

From July 2014 the Ministry of Social Development implements several new changes that affect our clients.

Tenancy Reviews

As announced earlier this year, from 1 July the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) will start tenancy reviews for people living in Housing New Zealand properties and paying market rent.

The Government wants social housing to be available for people and families most in need. Tenancy reviews are to make sure that people living in social housing still need it, and if they do, that the house continues to meet their needs.

The Ministry has said it will aim to review around 800 tenants in the 12 months from 1 July 2014.

We're taking a gradual approach to the reviews throughout the year, incorporating learnings as we go.

Each review will consider the client's individual needs and circumstances. The tenant will be invited to talk with a specialist case manager housing. This will enable us to gather all the information we need to determine whether they still need social housing or whether, with help, they can transition into housing in the private sector.

[For more information download the tenancy review factsheet.](#)

If you have any questions about tenancy reviews email social_housing@msd.govt.nz.

Housing support products

From 1 July we'll have some new support products specifically designed to provide assistance to people who are able, with some extra help, to find and remain in suitable housing in the private market, including:

- social housing tenants, including those in the process of a tenancy review
- social housing tenants moving to other social housing that better meets their needs
- people on the social housing waitlist, and
- people who've contacted us about a specific housing need.

The products each have different eligibility criteria and include:

- recoverable financial assistance for moving costs and letting fees
- non-recoverable help with bond payments
- a statement of satisfactory tenancy, which is a standard reference social housing tenants can request from their housing provider
- a Tenancy Costs Cover offered to landlords to be paid at the end of the tenancy to cover extra tenancy-related costs that are over and above the bond payment. Recoverable only if payment is required.

- a non-recoverable one-off payment to social housing tenants who voluntarily move into private housing.

Before granting these payments we'll take into account existing available assistance such as advance of benefit, special needs grants, recoverable assistance payments and the accommodation supplement. We'll base our decisions on the client's situation, needs and what will make a positive difference to their household.

[Find out more about these products on the Housing website.](#)

If you have any questions about the housing support products email social_housing@msd.govt.nz.

Relationship debt sharing

Most people getting financial assistance from the Ministry of Social Development do the right thing and tell us about changes that could affect their payments. However, some receiving a benefit, Student Hardship or New Zealand Superannuation are in relationships they haven't told us about.

Until now when an MSD client was found to have dishonestly claimed a single benefit while in a relationship, that client has been solely responsible for paying back the fraud debt.

This is changing.

From 7 July 2014, MSD will be able to hold partners of beneficiaries accountable for welfare fraud so the consequences of welfare fraud are shared by both people in the relationship.

The new law enables MSD to investigate and prosecute beneficiaries and their partners for relationship fraud and also makes the beneficiary and their partner jointly responsible for repaying the debt.

This is known as Relationship Debt Sharing. It applies in all situations where the partner knowingly benefits from money a beneficiary/superannuitant received but wasn't entitled to, and an investigation by MSD has led to the creation of a debt that needs to be paid back. It's a much fairer system that holds both people accountable for acting dishonestly.

For more information go to www.msd.govt.nz/debt-sharing