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| Factsheet - Tenancy review exemptions |

September 2018

The Government is making more public housing tenants exempt from tenancy reviews. The change is designed to better protect and recognise public housing tenants who most need the security and support of long-term public housing.

### What is a public housing tenancy review?

Tenancy reviews help make sure people living in public housing still need it, and the type of property they are living in still meets their needs. Public housing tenants may be contacted by the Ministry of Social Development for a tenancy review no more than once every three years.

### Which groups will now be exempt from periodic tenancy reviews?

Public housing tenants who do not need to undergo a tenancy review will now include:

* households where the signatory tenant or their partner has dependent children 18 years old and under in their care, including those working with a Children’s Team in Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children
* households where the signatory tenant or their partner is aged 65 years or over
* households where the signatory tenant or their partner receives a Supported Living Payment because they have a permanent, severe disability or health condition or because they are providing full-time care at home for a person other than their spouse or partner, who would otherwise need hospital level or residential care, or equivalent
* people with agreed lifetime tenure with Housing New Zealand.

Exempt tenants will only be reviewed if their circumstances change in a way that would impact their eligibility for public housing, or if they need to move into a different property that better meets their needs.

### Why has the Government widened exemptions?

While public housing is not intended to be a house for life, it is important to recognise that some groups of tenants will continue to need secure public housing and support for a long period of time, and that tenancy reviews can cause unnecessary stress and uncertainty for groups who are highly likely to remain in public housing.

Also, the previous exemptions were not as well targeted as they could have been. For example, the previous disability-related exemption excluded most disabled people, as it applied to properties modified for disability needs rather than to people with a disability or health condition.

### What does this mean for public housing tenants?

Public housing tenants do not need to take any action for the time being.

Tenancy reviews have been on hold since earlier in 2018 and will stay on hold until early 2019.

When reviews re-start in 2019, the Ministry of Social Development will get in touch to explain the next steps.

### Who was exempt in the past?

Until recently, the only groups exempt from tenancy reviews were people 75 and older; people living in a property with accessibility modifications (e.g. for wheelchair access) and those with an agreed lifetime tenure with Housing New Zealand.

There was also a small number of public housing tenancies who were working with an Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children Children’s Team and whose tenancy review could be deferred for up to three years, with a possible further deferral of up to two years.

All these groups will remain exempt from tenancy reviews.

### How many tenancies will now be exempt from tenancy reviews?

As at March 2018, 8,967 tenancies or 14 per cent of all public housing tenancies are exempt from tenancy reviews. Under the new exemptions around 81 per cent, or 52,950 tenancies, will be exempt.

### How will this affect the Housing Register?

Although the increase in exemptions is large, we anticipate that the impact on the Housing Register is likely to be small.

Tenancy reviews are not a main driver of exits from public housing, accounting for only 5.5 per cent of all exits from public housing between January 2015 and March 2018.

By focusing on groups that have previously been more likely to exit public housing following a tenancy review, we could see an increase in positive exits, freeing up more public housing places for people on the Housing Register.

Ministry of Social Development data analysis suggests that exit rates as a result of a tenancy review could rise from 20 per cent of all reviews to around 36 per cent.

We’re also increasing public housing supply by at least 1,600 homes every year which will help more people come off the Housing Register into a stable, secure home.

### Since tenancy reviews started, how many tenants have left public housing as a result of a review?

Since tenancy reviews began, the Ministry of Social Development has completed approximately 7,000 tenancy reviews. These resulted in around 1,400 households (20 per cent) moving from public housing into other housing such as private rental housing or home ownership.

Since reviews began in 2014, the vast majority of exits (around 1,200 of approximately 1,400) as a result of tenancy reviews have come from the tenant population which will remain eligible for review.

Only a small proportion of exits as a result of tenancy reviews have come from the tenant population who will now be exempt from review.

**Public housing tenants with questions can call the Ministry of Social Development on 0800 559 009.**