



Report

Date: 5 May 2022

Security Level: IN CONFIDENCE

To: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and Employment

From: Rachel Skeates-Millar, General Manager, Research and Evaluation, Strategy and Insights

Evaluation report on Homelessness Action Plan initiatives – Intensive Case Managers (ICMs) and Navigators

Purpose of the report

- 1 To advise you on the key evaluation findings for two initiatives from the Aotearoa Homelessness Action Plan – Intensive Case Management (ICM) and Navigation services (the Initiatives).
- 2 The evaluation assessed the design, implementation, and short-term outcomes of the Initiatives for whānau in Emergency Housing in three regions: Rotorua, Hamilton, and Auckland between April and October 2021.

Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **note** that an evaluation of the ICM and Navigator Initiatives was completed in 2021
- 2 **note** that the Initiatives were functioning largely as MSD intended, though there were some recommendations for improvements
- 3 **note** that some whānau had different expectations of the services, and expressed frustration that their primary need for long-term housing was not immediately being met
- 4 **note** that responses to the findings have been developed
- 5 **note** that the findings from the evaluation will be used to inform the next tranche of policy advice on the Emergency Housing system review s9(2)(f)(iv) OIA
- 6 **note** MSD officials will work with your office on the details for the release of the report and the response, including communications and key messages
- 7 **note** that MSD intends to publish the attached report on the MSD website in June 2022

8 **forward** the attached report to the Minister of Housing and the Associate Ministers of Housing (Public Housing, Māori Housing, and Homelessness).

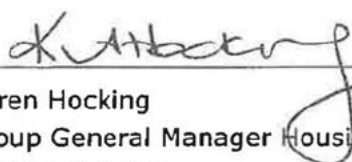
Agree / Disagree



Rachel Skeates-Millar
General Manager
Research & Evaluation

3/5/22

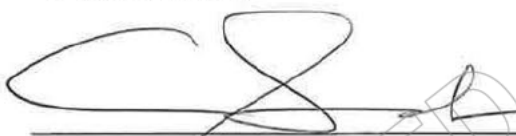
Date



Karen Hocking
Group General Manager Housing
Service Delivery

3/5/22

Date



Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Social Development and
Employment

7/5/22

Date

Background

- 1 In September 2019, MSD developed the Intensive Case Management (ICM) and Navigator Initiatives to better support people receiving Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH-SNG). MSD began implementing the Initiatives in line with the Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan (2020-2023) in May 2020.
- 2 Funding of \$31m was committed from Budget 2019 for the Initiatives. This funding was initially set up to support 1,200 whānau with children in Emergency Housing. There were 3,620 households in Emergency Housing in September 2019 and 4,728 households in Emergency Housing in March 2022. In October 2020, MSD introduced the Emergency Housing Contribution, where whānau living in Emergency Housing for more than seven nights pay 25% of their net weekly income, and received additional funding to expand the ICM initiative when household numbers increased.
- 3 The Homelessness Action Plan (HAP) aims to deliver on the Government's goal that homelessness is prevented where possible or is rare, brief, and non-recurring.
- 4 The Initiatives aim to improve the wellbeing and stability of whānau receiving EH-SNG, enabling them to engage with public and private housing and sustain housing in the long term.
- 5 The Initiatives **are not** specifically designed to rehouse whānau from Emergency Housing, but support whānau through their Emergency Housing journey.
- 6 The Initiatives are based on the theory that having intensive, personalised, single point of contact support will ultimately help whānau stabilise their housing situation.
- 7 Intensive Case Managers (ICMs) operate out of Work and Income offices. They grant entitlements, advocate for whānau, refer to other services, and can access additional funding for whānau. Navigators operate in the community and visit whānau at their Emergency Housing. They provide support to people to navigate the housing system and stay connected with their community, health services, and other necessary agencies. Whānau can receive support from either an ICM or a Navigator, or both. MSD refers whānau for ICM or Navigator support who have spent prolonged periods in Emergency Housing or are recurrent recipients of EH-SNG.

Evaluation

- 8 The aim of the evaluation was to understand the design, implementation, and short-term outcomes of the Initiatives, and how the Initiatives were experienced by clients/whānau, and MSD and non-governmental organisation (NGO) stakeholders.
- 9 The evaluation was completed by Litmus consultancy in October 2021 and investigated the experiences of the ICM and Navigator Initiatives in three regions: Rotorua, Hamilton, and Auckland.
- 10 Qualitative research methods were used, including semi-structured interviews with whānau, MSD staff, and NGO stakeholders, exploring three key evaluation questions:
 - 10.1 How well are the ICM and Navigator Initiatives being implemented against their intended design, recognising the need for regional adaption?
 - 10.2 How well are the Initiatives contributing to achieving short-term outcomes?
 - 10.3 How might the Initiatives be refined to improve outcomes for clients, particularly Māori and Pacific people, and other groups?

Key evaluation findings

Initiatives were largely being implemented as intended

- 11 The evaluation found that the Initiatives successfully contributed to achieving the goals of the HAP by providing holistic support to whānau in Emergency Housing. The Initiatives work to build the capability of whānau in Emergency Housing to search for houses and sustain their tenancies.
- 12 The evaluation however revealed discrepancies between the intent of the programmes (holistic support), and the whānau perception of them (housing placement services), potentially stemming from how the intent of the Initiatives was interpreted.
- 13 The Initiatives were not designed to address the underlying barriers and lack of housing supply that has resulted in whānau being in Emergency Housing. A lack of focus on these underlying issues created disappointment for some whānau, who assumed the Initiatives was a service that could secure them a home.

The referral process for clients into the Initiatives could be strengthened

- 14 Whānau may benefit from earlier engagement with an ICM or Navigator, as most whānau referred had already been in Emergency Housing recurrently or for over 16 weeks.
- 15 Whānau expressed that the referral process into the Initiatives was confusing as it required them to engage with multiple support services and staff while living in Emergency Housing. Whānau were often unaware they have been referred to an ICM or Navigator.
- 16 Navigators used referral information to build constructive relationships with whānau, maintain their safety, and manage risks. However, referral information from MSD to Navigators can lack information on risks, especially around health and mental health needs.

Whānau valued ICMs and Navigators who act in whānau-centred ways

- 17 Whānau strongly valued whānau-centred support provided when ICMs and Navigators understand their priorities and listen to their needs.
- 18 Whānau appreciated when ICMs and Navigators helped remove housing barriers, such as assistance getting on to the Housing Register, accessing the tenancy portal, gathering necessary documents needed to apply for a home, and connecting to Housing Brokers to identify suitable properties.

The workforce is knowledgeable, but further training would help strengthen outcomes

- 19 Most ICMs and Navigators have cross-sector knowledge, and awareness of housing options available to whānau. Many ICMs and Navigators have extensive experience working with whānau experiencing homelessness and are aware of the range of services that support whānau living in Emergency Housing.
- 20 Although most ICMs and Navigators are experienced Case Managers or community workers, investment in further training would help maximise the value added by the roles and build housing sector capability. This could include training on the Housing Register, the range of entitlements available to whānau and eligibility criteria for them, and the pathways and networks across the housing sector.

- 21 A need for increased clarity on the roles and responsibilities of ICMs and Navigators was also identified to ensure they are aware of the differences between their respective roles.

Whānau struggled with the Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant requirements

- 22 The Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant (EH-SNG) is a payment to help individuals and whānau with the cost of staying in short-term emergency accommodation. It can be granted for periods up to 21 nights at a time. ICMs and Navigators provide support to whānau receiving EH-SNGs.
- 23 The evaluation found that whānau did not have certainty that MSD would extend their EH-SNG. MSD requires whānau who receive the EH-SNG to demonstrate they are actively seeking alternative accommodation options. Most whānau believed providing information on their housing activities, including the number of houses they apply for, was a requirement to continue to receive the EH-SNG.
- 24 ICMs and Navigators interpreted and applied MSD's requirements differently across organisations and regions, for example the extent to which whānau were asked to undertake and demonstrate house search activities every week.
- 25 The prescriptive approach to extending the EH-SNG through re-application every 21 days negatively impacted whānau. Whānau felt pressured to apply for properties they could not afford or were unsuitable for their needs. They also felt that searching for, viewing, and applying for properties was time-consuming and added pressure for whānau managing other priorities, such as health.
- 26 These findings echo some of those revealed by the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG). In 2019, the WEAG published *Whakamana Tāngata – Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand*, a report into the welfare system. The report explored the stress involved in navigating MSD processes, and signalled that sanctions and obligations should be balanced to mitigate potential negative impacts on whānau. Whānau consulted for *Whakamana Tāngata* indicated that some aspects of MSD's operation eroded trust; a couple of these operational concerns are also reflected by whānau in this evaluation, including:
- 26.1 the wide array of obligations, and punitive sanctions for those who do not meet them
- 26.2 the complex and bureaucratic system for both staff and recipients of support, which contributes to inconsistent service.

ICMs and Navigators viewed the Initiatives as more beneficial than whānau did

- 27 ICMs and Navigators saw their role as addressing the immediate needs of whānau and building their capability to find and retain a house. They focused on short-term outcomes that contributed to this goal.
- 28 ICMs and Navigators reported that whānau gained confidence in engaging with Work and Income, Navigator providers, landlords, and other agencies due to their support. They also reported helping whānau to increase their knowledge of services and processes, and improving whānau wellbeing, by providing integrated support.
- 29 Whānau saw the purpose of the Initiatives' as helping them access and secure long-term housing. If this end goal was not achieved, whānau saw little value in the short-term housing readiness outcomes. Many whānau did not believe that having an ICM

or Navigator impacted their health and wellbeing, confidence, or ability to find long-term housing.

- 30 Whānau identified some short-term outcomes from ICM or Navigator support, including improved knowledge of their entitlements, increased capability to look for housing, and accessing other services.
- 31 While whānau were less positive than ICMs and Navigators about the difference the Initiatives made, they considered having the support 'better' than coping without any help.

Whānau need support transitioning to housing

- 32 Whānau did not like referrals to other support services without context. Many whānau work with multiple organisations and do not always remember who they are referred to. Whānau can become overwhelmed when another provider unexpectedly contacts them.
- 33 Transitioning from Emergency Housing to private or social housing is difficult for some whānau. Whānau said they valued when ICM and Navigators checked-in at this point and connected them with other support services.
- 34 ICMs and Navigators considered this ongoing support to be helpful for whānau sustaining their tenancies.

Alignment with Te Pae Tata and Pacific Prosperity

- 35 MSD has a commitment to improve outcomes for Māori through Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Pae Tata - Our Future (MSD's Māori Strategy and Action Plan). Te Pae Tata provides a clear direction on the importance of meaningful relationships with Māori to achieve better outcomes for Māori.
- 36 MSD also has a commitment to improve outcomes for Pacific peoples through Pacific Prosperity – Our People, Our Solutions, Our Future (MSD's Pacific Strategy and Action Plan). Pacific Prosperity interweaves the organisational shifts of Te Pae Tawhiti by placing Pacific peoples at the heart of its development, thinking, and decision-making.
- 37 MSD acknowledges that Māori and Pacific whānau and providers had minimal involvement in the initial design of the Initiatives, however the majority of the Navigator service providers identified as being Māori and worked within their relative kaupapa Māori frameworks.
- 38 To realise the commitment to Te Tiriti, Te Pae Tata and Pacific Prosperity obligations, MSD needs flexible and responsive engagement with Māori and Pacific housing and Navigator service providers. Working with Māori and Pacific providers benefits whānau who can culturally relate to their services.
- 39 The evaluation found that the Initiatives, based on their current design, can be strengthened by enhancing cultural safety at organisational and staff levels (leadership, management and frontline staff) so that MSD and Navigator provider organisations orient their service delivery to a tailored and collaborative approach with whānau.

Limitations of the evaluation

- 40 The evaluation findings reflect the experience of those interviewed in three regions and are not necessarily representative of experiences nationally.

- 41 The report provides limited insights into experiences of whānau who have left the Initiatives, as 22 of the 26 whānau interviewed were still in Emergency Housing.
- 42 Not all provider organisations in the three locations were interviewed. Service delivery and whānau experience may vary in other locations. However, feedback on the Initiatives was consistent across the three locations.
- 43 The qualitative process evaluation did not analyse administrative data on outcomes and cannot provide information on the overall effectiveness of the Initiatives.

How MSD is responding to evaluation findings

- 44 The findings in this evaluation provide an opportunity for MSD to strengthen its support to people receiving EH-SNGs. MSD has developed a range of proposed actions in response to the evaluation findings:
- 44.1 refresh and disseminate best practice examples for ICM and Navigators to capture a range of learnings from the evaluation and provide clarity around the role scope of ICMs and Navigators
 - 44.2 address the discrepancy between the intent and perceptions of the programmes through clear communication about what the Initiatives are to avoid disappointing whānau who believe that they are housing placement services
 - 44.3 expand the training programmes for ICM and Navigators to strengthen their knowledge of Housing Support Products and Services, practice examples and whānau-centred approaches
 - 44.4 update MSD's housing service design practices to integrate the learnings and support effective iwi engagement.

Relationship to the Emergency Housing system review

- 45 In March 2022, you received advice on "Progressing the reset and redesign of the Emergency Housing system" [REP/22/1/014 refers]. That advice:
- 45.1 highlighted the complex circumstances of people in urgent housing need as a key challenge with the system, with people not always getting the right support, at the right time. Resource constraints mean that not everyone can be supported, as demand for services currently exceeds supply
 - 45.2 outlined the future state for the Emergency Housing system which included "support that is easily accessible for those who need it, and is culturally responsive and consistent with whānau-centred and strengths-based approaches"
 - 45.3 stated that we want to ensure that people in the Emergency Housing system get the support that they need to improve their overall wellbeing and to develop a pathway into longer-term, sustainable housing.
- 46 MSD and Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development are due to provide you and the Minister of Housing with further advice s9(2)(f)(iv) OIA

47 s9(2)(f)(iv) OIA

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funding for the suite of services is time-limited, due to end in January 2023. The evaluation of ICMs and Navigators (as described in this paper) and the evaluation of Housing Brokers and Ready to Rent ready which will be complete later this year, s9(2)(f) OIA

Next steps

- 48 MSD is seeking to implement the above responses from May 2022.
- 49 MSD intends to publish the attached report on the MSD website in June 2022 and will work with your office on details, including key messages and communications.
- 50 MSD officials expect to carry out additional summative evaluations of the Initiatives in the future.

File ref: REP/22/3/149

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EVALUATION ON HOMELESS ACTION PLAN INITIATIVES

INTENSIVE CASE MANAGERS and NAVIGATORS

Background

In September 2019, MSD developed the **Intensive Case Management (ICM) and Navigator Initiatives** to better support people receiving Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants (EH-SNG). MSD began implementing the Initiatives in line with the **Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan (HAP)** (2020-2023) in May 2020. Funding of \$31m was committed from Budget 2019 for the Initiatives.

Purpose

The Initiatives aim to improve the wellbeing and stability of clients receiving EH-SNG, enabling them to engage with public and private housing and sustain housing in the long term. These initiatives were not designed to rehouse whānau from Emergency Housing and are based on the theory that having intensive, personalised, single point of contact support will ultimately help clients stabilise their housing situation.

The role of ICMs and Navigators

ICMs operate out of Work and Income offices. They grant entitlements, advocate for whānau, refer to other services, and can access additional funding for whānau.

Navigators operate in the community and visit whānau at their Emergency Housing. They provide support to people to navigate the housing system and stay connected with their community, health services, and other necessary agencies.

Under the Initiatives whānau receive support from either an ICM or a Navigator, or both.

Primary applicants of Emergency Housing



Given the rise in Emergency Housing demand, the Initiatives now support more people than initially intended.

The initiatives are funded to support approx.

1,200 people.

However, in the last week of June 2021, ICMs supported approx.

1,750 clients.

Navigators supported around

900 clients.

In total

11,700

unique clients accessed support from either an ICM or Navigator (or both) between **September 2019** and **June 2021**.

Homelessness in Aotearoa

102,000 people were severely housing deprived in 2018*.

Severe housing deprivation amounted to around **two percent** of Aotearoa's population. However, the increasing cost of housing and the impact of COVID-19 have increased housing deprivation across the country.

*2018 Census results



Key Findings

An evaluation of the Initiatives was completed by Litmus consultancy between April and October 2021. Qualitative research methods were used in 56 phone and face-to-face interviews with whānau, and MSD and NGO stakeholders in Rotorua, Hamilton, and Auckland.

The evaluation assessed the Initiatives' design, implementation, and short-term outcomes.

Three key questions that made up the evaluation were:

- 1** How well are the ICM and Navigator Initiatives being implemented against their intended design, recognising the need for regional adaption?
- 2** How well are the Initiatives contributing to achieving their intended short-term outcomes?
- 3** How might the Initiatives be refined to improve outcomes for clients, particularly Māori and Pacific people, and other groups?

The Initiatives are being largely implemented as intended

Through training programmes and personalised support and advocacy, the Initiatives are building the capability of whānau in Emergency Housing to search for houses and sustain their tenancies.

The Initiatives are not designed to address the underlying barriers and lack of housing supply that has resulted in whānau being in Emergency Housing. A lack of focus on these underlying issues creates disappointment for whānau, who often assume the Initiatives will help them get a home.

The workforce is knowledgeable, but more training is needed

Many ICMs and Navigators have great cross-sector knowledge and experience working with whānau experiencing homelessness.

Despite this, more training is needed to build housing sector capability. This should include training on the Housing Register, available entitlements, and pathways and networks across the housing sector.

There is also a need for greater clarity on the responsibilities of ICMs and Navigators, to ensure they are aware of the differences between their roles.

The referral process could be strengthened

Whānau express that they find the referral process into the Initiatives confusing, since it requires them to engage with multiple support services and staff while living in Emergency Housing.

Whānau may benefit from earlier engagement with an ICM or Navigator, as most whānau referred have already been in Emergency Housing recurrently or for over 16 weeks.

Whānau value ICMs and Navigators who act in whānau-centred ways

Whānau appreciate when ICMs and Navigators support their priorities and listen to their needs.

Whānau also value when they remove housing barriers (such as assistance getting onto the Housing Register), and connect them to a Housing Broker to identify suitable properties.



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Key Findings continued

Whānau struggle with the EH-SNG requirements

Whānau do not have certainty that MSD will extend their EH-SNG.

ICMs and Navigators interpret and apply MSD's requirements differently across organisations and regions, for example the extent to which whānau are asked to undertake and demonstrate house search activities every week.

The prescriptive approach to extending the EH-SNG through re-application every 21 days negatively impacts whānau. Whānau feel pressured to apply for properties they cannot afford or are unsuitable for their needs. Searching for, viewing, and applying for properties is time-consuming and adds pressure for whānau managing other priorities, such as health.

Whānau need support transitioning to housing

Many whānau work with multiple organisations and do not always remember who they are referred to. Whānau can become overwhelmed when another provider unexpectedly contacts them.

Transitioning from Emergency Housing into private or social housing can be difficult. Whānau value when ICMs and Navigators continue to check in, and connect them to other support services.

Ongoing support from ICMs and Navigators helps whānau sustain their tenancies.

ICMs and Navigators view the Initiatives as more beneficial than whānau do

Many whānau did not believe that having an ICM or Navigator impacted their health and wellbeing, confidence, or ability to find long-term housing. Client dissatisfaction with the Initiatives could be due to confusion regarding their purpose, as the Initiatives are not designed to address the core need of whānau – a home.

However whānau did identify some short-term outcomes from ICM or Navigator support, including: greater knowledge of their entitlements, capability to look for housing, and ability to access other services.

On the other hand, ICMs and Navigators said that the Initiatives helped whānau gain confidence in engaging with Work and Income, landlords, and other agencies, and improved whānau wellbeing.

While whānau were less positive than ICMs and Navigators about the difference the Initiatives make, they considered having the support better than coping without any help.

Alignment with Te Pae Tata

MSD has a commitment to improve outcomes for Māori through Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Pae Tata - Our Future (MSD's Māori Strategy and Action Plan). Te Pae Tata provides a clear direction on the importance of meaningful relationships with Māori to achieve better outcomes for Māori.

MSD acknowledges Māori and Pacific whānau and providers had minimal involvement in the design. While providers were not part of the initial design, the majority of the Navigator service providers identify as being Māori and work within their relative Kaupapa Māori frameworks.

To realise the commitment to Te Pae Tata and Te Tiriti obligations, MSD needs flexible and responsive services engagement with Māori and Pacific housing and Navigator service providers. Working with Māori and Pacific providers benefits whānau who can relate culturally to their services.

Limitations of the evaluation

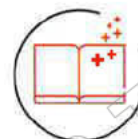
The evaluation findings reflect the experience of those interviewed in three regions and are not necessarily representative of experiences nationally. Not all provider organisations were interviewed in all three regions.

This is a process evaluation and cannot provide information on the overall effectiveness of the Initiatives.

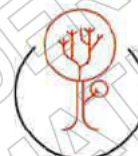
How MSD is responding to evaluation findings

The findings in this evaluation provide an opportunity for MSD to improve its support to people receiving EH-SNGs.

MSD has developed a range of proposed actions in response to the evaluation findings:



We will refresh and disseminate best practice examples for ICMs and Navigators to capture a range of learnings from the evaluation. We will also provide greater clarity around their roles and scope.



We will connect with appropriate iwi representatives and community groups when we are designing housing services to ensure all cultural aspects are considered.



We will address discrepancy between the intent and perceptions of the programmes through clear communication about what the Initiatives are to avoid disappointing whānau who believe that they are housing placement services.



We will further upskill staff to improve their knowledge of Housing Support Products and services, practice guidelines and whānau-centred approaches.



We will use the findings from the evaluation to inform the next tranche of policy advice on the Emergency Housing system review.



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Rautaki me Matawhānui

better
insights > decisions > lives