

REGIONAL HEALTHY HOUSING RESPONSE GROUP

Strategy and Action Plan

September 2019

*Ensuring everyone in the Wellington region
lives in warm, dry and safe housing by 2025*

1. Our Vision

The Regional Healthy Housing Response Group's vision and goal is:

Everyone in the Wellington region lives in warm, dry and safe housing by 2025

Through this Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan we will achieve that.

This big, hairy, audacious goal captures our shared commitment to, and responsibility for, improving the state of housing in our region.

Housing is an important underlying determinant of health. Housing quality and household crowding are significant risk factors for respiratory illnesses such as asthma, skin infections and acute rheumatic fever. The impact is higher for Māori and Pacific peoples. Housing insecurity further adds to this. By 2013 house ownership rates had declined to 28% for Māori and 19% for Pacific peoples, compared with 57% Europeans. In contrast the proportion of households per population group renting in the private sector increased to 77% Māori and 56% Pacific (41% and 27% respectively in 1986). Rental housing quality is generally lower than in owner-occupied housing. Added to that, rising rental and housing costs contribute to household crowding which adds to the serious risks of infectious diseases and hospitalisation¹.

It is a large and complex problem but focused intervention works:

- Almost a fifth of hospital admissions of young children with acute respiratory infections could be prevented if their houses were free from damp and mould².
- Investment in improving housing through retrofitting insulation provides a benefit: cost ratio of almost 4:1.
- Programmes such as Warm up NZ with targeted initiatives result in significant improvements to wellbeing³.

To achieve our goal this work needs to continue and expand. Our agencies are committed to improving housing across the region. We know it is the right thing to do.

As organisations working in the housing space we recognise that working together will get more whānau and others in cold, damp housing into warm, dry, safe homes faster.

Together, using a collective impact model of shared governance, strategic planning, community involvement and evaluation, the Regional Healthy Housing Response Group (RHHRG) has the collaborative leadership to develop creative solutions to the problem of Wellington region's poor quality housing using a pro-equity approach that recognises the acute impact of housing on the health and lives of our children, as well as all whānau and all Wellingtonians.

¹ Johnson, A., Howden-Chapman, P., Eaqub, S., (2018) [A Stocktake of New Zealand's Housing](#)

² TVOne, 15 Aug 2019, [New study lays bare cost of damp, mouldy homes on children's health in NZ](#)

³ Human Rights Commission, [Inadequate housing in NZ and its effect on children](#)

2. Where we are now

There are approximately 170,000 homes in the Wellington region. According to BRANZ research, over 40% of these homes will be damp or mouldy. This is leading to health issues with high rates of hospitalisation due to housing related illnesses. The key issues contributing to damp and mould are inadequate insulation, ventilation and heating. In addition we expect that very few rental properties will currently meet the new Healthy Homes Standards with the majority of owner-occupied homes needing upgrades to meet similar standards for rental properties.

Burden of Disease

Over the four years to June 2018, there were 5,925 housing sensitive hospitalisations of children 0–14 years of all ethnicities in the Wellington region, with 27.3% of these residing in NZ Deprivation areas of 9 and 10 decile (most deprived).

Māori and Pacific whānau carry the highest burden of disease. Over the same four year period, 2,000 0-14 year Māori children, and 1,280 Pacific children in the Wellington region were admitted for housing sensitive hospitalisations. The average annual housing sensitive hospital admission rate for both of these groups, over the same period, was 22 per 1,000 population. By comparison, the same rate for 0-14 year olds of all other ethnicities during this period was just 11 per 1,000 population.

More Māori than other New Zealanders are affected by overcrowding or substandard housing.⁴

Standards

Building code

New houses must meet the New Zealand Building Code. The last update to standards occurred in 2007, requiring that houses have higher levels of insulation, including double-glazing of windows. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and International Energy Agency note that the New Zealand Building Code is significantly below most of the OECD countries. There are calls for further increases to standards, and it is noted there is a quality gap for owner-occupied houses built before 2007.

Healthy Homes Standards

The Government's Healthy Homes Standard (HHS) for rental housing came into force on 1 July 2019, following the Residential Tenancies Act 2016 (RTA) standards for insulation and smoke alarms. This comprises five standards or elements: heating, insulation, ventilation, moisture ingress and drainage, and draught stopping. Compliance with the RTA insulation standard for all rentals also became compulsory from this date. Compliance with the HHS standard is staggered:

- 1 July 2020: Landlords must include a statement outlining their current level of compliance with the HHS in any new or varied tenancy agreement
- 1 July 2021: All private rentals must comply within 90 days of any new or renewed tenancy. All boarding houses must comply (except HNZ and Community Housing Provider tenancies).
- 1 July 2023: Housing provided by Housing NZ and Community Housing Providers must comply
- 1 July 2024: All rental homes must comply

⁴ MBIE, (2014), [He Whare Ahuru He Oranga Tangata – The Maori Housing Strategy](#)

HomeFit

The New Zealand Green Building Council, in conjunction with the housing sector and EECA, launched HomeFit in 2018. HomeFit is an inspection-based assessment of the health, comfort, energy efficiency and safety of the New Zealand home.

The HomeFit standard sets out the minimum standard required for a home to be considered a warm, dry, healthy home. This standard is achieved by complying with all the items on the HomeFit mandatory list and at least 3 items from the HomeFit optional list. For items included in the HHS, these are consistent.

A higher standard, HomeFit PLUS is available for homes that achieve all items in the HomeFit list and achieving higher insulation levels, having fixed, energy-efficient heating and any 6 items from an additional list. This is designed to recognize homes that have had additional features put in to improve health and comfort to occupants beyond the acceptable minimum.

Housing Quality Framework

A new Housing Quality Framework in development by Stats NZ (below) will define housing quality as the degree to which housing provides a healthy, safe, secure, sustainable, and resilient environment for individuals, families, and whānau to live in and to participate within their kāinga, natural environment, and communities.

Contribution to our vision

Between them, the HHS and HomeFit both directly require elements in homes that are shown to contribute to 'warm, dry and safe' homes. The Housing Quality Framework will further assist determining progress towards this. These bring benefits for the all New Zealanders but attaining these standards will in particular reduce the burden of disease for Maori and Pacific peoples, whether from overcrowding and/or substandard housing - our reason for action.

Stats NZ Conceptual Framework for Housing Quality



3. How we will reach our goal

The most powerful instrument RHHRG has as a group is the ability to all communicate these goals and to work together to collectively impact housing in the region. The levers we each hold mean that individually and as the group, and with the wide variety of providers we engage, our actions can bring about the positive change we want.

Our partnership and collaborative model upholds Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles with a view to reducing inequities and improving housing and health outcomes for Māori, upholding the partnership relationship and working in a spirit of collaboration and collective responsibility.

Outcomes

For all housing in the Wellington region to be warm, dry and safe by 2025, the outcomes we will achieve are:

- All rental properties, including social housing, to meet the Healthy Homes Standard by the legislative deadline.
- All owner-occupied housing to meet the HomeFit standard by 2025.
- Zero hospitalisations of children, Maori, Pacific and over-65s for housing-related illnesses.

Areas of influence

In addition we will influence other areas including:

- Quality standards for all types of housing in legislation by 2025 (owner-occupied and rentals).
- Zero homelessness in the Wellington region by 2025.

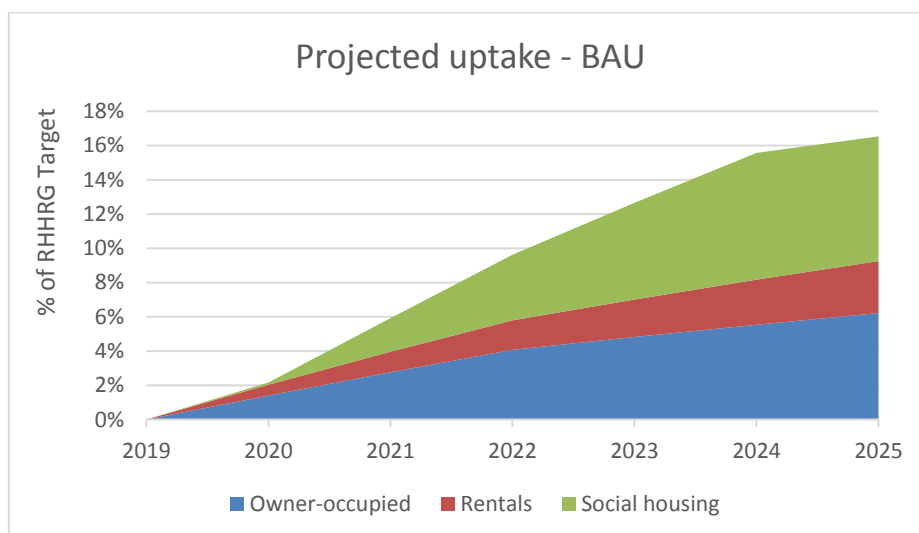
A logic model capturing this from end-to-end is appended.

Level of activity required

There are three scenarios for consideration.

Scenario 1: Business as usual

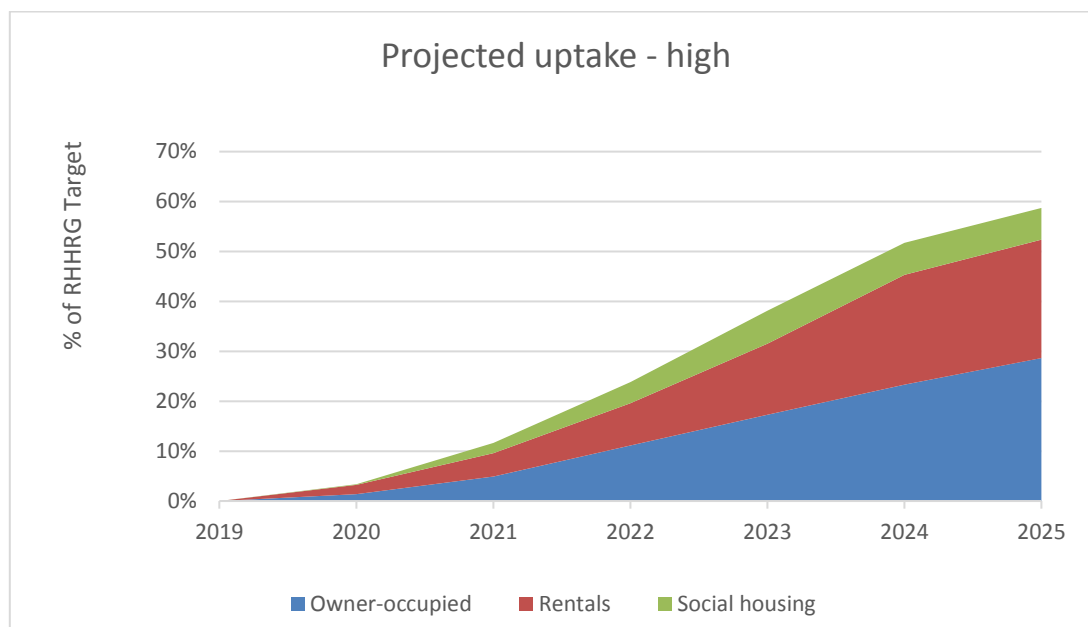
The graph below shows the projected pathway to homes that are “warm, dry and safe” by 2025, using a BAU approach assuming no additional improvements/uptake to existing programmes.



Scenario 2: High uptake

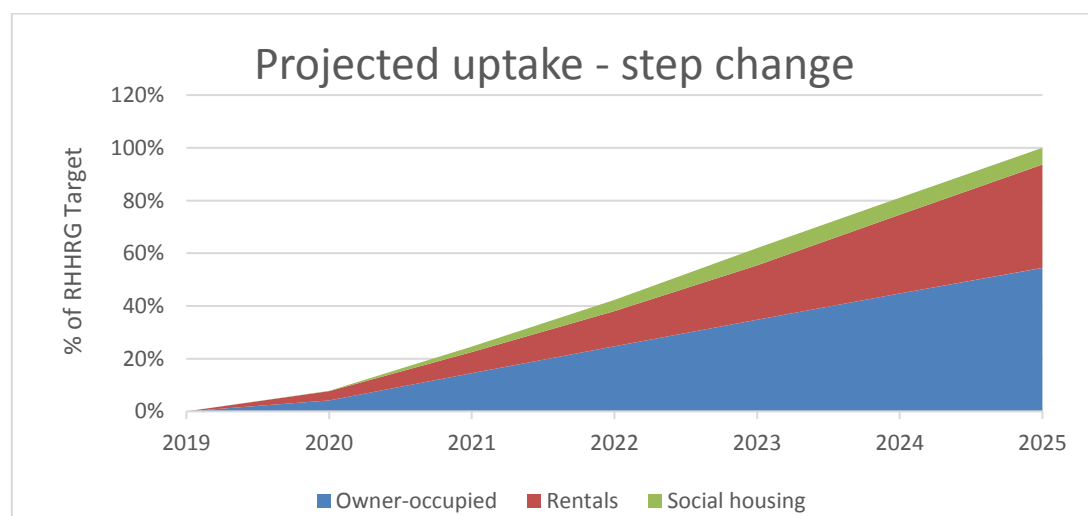
The graph below shows the percentage of total homes that may achieve the HHS and HomeFit or Homestar 6 rating in a high uptake scenario if all current programmes are enhanced, and mandatory certification is introduced for rentals, new builds and at point of sale.

This requires significant commitment from every organisation involved in housing in the Wellington Region both in the work they do and in calling for change.



Scenario 3: Step Change

The graph below shows the percentage of total homes that may achieve the Healthy Homes Standards, HomeFit or Homestar 6 rating in a step change scenario if all current programmes are optimised, and legislation for mandatory certification is introduced a year earlier, and leads to greater improvements to rentals, new builds and for all homes at point of sale. This is a major step change to how we work including large ramping up of all programmes and support.



4. Action Plan

The Action Plan outlines the major projects that the RHHRG plans to undertake over FY2020 (July 2019 – June 2020) to assist in meeting the 2025 vision (Table 1). The project areas have been determined through consultation within the Steering Group and are a mix of enabling and implementation projects. A listing of existing activities in the Wellington region is provided in Table 2. The Group activities have been ordered under the following headings:

- Administration: Appointment of an administrative lead and activities that enable the RHHRG to coordinate and deliver the work programme
- Advocacy: Influencing local and central government policy
- Education: Identifying knowledge gaps in the region that, if filled, would result in greater improvement of housing standards
- Projects: Practical delivery projects implementing housing upgrades or direct support to individuals
- Collaboration: Information sharing and networking among stakeholders to enhance joined up action
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Measurement of baselines and tracking progress towards the 2025 vision.

Table 1: Action Plan Project Areas for FY2020

Project Area	Priority	Actions	Est. Resources/Costs	Start Date	Accountability
Administration					
Administrative and project lead	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate funding to support Exec Officer (EO) and operations – est. 0.6FTE • Recruit and appoint lead agency or FTE 	\$60K/annum	1 Sept	Working Group (WG)
Guidelines and agreements for working group and projects	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Terms of Reference or contractual guidelines for WG/EO/SG relationships 	In-kind	1 Sept	WG
Sourcing of funding	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop funding bids to support administration and project delivery • Develop a central fund for regional projects 	0.1FTE EO >\$1M/annum	1 Oct	EO/WG
Strategic and Action Planning	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Strategic and Action Plans on an annual basis 		1 April 2020	EO/WG

Project Area	Priority	Actions	Est. Resources/Costs	Start Date	Accountability
Advocacy					
Expand GWRC targeted rate to heating and HHS/HomeFit measures	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop rationale with GW to include a higher cap and expansion to HHS/HomeFit measures 	0.1 FTE EO	1 Sept	EO/GWRC
Ban unflued gas heaters	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with MBIE/MoH/suppliers Develop policy/advocacy messages to Ministers 		TBC	EO/WG
Influence central and local government policies	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates rebates for HomeFit assessments Development incentives for Homestar subdivisions Low carbon actions by Councils focusing on building related emissions Mandatory “warm dry safe” disclosure for all homes at point of sale Engagement with outcomes from Elec Price Review 		1 Nov	EO/WG/SG
Support members to advocate on local issues	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alert members to opportunities for collective/individual advocacy Provide key messages for relevant consultations and policy 		Ongoing	EO/WG/SG
Education					
Develop and disseminate educational materials	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify knowledge gaps in region (who, where, what) that if filled will increase uptake of healthy homes measures (e.g. low compliance with HHS) Plan and deliver educational campaigns Support individual members with their own educational campaigns 	0.1 FTE EO	1 Jan	EO/SG

Project Area	Priority	Actions	Est. Resources/Costs	Start Date	Accountability
Projects					
Otaki Housing Upgrade Project	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult and form project steering group (iwi, community groups, Councils etc)) Design project Fundraise Deliver Report 	0.2FTE \$420K for measures	1 Sept	EO/WG/Partners
Lower Hutt Housing Upgrade Project	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above 	\$420K for measures	1 Sept	EO/WG/Partners
Fuel poverty reduction initiatives	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBC – Elec Price Review outcomes due in Sept/Oct 	TBC	1 Oct	EO/WG/Partners
Collaboration					
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain regular working group meetings 		Ongoing	EO/WG
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide seminar/conferences/educational visits for collective learning and sharing 		Ongoing	EO/WG
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide seminar/conferences/educational visits for collective learning and sharing 		Ongoing	EO/WG
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with research organisations to answer research questions on regional healthy housing issues 		Ongoing	EO/SG
Monitoring & Evaluation					
Establish HH data sets available on housing quality in Wellington	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain oversight of existing research contract 	\$30K	1 Nov	EO/WG/ Contractor
Stocktake and reporting on existing and planned programmes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data gathering and presentation of current regional programmes (web page etc) to highlight extent (and gaps) of healthy home activity. 	0.05 EO FTE	1 Nov	EO

Project Area	Priority	Actions	Est. Resources/Costs	Start Date	Accountability
Baseline housing quality assessment	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use available data sets to establish baseline quality of region's housing stock against HHS and HomeFit and other outcome criteria 	\$30K	1 Nov	EO/WG/ Contractor
Measuring and reporting on progress against Vision	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish methodology for measuring and reporting on impacts of existing and planned regional programmes in terms of quality improvement in housing stock against HHS and HomeFit 	\$50K	1 Nov	EO/WG/ Contractor

Table 2: Existing programmes run by members of Steering Group

Programme	Targets	Implementations	Target	Timeframe
Warm Wellington – GWRC targeted rate	Owner and landlords	Insulation and heating	1300 insulated 700 heated	Rising over 5 years
Eco Design Advisor	Owners, landlords and tenants	Advice	200-1000	Rising over 5 years
Well Homes	Low-income tenants and owners	Advice, social/health referrals, lower-cost measures	200-1000	Rising over 5 years
Warm Fuzzies	Low-income tenants and owners	Advice, social/health referrals, lower-cost measures	200-500	Rising over 5 years
Tumai Hauora	Low-income tenants and owners	Advice, social/health referrals, heating/insulation/ventilation, and other measures	40	Annually
Warmer Kiwi Homes	Low income owners and owners in high deprivation areas	Insulation and heating	1000 insulation 1000 heating	2019-2022
Home Energy Saver	Owners and landlords	Advice	500-1000	Rising over 5 years
Housing NZ (Hutt Project as pilot)	Social housing	Insulation and heating	60-2000	Annually
Council and community housing	Social housing	Insulation and heating	200-500	Annually
Targeted Housing Upgrade Projects (Otaki/LHutt/others)	Owners and landlords	Insulation, heating, ventilation	200-500	Annually
Unflued gas heaters project	Owners and tenants	Heating	250-0	Annually, reducing
EnergyMate pilot	Owners and tenants	Advice	150	Annually
Others ?				

5. Monitoring and evaluation

The Action Plan will be reported against every 6 months to the Steering Group. Agencies will report against the projects they are responsible for. The results will be compiled by a member of the working group and circulated to the Steering Group.

By 2025 the outcomes above will be achieved. Annual progress reports will be compiled using the reports from the 6 monthly reporting and assist shaping of the next year's actions. This will determine whether a continuation of the existing action plan is required or amendment.

We will use Statistics NZ's framework to support the Group's vision, and the Healthy Homes Standards and HomeFit as the tools to monitor whether we have achieved the "warm dry and safe" status for all housing in our region.

Health and environmental indicators will also help to track progress. These will include housing-sensitive health reporting and air quality indicators for affected air sheds. To gauge the success of our communications plan, progress on housing policy, increase in uptake of existing and new programmes and coverage of relevant stories originating from the group's own media engagement and individual organisations will be compiled.

6. Communications Plan

[TBC based on elements in Action Plan being approved]

APPENDIX 1: Logic Map

Regional Healthy Housing Response Group

VISION: Everyone in the Wellington region lives in warm, dry and safe housing by 2025

