

Who is the Lifewise Merge Community Team?

The Merge Community Team is mostly made up of volunteers who have lived experience of homelessness. The team works alongside and supports people who are currently homeless in the Auckland city centre. The team use their experiences of rough sleeping to provide a community-led approach that includes:

- peer to peer drop-in support at Merge Cafe
- development of community-led initiatives
- development of community-led social enterprises



The Team's Strengths

The team:

- bring their own lived experience to problem solve
- have already established relationships with the people that they support
- help to counter an "us and them" culture, where professionals are seen as experts, and the homeless are seen as "clients" that services do things to
- empowers others with lived experience of homelessness to take part in decision-making and influence the systems that affect them
- act as role models demonstrating different ways of being
- share their learnings and skills 'after hours' with their friends, family and the wider community

The Lifewise Merge Community Team A community-led approach to responding to homelessness

Our Vision

Is to provide people with lived experience of homelessness multiple opportunities for building skills, meaningful social connections and building their own abundance



We will:

- Build a confident and capable group of people providing peer to peer support and peer-led initiatives
- Foster and nurture multiple opportunities for community-led social enterprise
- Build and develop the voice of the wider homelessness community to develop their own solutions



What does the Lifewise Merge Community Team do?

Peer to Peer Drop-In Support at Merge Café

The Merge Community Team provide peer to peer drop-in support at Merge Café on K Road weekdays from 10am -2pm. Peer to peer support includes:



Advocacy Support: Supporting people to access information or entitlements from Work and Income and other government agencies.



Information: Providing Information or on the spot advice around how to access housing (including referrals to the city centre Housing First programme) and other essential services.



Social Support: Being a listening ear, having conversations and building meaningful relationships with the community



Navigation: Supporting people to find other places for support or information i.e. mental health or addiction services, budgeting, case management, or community activities.

Community-Led Social Enterprise

The Piki Project

The Piki project is a social enterprise that harnesses the creative skills of the wider homeless community and the technology of the Unitec design school to create piki (one off artisan feather-like adornments). Each piki is then sold by street vendors on the streets in the Auckland city centre.

Urban Hīkoi

Urban Hīkoi is a social enterprise project that provides hīkoi (walks) around the city centre for leadership development and team building. The hīkoi are facilitated by people with lived experience of homelessness who highlight the realities of homelessness, break down misconceptions and build empathy.

Speakers Bureau

The Speakers' Bureau is a social enterprise program that provides a mechanism for people to use their experience of homelessness to present at corporate and other events.

Community-Led Development Initiatives

Te Rōpū Wahine (Women's Group)

This group is led by women with lived experience of homelessness for other women in the wider community. The group provides a safe space for women to come together and participate in discussion and activities.

Co-Designing

The team are exceptional at engaging with hard to reach communities and are honing their co-design skills, particularly around empathy interviewing and implementation of new ideas.

Kai on K Road

Kai on K Road is a community-led cooking programme that encourages people to share their cooking skills. Sometimes local restaurants or community groups are also invited to share their cooking skills with the wider community.