Hidden Homeless

It is noble indeed to help a stricken elephant to its feet, it is called something else to try and stop it falling.

Anon
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Project Background

This project was commissioned by Tauranga City Council (TCC) and the Bay of Plenty District Health Board (BOPDHB) on behalf of the Tauranga Homelessness Steering Group. The research was undertaken by Rachel Hatch, a third year social work student from Waikato University who was working on a student placement between both organisations in the latter half of 2016.

Project Objectives

The objectives of this project were developed during a sector wide workshop:

- The size and extent of the homelessness problem in Tauranga
- Total number and demographics of rough sleepers, hidden homeless and demographics
- Living environments of those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness
- Identify issues impacting on people due to being homeless

Executive Summary

Quantifying the true extent of homelessness in Tauranga is an impossible task. This is largely due to a chronic lack of reliable and consistent local data. As a result the true extent of homelessness remains hidden and hinders progress at structural, institutional and personal levels. The collection of base-line data from those who engage with the widest range of service providers may make it possible to distinguish between those people in a transitional state of homelessness and those with a chronic and episodic problem. Armed with this information and combined with a concerted effort to increase social, community housing stock and affordable housing; the government, the community sector and service providers may be able to truly empower individuals to exit housing instability and homelessness.

Key Findings

1. The risk of becoming homeless in Tauranga has increased
2. There are two distinct groups of homeless people requiring different approaches:
   a. Transitional group – support in housing, outreach services, housing clinics and housing hub, preventative
   b. Chronic or episodic group – supported housing, wrap around support services
3. Staying with family and friends should be viewed as a temporary, short term option. Research indicates that families with children move between family and friends on numerous occasions. This may result in families, particularly children becoming even more transient and unsettled.
4. Women with children are the most invested in hiding their homelessness due to fear of Child Youth and Family involvement
5. Those in part-time or unstable employment are more likely to live in overcrowded conditions
6. The presence of a Men’s Shelter has given single men an element of housing security in the short term
7. There is a lack of emergency accommodation for women and children
8. A lack of affordable and suitable housing is impacting on the delivery of health and social services.
9. A lack of affordable housing throughout Tauranga City is impacting on the ability of individuals and families on a low income to accessing secure housing.

**Purpose of Project**

This report has three main aims:

Firstly, to collate existing secondary data, and qualitative accounts, relating to the issue of homelessness.

Secondly, collect primary data by the use of a survey, a record card and a co-ordinated count of cars with families sleeping in them. To add depth to the data, simple, unobtrusive observation is used.

Thirdly, this report aims to triangulate all sets of data in order to establish the size of the issue of homelessness in particular the numbers of people in the following groups:

- single men
- young women
- young people
- families living in cars
- families in insecure housing situations

Armed with this information, this report aims to determine the pathways and barriers that result in some people becoming and remaining homeless.

From the data collated in this report, recommendations will be made that will support the development of a homelessness strategy and support initiatives to find short and long term solutions.

**Structure of this report**

This report is presented in five main sections:

**Section 1** defines homelessness in a New Zealand context and considers the difficulties of establishing the size of the issue due a lack of shared governance regarding the collection of data. Reference is also made to the history of homelessness and the different perspectives on factors that may influence the scale and nature of homelessness across the life-span.

**Section 2** provides a methodology for measuring homelessness and also highlights the need for a diverse range of methods needed to quantify homelessness.

**Section 3** examines the secondary data available and refers to both quantitative data and qualitative accounts of those working at the coal face of homelessness. This approach gains a ‘feel’ for the issue of homelessness. It also outlines some of the emerging issues around homelessness in New Zealand.

**Section 4** analyses the primary data collected via a car count, survey and record counting card and compares this to the secondary data analysed in Section 3 to provide a comprehensive coverage of the issue of homelessness in Tauranga.

**Section 5** will discuss research, findings and make recommendations. It will also include the limitations to this research.
Section 1: History, Difficulties and the Growing Crisis

This section provides a brief background of homelessness and discusses the increase in the three recognised pathways or triggers into adult homelessness. Reference is also made to Statistics New Zealand (2015) revised definition of homelessness.

History

Homelessness and housing exclusion is not a recent phenomenon in New Zealand. Research indicates that in fact New Zealand has a long-standing history of housing shortages and inadequate housing provision. At the turn of the century it was reported that “the destitute often lived in hovels and shacks in the overcrowded inner-city districts” (Rice, 1996, p. 282). Furthermore, housing surveys conducted in 1936 reported little improvement, with over a third of urban housing deemed unsatisfactory and 15 percent requiring immediate demolition (Simpson, 1999).

The Growing Housing Crisis in Tauranga

The issue of homelessness is an emotive one. Decisions based on balancing the competing needs of property investors who wish to maximise returns on their investments, and tenants whose interests lie in securing safe, sound housing at affordable prices is fraught with tension.

Changes in rates of home ownership have led to an increased demand for rental properties

Historically in New Zealand, investment in rental property has been the major source of financial wealth for many individuals, in particular Pākeha families (Thorns, 1998, cited in Taylor and Giles, 2016). However, rates of home ownership have declined overall in New Zealand from 73.7 percent of the population in 1986, to 61.9 per cent in 2016 (Centre for Housing Research New Zealand, 2008).

Increased economic pressures on New Zealand overall, combined with the marked reduction in public housing investment during the 1990’s has resulted in a heavier reliance on the private housing sector to meet need (Taylor & Giles, 2016).

These changes have had more of an impact on certain sectors of the population. Since 1986, the proportion of Māori living in private rentals increased more than for the total population – up 88.3 per cent and 42 per cent respectively (Centre for Housing Research New Zealand, 2016).

Therefore, research indicates that changes to state housing provision and accommodation supplements will affect Māori families the most, as almost 33 per cent of all tenancies are Māori, and 28 per cent of Māori households are recipients of Accommodation Supplement (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2014).

Overall, housing affordability and availability remains a significant challenge for many New Zealanders, with Māori and Pacific people the worst affected. The proportion of people living in owner-occupied dwellings fell significantly in Tauranga, with the largest falls recorded in the Māori population (down 38.6 per cent) (Centre for Housing Research New Zealand, 2016).

What seems to distinguish homelessness today from that of the past, is that the crisis or transition points that can trigger pathways into chronic and long-term homelessness have increased (Chamberlain and McKenzie, 2003).

Triggers and pathways into housing instability and homelessness

The main triggers across the life span that underpin the slide into homelessness are:
- Poverty – especially accumulated debt
- Family breakdown – particularly family violence
- Transition from youth to adulthood homelessness

Poverty and debt
Three decades of massive economic and structural change have left many people worse off a generation later. Today, there are substantially more New Zealanders living in poverty in 2016, when compared to 1984.

The most recent recorded poverty rates stands at 14%, well above the 9% rate in 1984. This means that there are 622,000 people living in poverty in New Zealand including 230,000 children (NZ Christian Social Services, 2016).

Housing costs now take up a greater proportion of household income especially for lower income households. For all “working age” (under 65) households they are up from 14% in the late 1980s to 20% in 2015. For the bottom quintile, they are up from 29% to 54%. This is illustrated in the following graph from the Ministry of Social Development Household Income Report published in July 2014.

![Figure 1: Average housing costs as proportion of average income for different quintiles](image)

In June 2016 almost all renters receiving the Accommodation Supplement (94%) spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs, three in four spent more than 40% and half spent more than 50%. These figures were all up on what they were in June 2007 (90%, 67%, and 40% respectively) (MSD, 2016).

Research indicates that many New Zealand households across the board are already feeling the pinch and accumulating increasing levels of household debt. Of particular concern is that they are not actually earning any more to service this debt. In the past 12 months household debt has risen by 7.75% while disposable income has increased just 3.75% (Hargreaves, 2016).

For adults, accumulating debt and poverty often underpins the slide into homelessness described as a ‘housing crisis career’ (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2003).

There is no ‘in and out’ stage in this type of crisis - once an adult loses their accommodation due to debt or poverty their problems usually get much worse.
Family Breakdown

Family violence and relationship breakdown is a well-known cause of homelessness. In 2014, police recorded a family violence investigation on average every five and a half minutes (Statistics New Zealand, 2015), but the true figures are likely to be much higher as 76% of family violence incidents go unreported to the police (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

In 2014, a total of 101,981 family violence investigations were recorded by NZ Police in 2014 (New Zealand Crime and Safety survey, 2014), up 7% from 95,101 in 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Women are more likely to be assaulted in their home and are therefore more likely to need to flee their home for personal safety and the safety of their children. ‘Tauranga Women’s Refuge’ report that they have experienced a significant increase over the past year in the numbers of women seeking help and support.

Research supports the fact that family violence and relationship breakdown increases the risk of homelessness and can mark the beginnings of a significant pathway to housing crisis.

Young People transitioning into adult homelessness

Young people are reported to be at risk of chronic homelessness when transitioning to an adult state of homelessness. Beginning in early teens, often as result of family breakdown or physical and sexual abuse, (14% and 29% respectively) young people may temporarily run away and then return home (Mckenzie and Chamberlain, 2006). The young person is likely to leave school at the same time.

According to research gathered for this report, the transition from youth to adult homelessness increases the risk of long-term homelessness. The longer the time period the child is away from school the more likely they are to become chronically homeless (Mckenzie and Chamberlain, 2006).

Definition of homelessness

For the purpose of this report, the Statistics New Zealand definition of homelessness has been used to reflect the different categories:

“Homelessness is defined as a living situation where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing are:

- Without shelter
- In temporary accommodation
- Sharing accommodation with a household
- Living in uninhabitable housing

In Tauranga, homelessness encompasses not only people living on the streets, but also those people who have no security in their housing or who are living in uninhabitable accommodation.

The vast majority of homeless people in Tauranga are hidden - with the visible ‘rough sleepers’ making up a small part of the wider issue.

For those families who have no choice but to live in extreme overcrowding the effects can include mental health problems, stress, respiratory illness, sleep disorders and meningitis (Baker, McNicholas, Garrett, Jones, Stewart, Koberstein & Lennon, 2000; Howden-Chapman & Wilson, 2000). Research indicates that overcrowding is also strongly linked to family breakdown. Due to the negative impact of overcrowding on the emotional, social and physical well-being of people this report will view overcrowding as unfit for living purposes and therefore uninhabitable.

It is interesting to note the addition of an explanatory note to their homeless definition by Statistics New Zealand:
“People who have options to acquire safe and secure private accommodation are not defined as homeless” (Statistics New Zealand, 2015, p.6)

Options imply that there are opportunities, choices and plenty of selection. This report will also critically analyse what options are actually available to the majority of families, to access affordable, inhabitable and secure

Difficulties in establishing the size of homelessness

Homelessness is described as a transient, dynamic and often complex issue and therefore capturing the full extent of the problem is difficult. In a time of unprecedented media scrutiny about the housing crisis in New Zealand, the demand for housing solutions has increased. However, a chronic lack of consistent local data is keeping the real problem of homelessness at arms-length and ultimately stifling the decision making process. This lack of quantifiable data not only minimises the extent of homelessness but negatively impacts on the morale of those delivering social services. Agencies and volunteers, whose ultimate goal is to advocate and empower their clients, are having to resort to re-telling anecdotal stories about the plight of the homeless in and around Tauranga. Without comparable data it is impossible for anyone to develop indicators to monitor trends in the numbers and profiles of homeless people in Tauranga.

The collection of meaningful data that can be used to underpin decision making and social service delivery will be empowering for both service providers and clients alike

Section 2: Methodology

Due to a lack of consistent data on homelessness a multiple methods approach has been adopted. Using as many sources of qualitative data, government statistics and literature as practicably feasible, the aim is to provide dense and comprehensive coverage of the homelessness problem here in Tauranga. Secondary data was sourced from a wide variety of service providers around Tauranga including non-government organisations, schools and community volunteer groups. Where possible the organisation has been identified however some service providers requested anonymity, which was obviously respected.

Primary data

Survey
- A survey of homeless people was designed and administered via a wide variety of service providers.
- The survey was distributed as a hard-copy as it became apparent during the secondary data collection period that many homeless people experience great difficulty accessing the internet.
- The survey was administered over a period of 7 days to minimise the risk of double counting.
- Service providers were asked to enquire whether the person had filled one out before.
- Participants were reassured that the survey is anonymous and that there was no way of identifying who had filled one out before. A sealed box was provided for participants to place their completed surveys in.

Record Counting Card
- All service providers who agreed to facilitate the surveys were also given a record counting card with a definition of homelessness and potential homelessness.
- The counting card is to ensure that in the event of a very low participation rate, some data can be collected.
- The service provider was encouraged to record the number of clients who they know are homeless and who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless – the potential homeless.
It was also requested that the counting card be completed regardless of uptake of the survey. This would enable data/or lack of data collected via the survey, to be correctly referenced to the relevant service provider.

Co-ordinated Car Count

- A car count was arranged for Sunday, 6th September, 2016 between the hours of 8pm and 9pm.
- Sunday is the night that the freedom camping rules are relaxed. Freedom campers are prohibited from camping on weekends and families return to parks on Sunday evening to sleep for the night.
- It was clear the cars with families in because they had sheets and blankets covering the windows and children would peep out as you drove past.
- Any vehicle that was a camper van or bus was discounted from the research.
- The information received during the secondary data collection phase identified four locations that had ablution blocks. These locations were Fergusson Park, the Marina, Blake Park and Memorial Park.
- During the secondary data collection phase it was revealed that many families often prefer areas with security and lighting. This is not just for safety reasons but because their young children get frightened in dark areas and cannot settle.

Direct Observation

Research was undertaken using simple observation and semi-structured interviews with homeless people. By adopting a nonintrusive and passive role at dinner services and by spending the day with a homeless couple, it was possible to gain a valuable insight into the hurdles and barriers faced by homeless people on a daily basis. Just keeping to appointment times and locating the appropriate identification and documentation required to access services, appear to be insurmountable challenges in the life of a homeless person.
Section 3: Review of secondary data available on homelessness

This section provides a statistical background to the issue of homelessness in New Zealand using secondary data. Qualitative accounts from those working at the coal face of homelessness will provide additional context and a framework for the collection of primary data in Section 2.

Increased costs of rental accommodation and tension between landlords and tenants

Between 1 September 2015 and August 31 2016, there were a total of 15, 406 enforcement applications made using Tenancy Tribunal judgments. Almost all of these are for the enforcement of unpaid tenancy debts such as rent or property damage (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Out of these 15,406 enforcements, 1,263 of these enforcements were for evictions, often the result of monetary debts. Currently there are no civil enforcement options specifically around repossession so therefore the number of repossession enforcements remains unknown.

All enforcement activities require an application to be made to the District Court. This comes at a cost to the landlord that is recovered from the tenant but if the tenant is unable to pay, then the debt is added on to what they already owe. The landlord also has the right to withhold any bond.

In Section 1 accumulated debts is described as a significant pathway to homelessness, particularly in adulthood. Poor credit ratings further restrict a person’s ability to secure a rental elsewhere. In addition to the heated housing market and the increased cost of rentals, the risk of becoming homeless increases for those families who do not have the means or options to rent elsewhere.

Transient families living in temporary accommodation

On average, housing is the third most popular enquiry at the Tauranga branch of the Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) with over 1,151 housing enquiries per annum (CAB, 2016). Three of these enquiries a week are for Emergency Housing. However, management report that due to a lack of homelessness monitoring, the number of people reaching crisis point is likely to be much higher (CAB, 2016).

According to management some clients are not clear about why they have been referred to CAB. Some come with high hopes that the CAB is a provider of emergency accommodation but the reality is there is no emergency accommodation left in Tauranga.

In July 2016, the government introduced the Emergency Housing Assistance payment to families in urgent need of accommodation. From July 2016 to August 2016, a total of 21 emergency payments have been made to families in Tauranga (MSD, 2016).

A total of 22 children have required emergency housing along with their parents in temporary motels and hotels, simply due to a lack of options available to stay elsewhere. Out of these 21 families, 14 identified as Māori, 2 as Pākeha, 1 as Pacific and 3 as other ethnicities.

The costs involved in providing short-term emergency accommodation to these families for one month alone equates to $18,115.60 (MSD, 2016). Should this trend continue, the total sum of payments would be $217,387.20 per annum.

This is just in Tauranga alone.

Insecure accommodation

In addition to the financial unsustainability of the current crisis, the emotional and social costs of insecure and temporary housing on these families are also taking their toll. Housing insecurity and homelessness diminishes a child’s sense of safety, stability and well-being.
The following voice is that of Jan Tinetti, Principal of Merivale Primary School who made a submission to the Homelessness Inquiry held in Tauranga:

“On the 25th July we lost 20 children from our school role due to no housing and 8 of these families are now homeless. These families have run out of options. It takes 10 days before you are even registered as homeless. We have a huge increase in the numbers of our children who are suffering from behavioural issues due to stress and instability. These children are ‘dead behind the eyes’ and appear unable to show emotion. We as teachers are accused by the government of deficit thinking and told to find solutions. I am losing valuable teaching staff – one whose rent is $20 more a week than her income. There are no solutions left” (Principal, 2016)

Overcrowding and uninhabitable housing

Due to a lack of affordable housing and options to stay elsewhere families are living in places that lack basic amenities or are severely overcrowded

“We have a family of four who live in a garden shed. We have grandmothers sharing single beds with a couple of children. We have three families with nine children sharing a two bedroomed house just to make ends meet” (Anonymous, 2016)

Institutional factors

Experience of institutional living itself also places people in a vulnerable position on the housing market. Again, there are many complex and interrelated factors involved. For example, a lack of housing holds up discharge procedures for people leaving health care and may result in people being kept in hospital for longer than is actually needed. The loss of a secure tenancy whilst in hospital, inability to work on release, increasing debts and relationship breakdown all contribute to housing exclusion.

The cost of an acute in patient bed for the night is $967.14 (BOPDHB, 2016). Simply due to a lack of accommodation in the community, 17 clients stayed in hospital an extra 7 days on average at a total cost of $157,643.82. There are many other clients that have not been recorded in numerical terms as yet.

This is just one hospital ward in Tauranga hospital.

“Since October 2014 there has been 33 patients ready for discharge but with nowhere to go. These clients end up staying on the hospital ward. We have been collecting data on referral and wait times for the last 17 of these. The average wait time was 9.6 days - a total of 163 days” (Adult Mental Health and Addiction Services, 2016).

Women, children and families

Part of the scope of this project is to also establish the size of groups of homeless single women and families living in cars. Relying on secondary data to achieve this aim has proved impossible. This is mainly due to the fact that women with children are the group who are the most highly invested in hiding their homelessness due to fear of Child Youth and Family and the involvement of other
authorities. This is a complex area of homelessness fraught with issues of trust and stigma. Research included semi-structured interviews with various service providers. Some of these providers will remain anonymous in this report so not to risk jeopardising relationships and issues of confidentiality.

“Housing problems lie at the root of so many other issues that fly below the radar. For example, we may refer a young single mother for a parenting course and that ticks one box. But during the course it becomes apparent that the reason why she is so stressed out, both financially and emotionally, is because she has had her friend and four other children staying at her house due to homelessness. But at the moment we do not record that information, so it remains invisible” (Salvation Army, 2016)

Women and children remain the most hidden or unstably housed of all homeless people. They are also the smallest group of attendees at volunteer dinner services and do not have access to a shelter. Fear of Child Youth and Family involvement, shame and stigma may be a barrier that prevents women from seeking help. For progress to be made in this area women need to feel that they can seek help without the fear of being judged an unfit mother.

However research indicates that women remain hidden due to less immediately obvious reasons such as:

- The use of informal strategies such as friends and family
- Attaching themselves to housed men to avoid the streets or emergency shelters
- Moving out of urban areas to rural fringes. For example, Te Puke Caravan Park.
- Concerns over physical and sexual assault whilst sleeping rough.
- The public have less tolerance over seeing a homeless woman as women are ideologically and materially, associated with the private and the domestic sphere of home (Bondi, 1998).

Homelessness can also be a strategy used by women and young people escaping family violence to avoid unwanted attention

The following voice is that of a concerned father

“My daughter has finally plucked up courage and left her violent partner. She is moving from house to house sleeping on couches and garages to make sure he doesn't find her”

Manager of Tauranga Women’s Refuge can corroborate this type of qualitative information that a lack of accommodation is putting the safety and well-being of women at risk. The refuge reports that in the past year they have had to decline 25 women who did not meet their criteria because they were not escaping family violence. However these women were nevertheless desperate for a place to stay and thought that the refuge could help them.

In addition to concerns for women’s well-being, local police report that living in overcrowded and transient accommodation can be a risk factor for the safety and wellbeing of children within those families.

One can speculate that the informal strategies women traditionally use, such as family and friends when homeless are in themselves diminishing due to increasing rates of poverty and housing instability across the board.

Young People
Young people transitioning into adulthood are also vulnerable to homelessness. Te Manu Toroa Teen parent services are currently advocating for 8 percent of their families who are homeless and destitute. A further 80 percent of their clients are living in garages or sharing extremely overcrowded houses (Te Manu Toroa, 2016).

Table 2 entitled “Statistics by Age Group” reveals that a large proportion of people of “no fixed abode” who made a first appearance in Tauranga District Court in the past 12 months are

- Male
- aged between 17-24 years

There is little secondary data to analyse on the homelessness situation of the younger generation. However, during my research and engaging with homeless people, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of adolescents who are visibly sleeping rough on the streets around Tauranga.

Older people

The Tauranga Community Housing Trust (TCHT) was established in 2004 to provide housing and housing related services for people living with disability.

In 2009, in response to increasing demand, TCHT broadened its criteria. This criterion includes others in the community who cannot access habitable and affordable housing. Priority is given to those on a low income.

The manager of TCHT reports that there has not only been a significant increase in the numbers of the people seeking help, but also a change in demographics.

Overall, there has been a significant increase in the number of people in need of housing, with the most from people who have never needed to engage with service providers before. Poverty, steep rental increases, loss of a long term tenancy and lack of affordable options are reported as underlying factors that have contributed to this change.

TCHT waiting lists for community housing are longer than they have ever been. The most striking change has been a 300% increase of enquiries from older people. Manager of TCHT made the following point:

“When it comes to housing, waiting lists are not a true reflection of the extent of the problem. Often people go on a waiting list at a peak time of need when their situation becomes desperate and they cannot continue to manage alone. We need to start planning and building differently, not providing more of what we have already got” (TCHT, 2016)

Service providers working at the front line of the housing crisis are seeing that people have different needs for housing that the current housing market is failing to meet for a number of reasons. These include:

- Unaffordability of housing to rent or buy
- There is a mismatch between housing requirements and what is available. For example, community social workers report that they are assisting clients living in large state houses but occupying just one room. This is often due to chronic health conditions, in particular obesity related illnesses or older people trying to economise on heating bills. In contrast, there are multiple families living in two bedroom homes.
• A lack of affordable housing available around the CBD and in close proximity to services and employment.

“No fixed abode” and crime

The following tables provide statistics for different demographics for first appearance at Tauranga District Court with an address as “no fixed abode” for the last 12 months, from 1\textsuperscript{st} September, 2015 to 31 August, 2016.

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<th>Table 1: Statistics by gender</th>
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<th>Table 2: Statistics by age group</th>
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<td>Age Group</td>
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<td>Under 17</td>
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<td>17-24 years</td>
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<td>25-29 years</td>
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<td>30-39 years</td>
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<td>40+ years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

When analysing crime statistics relying on “no fixed abode” is inadequate in measuring homelessness. According to probation officers people often use “no fixed abode” as a way of preventing their families from finding out and thus over report homelessness. In contrast, Ministry of Social Development add that many homeless people will use an address that they don’t actually live at and therefore homelessness can go under reported.

“No fixed abode” and hospital admissions

In a hospital context one would anticipate that a person would not need to hide their housing status.

According to data collected by social worker Gary Hinton, from the months July 2016 to September 2016 there were 25 visits to the Emergency Department by 18 different people who described themselves as of “no fixed abode”. Each person visited on average 1-4 times and therefore the total number of visits reached 169.
Out of these 169 visits to the emergency department, a staggering 164 people live with acute mental health or addiction problems. These patients had either presented themselves at accident or emergency, arrived by ambulance or has been referred by mental health and addiction services.

Secondary data from the accident and emergency department at the hospital proves that there are vulnerable and homeless people living with mental health issues and addiction problems in Tauranga.

The effects of a lack of housing on the ability to access and deliver health and social services

Families become trapped in a system; “a costly gyroscope that spins families around, keeping them at the heart of the system, stuck exactly where they are” (Cottram, 2011, p.139).

Te Manu Toroa

Te Manu Toroa; a charitable trust who provides a range of primary health care services for the community, report that barriers to housing are across the board for the people they see.

For example, Tamariki Ora nurses report that out of their 2,000 registered clients, 25 percent fit the definition of homelessness. Midwives are also becoming increasingly concerned with the additional pressure that housing shortages place on parents with young babies.

During the course of these interviews the common assumption that families are not making sufficient plans to prepare and deal with their homelessness does not stand up to scrutiny. Many of these families are described as demoralised and frustrated as they “Finally reach the end of the road. They have tried absolutely everything they can to find a house” (Te Manu Toroa, 2016).

Te Tuinga Whānau

Te Tuinga Whānau offers free social work, advocacy, information and support regardless of ethnicity.

Data provided for analysis by Te Tuinga Whānau highlights how problems with housing are a common reason for engagement. During June 2016, 20 families presented with a wide range of housing needs. The number of people in the families totalled 188 including one unborn child.

The multiple housing problems illustrated in this secondary data are confirmed by the primary data collected for the survey:

- 2 evictions
- 6 tenancies ending
- 2 families unable to access housing or discriminated against for having too many children
- 3 families with children living in vehicles
- 2 staying in temporary accommodation
- 3 families had experienced family breakdown
- 1 family living in overcrowded conditions
- 1 family of 5 had stayed with family and friends but had moved 5 times in the past 4 months
- 1 family of 2 living in a garden shed

From the data provided it was easy to establish that the majority of those seeking help were females with children.
Section 4: Data analysis

Using the above secondary data, a methodology was designed to collect primary data. This involved the use of a survey, record counting card, a co-ordinated car count and case studies. This primary data was then triangulated to establish the profiles and demographics of some of the homeless people in Tauranga.

St Peters

St Peters provides a free lunch for people one day per week. It is difficult to immediately distinguish who could be classified as homeless who attends.

On this occasion 14 men attended and 3 women. This trend is consistent with data collected by social worker Gary Hinton in previous years.

Of those who filled out the survey, 14 described themselves as single and 3 with a partner. None of these reported that they had children.

The facilitator of the survey had taken the decision not to assist people in completing the survey, so not to influence results.

Age: All of those who attended the lunch service can be categorised as adults

![Age Distribution Chart]

- 35-49 years: 9 people
- 20-24 years: 7 people
- 25-34 years: 1 person
- 50-64 years: 2 people
- 65 and over: 0 people

Note: "0-19" not shown as no one in this age group attended.
Employment Status: The majority of those who attended the lunch service have been unemployed for more than 6 months.

In the past year, participants were asked to tick the number of situations that have applied to them in the past year. This information was used to gauge pathways into homelessness. A small number of participants did not complete this part of the survey and others ticked multiple answers indicating that a number of situations had applied to them in the past. All the respondents were in precarious and insecure housing situations over the past year.
The following part of the survey was designed to gain a sense of housing security by asking participants to tick the box where they think they were going to stay that night, and in a week’s time.

Some respondents ticked more than one choice that may reflect their uncertainty about where they intended to live. Others did not fully complete the survey. Perhaps those who attended the lunch service would have benefitted from some assistance with completing the survey.

**Synopsis:** The presence of the Men’s Shelter in town has clearly given men an element of security in the fact they could access temporary shelter. Many of people who attended St Peters on that day had experienced housing instability over the past year in the form of sleeping rough, staying in overcrowded conditions and living in properties with no legal tenancy. Despite the presence of the Men’s Shelter there still remains significant housing insecurity as people do not know where they are sleeping that night or in a week’s time. A cluster felt that they do not have any choice but to sleep rough or live in uninhabitable accommodation.
**Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army is a faith based organisation that offers a wide range of services for people of all ages.

The survey was conducted over a week. The survey was facilitated by staff members who offered assistance to those who needed it.

Over a week 17 people completed the survey. Of these 17 people, 6 were male, 8 female and 3 unknown.

One male and one female reported themselves as single with a child. One other couple reported themselves as having children.

**Age:** All of the 18 respondents were adults. One person did not state their age.

It is not known how many children are affected by homelessness as the survey did not request information on the total numbers of children respondents had.

**Employment status:** Being unemployed for more than 6 months is a predominant theme. Other forms of employment were insecure irregular forms of employment, such as odd jobs for cash.
**Situations in the Past Year:** Participants were asked to tick the number of situations that have applied to them in the past year. This information was used to gauge pathways into homelessness.

The graph indicates that respondents to the survey have all been in multiple insecure housing situations in the past year - against their choice. These arrangements range from absolute homelessness in the form of sleeping rough, to staying in places without a tenancy agreement, living in overcrowded rentals and having to resort to splitting up their families in an attempt to house them.

**Where are you staying tonight and in a week’s time?**

The following part of the survey was designed to gain a sense of housing security by asking participants to tick the box where they think they were going to stay that night, and in a week’s time.
One respondent ticked more than one choice when questioned where they are intending to stay that night and two ticked more than one choice for in a week’s time. This may reflect a degree of uncertainty with regards to where people felt they could stay.

Synopsis: For the people who attended the Salvation Army over the course of a week the majority of them were either sleeping rough or had no idea where they were going to stay that night. This uncertainty had increased in a week’s time. A small proportion of them had family and friends as a temporary option. Overall the respondents were sleeping rough or living in crowded or uninhabitable housing arrangements.
**Te Manu Toroa**

Te Manu Toroa is a Māori healthcare service provider who offers a wide range of health and social services. They are highly mobile, well-resourced and equipped to improve outcomes for their clients.

Te Manu Toroa had the highest number of respondents to the survey. The survey was facilitated by staff who report that the survey was well received by clients.

Over a week 36 people completed the survey. Of these 36 people, 11 were male, 20 female and 5 unknown. 14 respondents described themselves as single with children, and 20 reported themselves as in a relationship with children.

**Ages:** The ages of the 36 respondents covered a broad range from adolescence to over the age of 65 years. It is not known how many children are affected by homelessness as the survey did not request information on the total numbers of children respondents had.
Employment status: The respondents to the survey were in a wide variety of employment situations. The largest groups comprised of regular full time employment and odd-jobs for cash. A small proportion reported being unemployed or undertaking full or part time study.

In the Past Year: Participants were asked to tick the number of situations that have applied to them in the past year. This information was used to gauge pathways into homelessness.

Again the graph indicates that respondents to the survey have all been in multiple insecure housing situations in the past year - against their choice. These arrangements range from relying on family and friends to absolute homelessness in the form of sleeping rough, staying in places without a tenancy agreement, living in overcrowded rentals and having to resort to splitting up their families in an attempt to house them.
Where are you staying tonight and in a week’s time?

The following part of the survey was designed to gain a sense of housing security by asking participants to tick the box where they think they were going to stay that night, and in a week’s time.

**Synopsis:** The majority of respondents relied temporarily on family, friends and crowded rentals for shelter. It is important to remember that this was a decision made due to a lack of other options. A cluster of respondents knew where they were staying tonight but not in a weeks’ time.
Family Link provides two services funded by the Bay of Plenty District Health Board. One is to support family and whānau who have a family member who is experiencing mental illness, and the other supporting children, adolescents and youth who have a parent or family and whānau member with mental illness.

Over a period of a week 6 people completed the survey. Of these 6 people, 4 were male and 2 female. One respondent reported they had children but the relationship status of the parent is unknown.

Age: All respondents were adults. It is not known how many children are affected by homelessness as the survey did not request information on the total numbers of children respondents had.

Employment: Again being unemployed for more than 6 months is a reoccurring theme. Respondents also report undertaking regular and part time employment or being unemployed for under 6 months.
**In the Past Year**: Participants were asked to tick the number of situations that have applied to them in the past year. This information was used to gauge pathways into homelessness.

The graph indicates that respondents to the survey have all been in multiple insecure housing situations in the past year - against their choice. These arrangements range from having to rely on family and friends to absolute homelessness in the form of sleeping rough and living in overcrowded rentals.

**Where are you staying tonight and in a week’s time?**

The following part of the survey was designed to gain a sense of housing security by asking participants to tick the box where they think they were going to stay that night, and in a week’s time.
Synopsis: For the clients of Family Link, housing instability and insecurity is clearly reflected in the findings. Half of the respondents had no idea where they were sleeping that night and this uncertainty had increased a week later. Temporarily staying with family was a popular choice for that night, but this option had diminished in a week’s time.
The Men’s Shelter

The Men’s Shelter is a facility that provides shelter, support and advocacy for homeless men.

The survey was facilitated by management over a period of a week and assistance was given to those who needed it.

Over a week 16 men filled out the survey. All reported being single and 3 men reported having children at some stage of their lives.

**Age:** All respondents are adults with the largest proportion aged 50-54

**Employment:** The majority of participants had been unemployed for more than 6 months.

**In the Past Year:** Participants were asked to tick the number of situations that have applied to them in the past year. This information was used to gauge pathways into homelessness.
Retrospectively, many of the men at the night shelter had previously stayed with family and friends because they felt they had no other place to go. The youngest participant had been asked to leave by their parents or caregivers and one other had been asked to leave by his partner whom he regarded as his caregiver. One participant added the note that he had been sleeping underneath a building for a year. Again all respondents had been living in a variety of temporary, unstable and precarious housing situations.

Where are you staying tonight and in a week’s time?

The following part of the survey was designed to gain a sense of housing security by asking participants to tick the box where they think they were going to stay that night, and in a week’s time.

**Synopsis:** The presence of a night shelter for the homeless men in Tauranga has provided not only a degree of housing security, but support and advocacy. Men had gone from a variety of unstable housing circumstances to at least having an element of certainty over where they were staying that night and in a weeks’ time.
**Consolidated Results of all providers**

**Age:** The following graph illustrates that homelessness in Tauranga is affecting people across the lifespan.

![Age of respondents graph]

**Gender:** From the survey data collected over a period of a week, single males are the most likely to be homeless

![Gender graph]
**Employment status:** According to the survey, 42 respondents reported being unemployed for more than 6 months. However, 16 respondents worked full-time, closely followed by odd-jobs for cash and both regular and irregular forms of employment. A small cluster of part-time and full time students reported being affected by homelessness.

![Employment Chart]

The *numbers of* children affected by homelessness are not reflected in any the results. Respondents were only asked if they had children, not how many.

**Housing stability over the past year:** Overall, respondents had lived in a variety of unstable housing environments that reflects the dynamic nature of homelessness. The largest proportion of people relied on family and friends for shelter with a cluster staying in overcrowded rentals. A cluster of respondents had their rental house sold in the past year and a proportion had stayed in a house without a proper tenancy agreement through lack of choice. A cluster had slept rough or arranged for their children to stay elsewhere. Six respondents had been asked to leave home by their caregivers.

![Past Year Chart]
Where are you staying tonight and in a week’s time?

The following part of the survey was designed to gain a sense of housing security by asking participants to tick the box where they think they were going to stay that night, and in a week’s time.

![Diagram: Tonight]

![Diagram: In a week]

**Security:** The number of people who did not know where they were sleeping in a week’s time increased from 10 to 15. The numbers of people who intended to sleep rough that night had reduced a week later and those who intended staying with family remained fairly consistent. For those who stayed with friends, or in a crowded rental that night as a temporary measure, four envisioned they would not be able to stay there a week later. The presence of a Men’s Shelter in Tauranga gave single males an element of security that night and in a week’s time.

The pilot survey conducted over a period of a week provides evidence that homelessness is prevalent in Tauranga and affects people across the lifespan. The use of a retrospective survey confirms that there are many people in a transitional state of homelessness as they move from one form of temporary or unstable accommodation to another. Due to a lack of other options, the Men’s Shelter and shifting between family members and friends provided an element of security in the short term. However, for those individuals and families without support networks, sleeping rough or simply not knowing where you were going to stay were prevalent. The data does not reflect the numbers of children affected.
Section 5: Discussion

What next?

The review of secondary and primary data suggests that in order to minimise the risk of homelessness a systems approach needs to be applied (Edgar, Harrison, Watson & Busch-Geertsema, 2007).

Analysing the research it has been possible to specify inputs, system and output indicators that can be used to:

- predict those at risk of homelessness
- monitor the levels and changes of homeless
- monitor the effectiveness of any initiatives implemented by the Homelessness Steering Group

The Homeless System in Tauranga

![Diagram of the Homeless System in Tauranga]

Figure 2: Source adapted from Edgar et al, (2007)

By applying the secondary and primary data collated for this report to the above approach it is possible to identify inputs, system and output indicators relevant to homelessness here in Tauranga. Armed with this knowledge it is then possible to account for the factors that can lead to homelessness and implement a homelessness prevention plan.

Why are people homeless in Tauranga?

Input indicators:

From the secondary and primary research collated for this report it is possible to identify factors of vulnerability that increase a person’s risk of housing exclusion and housing instability in Tauranga. These factors are a combination of structural, institutional, relationship and personal issues:
### Structural
- Threat of eviction or tenancy ending
- Long term unemployment – over 6 months
- Part-time or unstable employment
- Accumulated debt and poor credit ratings
- Accessibility and affordability of transport
- Chronic lack of social housing

### Institutional
- Leaving institutions after a long period of time
- Young people asked to leave home
- Allocation of housing inappropriate to need
- Lack of co-ordination between mainstream services

### Relationship
- Relationship and family breakdown
- Status – single people more vulnerable
- Relationship situation – abusive partners, young people asked to leave home by caregivers, fleeing gangs

### Personal
- Long term illness requiring hospital admission
- Mental illness and learning disability
- Addiction
- Gender
- Age

### System indicators
- Number of people identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness receiving health, social and community services
- Time spent in the system eg. time spent in emergency accommodation
- Flow of people through the system

### Output Indicators
People re-housed with or without support

*From the data collated for this report it has been established that there are two main types of homeless people. Both groups require a different approach.*
• Chronically or episodically homeless
• Transitional homeless (Busch-Geertsema, Edgar, O'Sullivan & Pleace, 2010).

Recommendations
To combat homelessness in Tauranga requires a multi-agency approach. Tackling the homelessness issue in Tauranga will be undoubtedly challenging and will require an element of trial and error. This may require a less competitive funding environment.

It is recommended that homelessness is tackled at the following levels:

Structural
- Develop a well-defined governance of data. Due to the fact that the survey was well received by both service providers and participants, it is recommended long-term surveys are widely implemented. This will to enable broad trends to be established and to capture the dynamic nature of homelessness.
- In the short term, simple data collected from all service providers regarding housing situation
- Due to lack of transport, accessibility and often chaotic life of homeless people, services need to be mobile and outreach services considered
- Prepare a homelessness monitoring strategy in consultation with stakeholders
- Major stakeholders agree to collect and share information via a service provider database. In other countries this is normally funded by the relevant government ministry.
- The monitoring approach above is combined with staff training to ensure that the data collected is accurate and in accordance with the New Zealand definition of homelessness.
- Homeless women with children and women who face imminent eviction are able to access help without the fear of having their children uplifted by Child Youth and Family
- Lack of documentation when accessing services are a significant barrier for homeless people. The criteria required to access services needs to be low
- It may be cheaper in the long term to offer loans or payments to those facing eviction, with a poor credit rating or tenancy history
- A community led accommodation database that provides details about members of the community who want to offer temporary and emergency shelter to the less complex cases

Institutional
- Emergency accommodation is supplied for all members of the family so that they can be together. Homelessness or imminent homelessness is a very stressful time and couples can give each other support.
- The variety of social housing stock is increased.
- Tauranga is fortunate in that it has a vast network of services. Therefore the human resources are already well established to meet the complex needs of the homeless. However, they are being held back and progress stifled simply by a lack of affordable housing supply. This situation is not only unsustainable financially, but also comes with a cost to society that is yet to be fully understood
- Representatives of health and social service providers agree to meet and information share on a regular basis to identify those at risk of homelessness
Supported accommodation is provided for those in a chronic and long term state of homelessness

**Relationship and Personal**

- Again information sharing between health and social service providers can help identify those who are in an unstable housing environment.
- In order to reach out to homeless people, in particular women and children, young people and older people it is recommended that a mobile “Housing Clinic” service is established. Throughout the course of the research it became evident that those in a transitional state of homelessness do not automatically engage with service providers or claim benefits.
- It is recommended that the housing clinic utilises well established umbrella organisations such as Te Manu Toroa and Te Tuinga Whānau.
- It is recommended that homelessness people are not presented as passive victims, unreliable or deficient, but to give voice to the complex factors that have also caused the housing crisis here in Tauranga.

Transitional groups of homeless people are characterised as requiring different supports to exit homelessness. They are often characterised by having lower rates of service involvement and having access to social supports such as family and friends (Busch-Geertsema et al).

### Implementation of Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>TYPES OF NEED</th>
<th>PERSON/AGENCY RESPONSIBLE</th>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women and children</td>
<td>Emergency Shelter, affordable housing, Homelessness Prevention Grants, school zoning criteria relaxed, subsidised school transport, financial and instrumental support for households who accommodate them, outreach services, mobile food and health services, mobile housing clinic to attend community meals, centres, community-led accommodation database</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education, Women’s Refuge, Homelessness Steering Group, NGO’s, Te Tuinga Whānau, Kai Aroha community meals, Arataki community meals, DHB, HNZ, Social housing providers, Local government, Voluntary organisations</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young People</td>
<td>Supported housing, employment and training opportunities, affordable housing, transport subsides, mobile outreach services, virtual on-line hub</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education, Faith based organisations, Youth focussed community organisations</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>Emergency housing, Homelessness Prevention Grants for those at imminent risk, mediation services to prevent housing exclusion, emergency accommodation, access to affordable housing</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development, HNZ, Local government</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hospital discharge

Affordable housing, supported living next to main services

Ministry of Social Development DHB

High

Chronically/episodic homeless people are characterised as having high support needs centred on severe mental illness, problematic substance abuse or a lifetime of abuse and violence. They are likely to lack social support or be estranged from family and whānau and require a “warts and all” approach (Busch-Geertsema et al).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
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<th>PRIORITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single men</td>
<td>Affordable housing, supported transitional housing from Men’s Shelter, food services, employment and training opportunities,</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development Homelessness Steering Group Men’s Shelter NGO’s</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single women</td>
<td>Supported housing, employment and training opportunities, affordable housing, financial and instrumental support for households who accommodate them</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development Ministry of Education NGO’s Faith based organisations</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term chronic mental health issues and addictions</td>
<td>Supported living, more independent living units close to main health and social service providers</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Development DHB NGO’s</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Proposed solutions for chronically/episodic homeless people**

**Limitations**

- Homelessness by its very nature is transient and dynamic and difficult to capture in statistics.
- Quantitative data in itself can be deceptive and is limited in terms of its accuracy. It may look accurate but is always heavily influenced by the nature of the participant group, how questions are asked, co-operation of survey administrators, how much help is given to fill out the survey, memory and literacy rates to name a few.
- Time. The data needed to be collected and analysed over a 60 day period. More time could possibly increase the validity of results.
- All forms of self-reporting, that is the information given to me by homeless people is influenced by their willingness to confide information to me honestly and accurately.
- The survey did not request information on how many children people had. As a result the numbers of children affected by homelessness remains invisible.
- This report has aimed to measure the stock, flow and the prevalence of homelessness in one survey. This has proved to be an ambitious task severely constrained by the length of the survey period and overall lack of data relevant to homelessness.
- Service providers who are already very busy were selected to facilitate the survey. Some service providers simply didn’t have the time, resources or willing client group to administer a survey to its full potential.
- An on-line survey may have improved the validity of results. However, many homeless or unstably housed people do not have access to the Internet.
- The survey excludes those who do not engage with other service providers.
• The survey was anonymous with no unique identifiers. Service providers reported that this was a strength of the survey as people were more inclined to fill it in. However, the lack of identifiers increases the risk of double counting.

• There is an over-representation of males in the data. This is because the Women’s Refuge was unable to complete surveys due to an unprecedented amount of phone calls over the course of the data collection period.

• Some service providers were unable to facilitate the survey due to sickness
References


