



*Lakes District Health Board is committed to improving and protecting the health of the communities in the Lakes district.*

## **Position Statement – Housing and Health**

The quality, affordability, safety, and suitability of housing are all important determinants of health and wellbeing.

Lakes District Health Board supports and advocates for healthy homes for all people.

The concept of a healthy home brings together three key aspects: the physical conditions of the house, the suitability of the house for its occupants, and the affordability of the house.

Housing is a significant determinant of health. Good quality and appropriate housing is essential for physical and mental health.

Unhealthy homes can impact on health in many ways. Houses in poor repair increase the risk of injury. Cold, damp, and mouldy homes are associated with illnesses such as asthma and respiratory infections. Cold indoor temperatures also increase the risk of acute cardiovascular events. When hazardous substances are present in a home the health of its inhabitants can be affected in both the short and long term. Household crowding increases the risk of infectious disease transmission.

Crowded, cold, damp, and unaffordable housing can affect mental health. Conversely, having secure housing tenure and housing that enables connection with local community promotes and supports mental wellbeing.

Important characteristics of healthy homes are outlined below.

### **Physical Conditions**

- Houses need to be warm and dry. All houses should be insulated to the extent that is necessary and reasonably practical. All steps should be taken to prevent moisture build up in the home. This includes ventilating bathrooms, laundry areas, and kitchens, installing vapour barriers in crawl spaces, having adequate guttering, and ensuring there are no water leaks.
- Houses need adequate heating to provide a comfortable living temperature (at least 18°C) and to help prevent the build-up of moisture. Adequate heating and the prevention of moisture build-up help prevent damp and mould.
- A house must have adequate sanitary facilities including plumbing and suitable personal hygiene facilities. Personal hygiene facilities include showers, baths, basins and toilets. Plumbing includes the provision of drinking water and disposal of waste water.



A home should not pose undue risk of physical harm to its occupants. For instance electrical wiring and fittings should meet the current standards.

- Houses should provide physical security for their occupants. Security features need to be in good order and only operable by the current occupant or property owner.
- There should not be health risks from the presence of hazardous and toxic substances. These include, for example, asbestos, mould, lead and residues from the production or use of drugs.
- Houses should be free of indoor air pollution including smoke from tobacco or any other smoked substances.

### **Suitability**

- The house must be of sufficient size for its occupants so that crowding does not occur. In addition, the house should be efficiently and affordably heated and maintained so that all rooms may be used for the intended purpose.
- A house should provide all occupants with an appropriate level of personal privacy.
- Occupants need to have sufficient security of tenure. This may vary with circumstances and stage of life. Families and older people typically require a high level of security of tenure.
- Housing needs to be in a location that facilitates household connectedness and enables the occupants to build strong connections in the community.

### **Affordability**

- A house needs to be affordable for its occupants including any of the associated costs of heating, insurance, rates, and general maintenance.
- The affordability of transport to and from workplaces and community facilities needs to be part of the determination of whether a house is considered affordable for its occupants. High transport costs may be unsustainable in the long term and may cause stress to the occupants.

### **Lakes District Health Board advocates and supports the following:**

- Explicit recognition by local and central government of the importance of housing to health and wellbeing.
- Measures which support warm, dry, suitable, and affordable housing.
- Increased affordability of housing.
- The best practicable [sanitary services](#) to protect the health of the household and public.
- Safe heating systems, insulation, and ventilation of homes to provide indoor temperatures of at least 18°C.
- Initiatives such as a warrant of fitness system to ensure ongoing compliance with the Building Act and Health Act.
- Local initiatives in the industrial, commercial, and private sectors which improve housing conditions.
- District councils taking proactive approaches to identify earthquake-prone, dangerous, and insanitary housing and to assist people with rectifying these issues.
- Planning for housing in locations that allow residents to walk, cycle, or travel by public transport to work, services, and amenities.
- The provision of social housing for vulnerable populations such as the homeless, elderly, low income families, and people with disabilities.
- Education for home owners about maintaining a healthy home.



## References and Further Information

- Baker, M., McDonald, A., Zhang, J., Howden-Chapman, P. *Infectious Diseases Attributable to Household Crowding in New Zealand: A Systematic Review and Burden of Disease Estimate*. He Kainga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago, 2013
- Bay of Plenty Regional Council (2006), *Onsite Effluent Disposal in the Bay of Plenty*.
- Child Poverty Action Group (2003) *Room for Improvement: Current New Zealand housing policies and their implications for our children*.
- Howden-Chapman, P., Bennett, J., Siebers, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Do damp and mould matter? Health impacts of leaky homes* (1st ed., p. 172). Wellington: Steele Roberts.
- Injury Prevention Research Unit, (2007). *Child Home Injury Research Project* retrieved from [www.otago.ac.nz/ipru?Research/Child.html](http://www.otago.ac.nz/ipru?Research/Child.html),
- Issacs N, Camillere M, French L, Pollard A, Saville-Smith K, Fraser R, Rossous P, Jowett J. 2006. BRANZ Study Report No. SR 155 Energy Use in New Zealand Households. Report on the Year 10 Analysis for the Household Energy End-se project (HEEP).
- Keall, M. D., N. Piersie, P. Howden-Chapman, C. Cunningham, M. Cunningham, J. Guria and M. G. Baker (2015). Home modifications to reduce injuries from falls in the Home Injury Prevention Intervention (HIPI) study: a cluster-randomised controlled trial. *The Lancet*, 385: 231–238
- Mason, K. E., Baker, E., Blakely, T., & Bentley, R. J. (2013). Housing affordability and mental health: Does the relationship differ for renters and home purchasers?. *Social Science & Medicine*, 94, 91-97.
- Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. (2015). Exploring security of tenure through co-design. Retrieved from <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/publications-research/research/housing-and-property/Rental%20Tenure%20-%20Talkbook.pdf/view>
- Ministry for the Environment (2005). *Warm Homes Technical Report: Social Drivers, Phase 1: Interim Progress Report*. [www.mfe.govt.nz](http://www.mfe.govt.nz)
- New Zealand Building Act 2004
- New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine Policy Statement. Retrieved from: [http://www.nzcphm.org.nz/media/64535/2013\\_08\\_02\\_housing\\_policy\\_statement.pdf](http://www.nzcphm.org.nz/media/64535/2013_08_02_housing_policy_statement.pdf)
- New Zealand Health Act 1956
- New Zealand Housing Improvement Regulations 1947
- Phipps R .2007. *Indoor Environment Quality*. Report TE220 for Beacon Pathway Limited. [http://www.nowhome.co.nz/images/uploads/Public\\_report\\_TE220\\_IEQ.pdf](http://www.nowhome.co.nz/images/uploads/Public_report_TE220_IEQ.pdf)
- Public Health Advisory Committee (2002). *The Health of People and Communities*, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Statistics New Zealand 1986–2006 *Ethnicity and crowding: A detailed examination of crowding among ethnic groups in New Zealand*
- Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service (2008). *Housing and Health Report*, retrieved from <http://www.toiteorapublichealth.govt.nz/vdb/document/65>
- WHO. 2011. Environmental burden of disease associated with inadequate housing – summary report. [Retrieved from WHO website](#)
- WHO. Guidelines for indoor air quality. [Retrieved from WHO website](#)

**Adopted** by Lakes District Health Board at its meeting on

**Review Date:** This position statement will be reviewed in three years, or as necessary.

