



FAQs on Lifewise Hub and Housing First

Is the Lifewise Hub closing?

No, it is not closing. The focus of our services is changing.

The Lifewise Hub, above Merge Café at 453 K' Road, has so far been the link that connects people to the agencies and support that helps them turn their lives around. From Monday 13 February, this kind of support and connection will be available through Merge Café. The case management that has been available in the Hub upstairs will no longer be available as we move towards a focus on the Housing First programme.

Housing First is a new programme run by Lifewise and the Auckland City Mission. The focus is to provide housing and wraparound support for people who have been long-term homeless in the city centre. The programme will begin operating in March 2017.

Merge Café is a community space where Lifewise will also provide peer support and community development staff. They along with volunteers will provide community connection, drop in support, advice, information and navigational services. Many of the services that the Hub used to provide are available elsewhere in the city centre, and we will do our best to connect people with those services.

We realise that change can be challenging, however we will be working together with our colleagues at other agencies to look after people in need, and support them to have access to the services that are right for them. People will also still be able to use Merge Café's computers to access www.awhina.net.nz for additional help.

Is Merge Café closing?

No, it is not closing.

Merge Café will continue to provide fresh, nutritious meals at the same affordable prices. From Monday 13 February, the Lifewise support available to people experiencing homelessness will be available through the Merge Café.

Merge Café will also still be a place offering free wifi, free tea and free coffee near the computers, and (on those computers) free access to websites like www.awhina.net.nz in order for people to access additional help as needed.



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If it's not closing what will happen there?

The intensive case management services that have been provided by the Lifewise Hub will cease from 13 February and the services provided will be:

1. **The Housing First Programme**, which will begin operating in March 2017. Initially, referrals to the Programme will be made through Auckland City Mission and Lifewise as we learn and develop with small numbers. After some months, we will begin to take referrals from our partner organisations.
2. **Information, support, connection and navigation service through Merge Café.** Merge is a community space where you can engage with people who need the services that you provide. Lifewise will have peer support and community development staff and volunteers working in the café to provide community connection, drop in support, advice, information and navigational services.
3. **Youth Housing Support.** The Community Team at Merge Café will also take referrals for the Youth Transition to Adulthood Programme based in West Auckland. The Programme provides safe housing and support for youth who don't have a safe or stable place to live. This service is for 17-24-year-olds who either are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless or have a serious housing need. The service encourages self-sufficiency by using a positive youth development approach. Young tenants receive opportunities to exercise leadership, build key skills and get involved in their communities.

We realise that change can be challenging and we will do our best to work together and provide support to our most vulnerable community members.

Who will Lifewise be working with?

Lifewise and Auckland City Mission are working together on the Auckland City Centre Housing First programme. Lifewise and Auckland City Mission (through our joint proposal) were chosen as recommended providers of Housing First in Auckland. Also on the list of recommended providers are VisionWest (West Auckland), the Wise group's LinkPeople (South Auckland), and Affinity (Central Auckland).

Where should people go for the services that were provided by Lifewise's Hub?

There are a number of organisations that provide emergency services for Auckland's homeless population. These include Auckland City Mission, Queen Street Community Link, Healthline, and Affinity Services among others. Peer support workers working from Merge Café can help to direct people towards these other agencies.



Why the changes?

As a not-for-profit organisation, Lifewise have limited resources. We feel that we can optimise the deployment of these resources for the best outcomes by focusing on long-term solutions to end homelessness. Meanwhile, Lifewise will provide navigational support to help connect people with the organisations that provide emergency services. All in all, the overall aim is to support people who are experiencing homelessness and provide solutions to end homelessness.

What is Housing First? Can I become part of it?

Housing First is a different approach towards ending homelessness. Lifewise and Auckland City Mission are working together to provide permanent accommodation plus wrap-around support to people experiencing chronic homelessness.

To know more and to find out if you can be a part of Housing First, please visit lifewise.org.nz and search for “Housing First” or contact Zoë Truell on 021 302 5390.

Why not help those who need Emergency housing?

Lifewise have always sought to help create a solution to end homelessness. While emergency housing does have its place, it is a band-aid solution and only addresses one part of the homelessness problem. Lifewise are choosing to now focus energy and resource on evidence-based, solutions-focused approaches like the Housing First initiative, as we feel it is more of a long-term solution.

Moira Lawler, Chief Executive, Lifewise previously said in May 2016, “In a system geared towards ending homelessness, emergency housing is but one part of a collective effort to house people rapidly and permanently. We must also support people to live sustainably in permanent housing that they can call home.”

When individuals have permanent housing and the wraparound support they need, they are able to become more independent. Housing First is based on a model that has been successful overseas and, given the right backing and support, can also be successful here in New Zealand. Many international studies show it is most effective to support people to move quickly into secure, but also permanent, accommodation.

Who has been involved in making this decision?

Lifewise and Auckland City Mission have been working together on the Housing First initiative in Auckland. This programme also involves people with lived experience of homelessness. This means the voice of the homeless community becomes a part of the decisions that shape the Housing First programme.



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The first part of finding a solution was to include those who have experienced living on the streets and who have struggled to pull themselves out. We asked questions like 'What can we do differently?' and most of them would say that they 'need to find a place to live'. Previously the only way these individuals could access services was to get treatment and then housing as opposed to get housing and then the support services they needed.

We believe in providing housing first, **not housing only** – we understand and recognise that wraparound support is also needed.

Isn't it expensive?

The average cost of someone remaining homeless is approximately \$65,000 taxpayer dollars per person per year. Studies into Housing First have found an average cost saving on emergency services of \$31,545 per person housed in a Housing First programme over the course of two years. Another study showed that a Housing First programme could cost up to \$23,000 less per consumer per year than a shelter program.

Fixing problems such as mental health, addiction and poverty take a long time. However, fixing homelessness can take a lot less time and can provide a stable environment from which people can then address other issues.

In 80-90% of cases, those who are in a Housing First type solution do not end up back on the streets. This allows agencies like Lifewise to focus our attention on other social issues. The data overwhelmingly reveals that Housing First ends homelessness permanently, while treatment first rarely ends homelessness if at all.

How long are the Housing First services provided for?

Because the Housing First model is focused on the individual and their needs, the time period of this phase is not predetermined. The wrap-around support will be available as long as it is needed, which could be a few months for some and much longer for others.

How many people can Housing First support?

We don't have that information yet, but we will start small as we are learning as we go.



Housing First key messages:

- Housing First is an internationally recognised solution for ending homelessness. It has been successfully implemented in the US and Canada, and also in Hamilton by The People's Project.
- Lifewise and City Mission are collaborating to deliver the Housing First solution in Auckland City Central.
- Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that *first* moves people into independent, permanent housing, *then* provides additional support and services to address the issues underpinning their homelessness.
- Housing First is an alternative to a system of emergency shelter and transitional housing progressions. It combines stable housing with treatment services including support for mental and physical health, substance abuse, education, employment and community connections
- Housing First is an effective model to support those who are most at risk - people who are chronically homeless (who have not had a permanent home in over two years).
- Housing First is a viable solution to homelessness in Auckland (and New Zealand), however, in order for it to work, we require increased safe, stable housing stock.
- Housing First is about ending homelessness as opposed to managing homelessness.