties
- identify outcomes and goals that are shared
- formally describe how the parties will work more closely together to assist each to achieve mutual interests and goals
- commit to 5 year plan outcomes and resources

## **C Relationship management**

All parties agree to:

- Work together in good faith, respecting each other's contribution to end/reduce homelessness in Auckland,
- Develop and maintain a positive ongoing working relationship that respects and acknowledges each other's areas of expertise.
- Provide, share, collect and report on data or other information as outlined in the Practice Guide to End Rough Sleeping that accompanies this MOU

In particular, the relationship between all parties will involve:

### **1) Clear channels for communication**

All parties will establish, maintain and improve communication systems

- Each agency will identify people responsible for different work streams and encourage communication between these identified people
- Where there is lack of clarity about who to contact, then communications will be between the nominated representatives

### **2) Policy consultation**

All parties will include in their regular meetings any proposed new policy initiatives of relevance to any party.

This will include the exchange of key information and research findings as appropriate and timely. Any information shared will remain confidential to each organisation until it is released publicly.

### **3) Planning processes**

All parties agree to early consultation on any planning processes of relevance to any party.

Again, this will include the exchange of key information and research findings as appropriate and timely.

### **4) Respecting the environment within which we operate**

The relationship will also respect the environment within which each organisation exists. All parties acknowledge that government agencies cannot act in any way contrary to their obligations pursuant to any ministerial or cabinet direction.

## **D Confidentiality**

No party will, without the consent of every other party at any time disclose to a third party information concerning the affairs of any other party, or that otherwise deemed to be confidential by any other party or where such disclosure of information may be subject to the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

## **E Privacy Act 1993**

All privacy matters relating to clients will be compliant with the Privacy Act 1993, but signatories to this protocol will recognise the importance of sharing information and undertake to cooperate fully with each other within the parameters of the Privacy Act 1993. No other agency can give out information unless it relates to their 'own' client. In all circumstances, the Privacy Act and agency protocols must be observed.

## **F Media matters**

All promotional material and media releases will reflect the key messages and all agencies will adhere to only these messages. Any other promotional material will involve all signatories as much as is practicable.

Where one agency intends to involve media in an issue (the lead agency), advance notification should be relayed to all signatories and the lead agency will take responsibility for dealing with any reactive requests from media about the project.

Any promotional material/s or media release will acknowledge the contribution of all the parties involved with agencies listed in alphabetical order.

Any issues of concern, operational or policy, will be raised through the Homeless Steering Group rather than raising these through the media.

Some key messages that all agencies involved in media issues should adhere to include:

- Homelessness is not a choice, it is a lack of options
- Rough sleeping can be solved in Auckland and this will improve social outcomes for families, whanau and the wider community
- Collaboration with government and non-government agencies closes systemic gaps and allows rough sleepers to live in long-term housing with appropriate supports
- Investing in services that prevent homelessness delivers benefits to all New Zealanders
- We will lead Auckland in the development of homeless policy as well as provide a rapid solution focussed response to homeless issues in the community

## **G Variation**

All parties agree that this Memorandum can be amended by agreement. The amendment will be done in writing and signed by each party. Such variation should be raised and addressed in the first instance through the chair of the Homeless Steering Committee.

## **H Duration and review**

This Memorandum will have an initial term from the date the Memorandum. It will be signed by each party and will stand until an agency informs the others, in writing, of their intention to withdraw from the Memorandum.

This Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed annually or at such times as agreed by the majority of parties.

**I Dispute resolution**

Resolution of all disputes and differences, or other issues arising between the parties in relation to the interpretation or performance of the Memorandum shall, in the first instance, be resolved if at all possible, at the earliest opportunity, at the local level. Local representatives or managers should attempt resolution as agreed by the majority of the parties.

When matters remain unresolved or require further negotiation they should be referred to the nominated liaison person.

**J Effect of the Memorandum**

This Memorandum does not constitute or create, and shall not be deemed to constitute, any legally binding or enforceable obligations on the part of any party.

The provisions in this Memorandum are to be read subject to any Chief Executive, Ministerial or Cabinet directives, and any enactment.

Where there are changes to Government policy which affect the purpose and functions of this memorandum, each party agrees to inform the others of those changes at the earliest possible time thereafter and agrees to meet to re-negotiate if necessary any aspects of this Memorandum.

Signed by:

**Housing New Zealand Corporation**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Auckland District Health Board**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Waitemata District Health Board**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Auckland City Mission**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Lifewise**

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Signed:

Date:

**NZ Police**

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Signed:

Date:

**St John New Zealand**

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Signed:

Date:

**Accident Compensation Corporation**

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Signed:

Date:

**Department of Corrections**

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Signed:

Date:

**The Salvation Army New Zealand**

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Signed:

Date:

**Te Puni Kokiri**

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Signed:

Date:

**Ministry of Social Development**

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Signed:

Date:

**Auckland City Council**

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Signed:

Date:

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