

**ALL NEW
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Covid-19 Community Housing Sector Update 26 March 2020](#)

['Letter of proof' for your organisation as an essential service](#)

[Issues requiring clarification](#)

[Government protections for tenants](#)

[Information about financial services continuing to operate](#)

[Covid-19: Information for community housing providers](#)

[News](#)

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Covid-19 Community Housing Sector Update 26 March 2020

Welcome to a special newsletter from Community Housing Aotearoa *Nga Wharerau o Aotearoa*.

As your sector organisation, we will regularly update you on information and guidance relevant to your work as it comes to hand. We are working closely with government agencies to ensure they are aware of the issues you are addressing and any assistance you need.

Please contact either CHA Senior Programme Manager [David Zussman](#) or Deputy Chief Executive [Chris Glaudel](#) if you need additional support as a member. CHA staff are working remotely and keeping normal hours so don't hesitate to contact us. We appreciate this is a difficult situation with a lot of unknowns to navigate and we are here to help.

As always, thank you for the work you are doing. It's essential and it doesn't stop, even in a pandemic. Stay safe.

'Letter of proof' for your organisation as an essential service

MSD and HUD are under high demand and they are asking our sector to find our own solutions and implement those with best efforts wherever we can. When we need something specific, please let us know, and we'll go to them for that. CHA has been asked to collate your queries, respond where we can signpost you to published information, and only take forward the unanswered queries. In some cases, we may need to triage issues for handling in a few days after more urgent ones.

As a sector, it's our opportunity to share practices and knowledge, and we are here to help you do that. We are looking into a technology solution to assist with real-time sharing.

As providers across the sector, you are empowered to act with best efforts as affirmed through the 'Letter of Proof – Essential Services' which you should have received today from HUD and/or MSD. If you have not received this, please follow up with your contract manager and also let CHA know so that we can also follow up.

HUD has created new pages on their website to keep you up to date. Information and operational guidance for housing and housing support service providers operating at COVID-19 Alert Level 4 is now available on the HUD [website](#).

COVID-19 Provider Guidance, Frequently asked Questions and an updated Letter of Proof – Essential social services housing is now available.

CHA asks you to keep track of your increased costs that result from Government announcements and be ready to share them with us, and present them to HUD/MSD. With your help we can track the evidence that providers have acted in good faith, with best efforts to support whānau. Your information will support a sector wide case for how things should be reconciled going forward. We continue to provide your input and views to HUD and MSD daily, but not all of that is being reflected in decisions made at this time.

Scott Figenshow
CHA Chief Executive

Issues requiring clarification

Members have raised a number of issues with CHA requiring clarification from government agencies. We will follow up and come back to you, either through this newsletter and/or through online meetings of member networks.

Issues raised so far include:

- Move-ins during Level 4, procedural issues and safety protocols
- Rent arrears resulting from no evictions approach and issues of cash flow support for providers
- Communal/shared facilities and ability to follow self-isolation protocols
- Contractors for essential services and resource-sharing across providers and Kāinga Ora
- Availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and appropriate use of information.

This is an indicative rather than exhaustive list of issues raised. CHA will be looking to host further Zoom meetings with members in the coming week to discuss these further.

Government protections for tenants

The Government has announced more details of the rent freeze and protections for tenants during the lock-down period. These are [available on the HUD website](#).

As HUD says, it is more important than ever to ensure tenancies are sustained and tenants do not have to face the prospect of homelessness during a global pandemic.

It's also critical from a public health perspective that people self-isolate in their own homes by ensuring that they can remain in their rental properties for the duration of this crisis.

The main points:

- There is now a freeze on rent increases.
- A rent-increase notice from a landlord will not have the effect of increasing a tenant's rent, unless the rent increase has already taken effect.
- Tenancies will not be terminated during the lock-down period, unless the parties agree, or in limited circumstances, regardless of when notice was provided.
- Tenants will still be able to terminate their tenancy as normal, if they wish
- Tenants will have the ability to revoke termination notices that they have already given, in case they need to stay in the tenancy during the lock-down period.

The measures take effect by Thursday, 26 March. The rent freeze applies for an initial period of six months. The protections against terminations will apply for an initial period of three months.

At the end of both initial periods, the Government will evaluate whether they need to be extended.

A [Q&A document about the measures](#) is also available on the Beehive website.

Information about financial services continuing to operate

The Reserve Bank has provided information about which financial services are continuing and how they are operating. As well as being useful for your organisation, this information might also be helpful if you have queries from tenants.

The Government has determined that financial services are essential services. These include banking, insurance and other financial institutions.

Please see the [Reserve Bank website for full details](#).

Covid-19: Information for community housing providers

Always check the Government's dedicated [Covid-19 website](#) and the [Ministry of Health website](#) for the latest information and advice.

CHA is also including best practice information for community housing providers on our website, [under the 'Best Practice' tab in the 'Members' section](#).

And a reminder to contact us if you need additional support from CHA - either CHA Senior Programme Manager [David Zussman](#) or Deputy Chief Executive [Chris Glaudel](#).

News

- [Essential workers don't need a letter of authority but some have one](#)
- [Self-isolating impossible for many NZers unless we help them fast](#)
- [NZ must ensure coronavirus crisis doesn't become an inequality crisis](#)
- [Food banks facing high demand and low supplies](#)
- [What Auckland City Mission is doing for homelessness during the lock-down](#)