The Way Forward
Te Ara I Mua:

An overview of current homelessness and social housing workforce development in Aotearoa New Zealand

Sho Isogai, Doctoral Candidate — Doctor of Social Work, Massey University

There is a growing concern at the number of people experiencing homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand (hereafter referred to as Aotearoa). Despite this issue of increasing homelessness in Aotearoa and across the globe, and initiatives in place to address it, there are few workforce planning and development programmes in Aotearoa that address this issue. The cross-party report into ending homelessness[1] and Te Matapihi he tirohanga mō te Iwi Trust[2] indicate the need for more training, capacity and capability building for both practitioners and organisations in the homelessness and housing sector. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the current homelessness and social housing services and their development in the context of changing service delivery approaches and the social environment in Aotearoa.

Overall Prevalence of Homelessness in Aotearoa

Aotearoa is a small Pacific island with an estimated population of 4.8 million people.[3] Although a global framework on homelessness has been developed by the Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH)[4] to measure the number of street-homelessness consistently across the globe,[5] this framework has yet to be implemented in many countries. Nevertheless, recent research shows that Aotearoa was ranked highest among OECD countries in the number of homeless people, followed by the Czech Republic and Australia.[6] In 2013, at least 41,000 were either homeless or at-risk of severe housing deprivation.[7] Approximately 82 to 91 per cent of homeless people were turned away from emergency housing services in 2017.[8] Only 28 per cent of Māori

and 19 per cent of Pasifika people owned their own homes in 2013.[9]

Global and National Strategic Contexts

Internationally, there are several developments to tackle global homelessness. One is the *A Place to Call Home* initiative by the IGH.[10] This is a worldwide, collaborative initiative among international, national and local organisations to support 150 cities around the world to end street homelessness by 2030. This initiative has been launched in several cities in different countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom.[11, 12] The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights[13] recommends that many countries design and implement effective human rights-based housing strategies to meet the obligation of the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The Centre for Homelessness Impact is another initiative, which explores global evidence and gap maps of effective homelessness intervention tools and approaches to end homelessness around the world.[14]

In Aotearoa, several key documents relate to workforce development in the homelessness and housing sector at a national level. These documents are: *Our place: All New Zealanders well-housed*,[15] *Australasian Housing Institute (AHI) strategic plan 2016–2020*,[16] *Briefing to the incoming ministers for housing and urban development and Māori development*,[17] and the *New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness (NZCEH) strategic plan —— 2017–2022*.[18]

Some of these documents support the view that increased training and professional development

opportunities, and the development of a service delivery arm with a multi-disciplinary team, are necessary to strengthen the capacity and capability of the sector in Aotearoa.

Housing industry and homelessness and housing service developments in Aotearoa

In response to the increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness, the New Zealand Government has initiated various housing industry developments. One of these, KiwiBuild, is to build 100,000 affordable and quality houses for New Zealanders within the next decade. Under the KiwiBuild policy, the prefabrication industry has expanded to build more houses in Aotearoa than ever before.[19] Further, the Minister of Housing and Urban Development has announced the Government will establish a housing commission to produce large-scale projects that build whole communities.[20]

Various factors have led to the current focus on homelessness and social housing workforce development in Aotearoa. These factors are the growth of community housing providers and the development of homelessness and housing services, employment and strategies, including a movement towards implementing the Housing First model to house rough sleepers.[21] The Housing First programme has been implemented in Waikato/Hamilton (that is, The People's project) in 2013 and Auckland and is currently being introduced into Christchurch, Tauranga and Wellington. This initiative is driven by the non-profit sector along with government agencies.[22]

Due to the impact of globalisation, several challenges face service providers in the homelessness and social housing sector in Aotearoa, including; global financial crisis and the migrant and refugee resettlement movement around the world. Nevertheless, there has been a significant development in homelessness and housing services to end homelessness in Aotearoa. These services include social housing, transitional/youth housing and emergency housing, treatment first/continuum of care and Te Puea Memorial Marae in Māngere.[23, 24]

Other homeless services and approaches have also been introduced to expand the homelessness workforce in Aotearoa. These models are *peer-support*, *social enterprise*, *common ground*, *assertive outreach* and *system planning*. The peer-support workforce was developed by a few non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and has been incorporated partly into the Housing First programme.[25] The social enterprise approach has also been implemented by some NGOs to tackle financial challenges and provide meaningful connections and integration for rough sleepers and low-income families in society, through the design and creation of creative businesses supported by the Ākina Foundation. This approach is aligned with relationally and context-focused responses,[26] and is used to develop a peer-support workforce in a judgement-free environment. An example of this approach is the Piki project at Merge Café community by the Lifewise Trust (See *https://www.lifewise.org.nz/ piki-project/*). The Impact Initiative, a partnership between the Department of Internal Affairs, on behalf of the New Zealand Government, and the Ākina Foundation, was launched to support such social enterprise initiatives in Aotearoa.[27]

The outreach service has also been developed in a few cities to engage with people experiencing chronic homelessness at their places, to support them to access to services and/or transit into accommodation.[28] Lastly, the system planning approach has been implemented to tackle youth homelessness in the Auckland region. The aim of this approach is to develop a homeless-serving system by a lead organisation in a collective manner, using the available information on housing demands, and to supply homeless service and programme suitability based on the needs, frequency and duration of homeless people.[29]

Further, various local homelessness and housing action plans and initiatives and campaigns, were developed and placed to tackle homelessness at several cities in Aotearoa, for instance, Broad and Pain's *Everybody needs somewhere to put their head at night don't they?* Southland community housing strategy report.[30] Several homelessness steering/cross-sectoral groups were developed by several organisations and/or local governments in various cities in Aotearoa, such as Napier and Invercargill. Further, community and/or emergency housing network groups were developed by service providers in some cities in Aotearoa. These groups play a key role in facilitating discussion and collaboration among service providers and practitioners from various organisations to end homelessness in local communities. Lastly, the Auckland Housing Summit was developed by five key players, which formed a collective that impacted all sectors to ensure that every Aucklander has access to adequate and affordable housing in Auckland.[31]

With increasing homelessness, emerging practices and changes in service delivery, and the social environment in Aotearoa in the midst of globalisation, homelessness and social housing workforce planning and development has become a significant issue in Aotearoa. External and professional training opportunities are now offered by organisations such as AHI and CHA for further engagement, recognition and development in the sector in Aotearoa. Despite these developments and growth of employment in this field [32] there is a lack of a clear vision, targets, and commitment to end homelessness via a co-ordinated approach. Further, there seems to have been no government response to provide funding for the necessary skills and education to ensure skilled workforce in this field. Many organisations are required to use their own resources to provide skill development for practitioners.

Implications and Concluding Comments

Given the rapid development and the complexity of the homelessness and housing sector in Aotearoa and internationally, a figure was produced through the literature review to create a framework for best practice and future workforce planning and development (See Figure 1).

This framework comes under the bi-cultural/treaty framework and aims to explore 'third-space' — a space where local, indigenous and international components are mutually contextualised and integrated in practices and/or service delivery models via partnership and collaboration with local, iwi, national and international organisations in this sector.

Skills development is necessary for staff and practitioners from various professions, including librarians, the police, designers/architects, health professionals and social entrepreneurs to work with diverse and specific people who experience homelessness (that is, Māori/Pasifika, children/youth/older people, victims of family violence, people with disability, mental distress and/or substance misuse and transgender and gender diverse). Skill development for people

Figure 1 — 'Third-Space' framework

International

Third-space

Indigenous

Local

experiencing homelessness in building houses and business skills are also necessary to strengthen the peer-support and social enterprise workforce. Further funding support is necessary for many organisations to ensure they have the skills and collaborative workforce to meet the demands on them as this is lacking in government investment.

It is also essential to develop a collaborative capability among different local, national and international homelessness and housing organisations, based on the housing affordability continuum,[33] and other professionals and relevant services, to establish a single, global-local, collaborative and organic system (34) or Collective Impact (See link — *https://thehomepage.nz/*) to end global homelessness in local communities. The creation of a future road-map with a shared vision and theory of change that aims to describe and/or shape the future direction of the homelessness and social housing sector, especially after ending street-homelessness in Aotearoa, is necessary to reduce anxiety among practitioners about service continuity and employment security. Ultimately, it is necessary to create collaborative, practice-ready workforce planning and development that facilitates a global movement towards ending homelessness in Aotearoa. Homelessness is not acceptable in Aotearoa and that we as a community and country can do better than this.

Endnotes

1. Cross-Party Inquiry 2016, *Ending homelessness in New Zealand: Final report of the cross-party inquiry on homelessness.* Green, Labour and Maori Parties, Wellington. Retrieved from: *http://www.healthyhousing.org.nz/wp-*

2. Te Matapihi is a Māori organisation that operates as an independent voice to advocate better Māori housing outcomes at national/system level. *http://www.tematapihi.org.nz/*

3. Statistics New Zealand 2018, *Population*, Statistics New Zealand Wellington. Retrieved from: *https://www.stats.govt.nz/topics/population*

4. Institute of Global Homelessness 2017, *A place to call home initiative.* Retrieved from: *http://www.ighomelessness.org/a-place-to-call-home-initiative*

5. Busch-Geersema V Culhane D and Fitzpatrick S 2016, Developing a global framework for conceptualising and measuring homelessness, *Habitat International*, vol.55, pp.124–132.

6. Chamie J 2017, *As cities grow worldwide, so do the numbers of homeless.* Yale University, Connecticut, Retrieved from *http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/cities-grow-worldwide-so-do-numbers-homeless*

7. Amore K 2016, *Severe housing deprivation in Aotearoa/New Zealand: 2001–2013*, He Kainga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago, Wellington.

8. Johnson A Howden-Chapman P and Eaqub S 2018, *A Stocktake of New Zealand's Housing*, The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Wellington.

9. Ibid.

10. Institute of Global Homelessness 2017, op cit.

11. See the link for current progress of this initiative: *https://www.depaulnewsline.com/campus-and-community/ending-street-homelessness-around-globe-technical-support-testing-strategies*

12. Institute of Global Homelessness 2017, op cit.

13. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2018, *Report of the special rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva.

14. White H 2018, *Evidence and gap maps on homelessness. A launch pad for strategic evidence production and use: Part 1: Global evidence and gap map of effectiveness studies.* The Centre for Homelessness Impact, UK. See link for more information: *https://www.homelessnessimpact.org/*

15. Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA)2016, *Our place: All New Zealanders well-housed*, CHA, Wellington.

16. Australasian Housing Institute (AHI) 2017, *AHI strategic plan 2016–2020*, AHI, Mawson.

17. Te Matapihi he tirohanga mō te Iwi Trust 2017, *Briefing to the incoming ministers for housing and urban development and Māori development*, Te Matapihi he tirohanga mō te Iwi Trust, Whangarei.

18. New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness (NZCEH) 2018, *NZCEH strategic plan — 2017–2022*, NZCEH, New Zealand.

19. PrefabNZ 2018, *Capacity and capability report 2018*, PrefabNZ, New Zealand.

20. New Zealand Government 2017, *The future of housing in New Zealand.* Retrieved from *https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/future-housing-new-zealand*

21. Ministry of Social Development 2018, *Housing regional fact sheets — 2018.* Retrieved from: *http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/quarterly-factsheets/2018.html*

22. See link for results of People's project: *https://www.thepeoplesproject.org.nz/results*

23. Auckland Council 2017, *Addressing homelessness in Auckland: Identifying Auckland Council's position and role.* Auckland Council, Auckland. Retrieved from *http://infocouncil.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Open/2017/08/ENV_20170808_AGN_6831_AT_files/ENV_20170808_AGN_6831_AT_Attachment_54705_1.PDF*

24. Cross-Party Inquiry 2016 op cit.

25. Lifewise 2016, *The Auckland city centre housing first project*, Lifewise Trust, Auckland. Retrieved from *https://www.lifewise.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/HF-update-06-sent-4-Oct-2016.pdf*

26. Hodgetts D, Stolte O and Groot S 2014, Towards a relationally and action-oriented social psychology of homelessness, *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, vol.8, no.4, pp.156–164. doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12096

27. The Impact Initiative 2018, programme details, New Zealand. Retrieved from: *https://www.theimpactinitiative.org.nz/programme-details#*

28. Field A and Butler R 2017, *Rough sleeping outreach services: Report from Dovetail for Auckland Council*, Dovetail, Auckland.

29. Homeward Trust Edmonton 2017, *A place to call home: Edmonton's updated plan to prevent and end homelessness.* Homeward Trust Edmonton, Edmonton.

30. Broad A and Pain TV 2017, 'Everybody needs somewhere to put their head at night don't they?' *Southland community housing strategy report*, Invercargill City Council, Invercargill. Retrieved from: *https://icc.govt.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Housing-Strategy-2017.pdf*

31. Freeman L, Phipps R, Crosbie A, Gilberd P and Rothschild K 2017, *Connecting minds, collective action: A report on the findings from the Auckland Housing Summit*, Auckland Housing Summit, Auckland.

32. Seek 2017, *Fastest growing jobs on SEEK for 2017.* Retrieved from: *https://www.depaulnewsline.com/campus-and-community/ending-street-homelessness-around-globe-technical-support-testing-strategies*

33. Community Housing Aotearoa 2016 op cit, p. 8–9.

34. Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui 2018, *Collaborative capability in the mental health and addiction sector: A review of the literature*, Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui, Auckland.