



Close to Home

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42,000+ wellbeing calls made to customers during COVID-19 lockdown



This has been a confusing and scary time for people, and our staff around New Zealand have been phoning our customers to see how they're doing.

We've also used these calls to chat, and to connect some customers to extra support services.

If we've not called you and you'd like to talk to us, call us free on 0800 801 601 from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

For Shirley, just hearing a familiar voice during lockdown was enough to help her get through.

"I do spend time alone when I'm home because, sadly, I don't see much of my family," she said.

"Hearing a friendly voice on the phone, simply asking 'How are you?', was lovely."

As well as speaking with more than 42,000 of our customers, more than 3,800 have received direct financial

support and hundreds have been helped with food or medical needs.

But the positive reaction from customers means the way Kāinga Ora works with its customers is going to change, says Shannon, Kāinga Ora National Operations Manager.

"Our people have always looked out for our customers, but kindness, empathy and understanding will become key to the way our customer-facing staff work," Shannon says.

If we can understand why someone is struggling to live well in their home and pay their rent we will be able to help them better.

Kāinga Ora is making changes to the way we serve our customers later this year – all our tenants are individuals and we'd like to be able to tailor solutions for their needs. Another positive change will be tenancy managers visiting at a time that suits you. Our focus will be on you and your household, not just the home.



Important messages within Close to Home have been translated into Māori, Samoan, Tongan and Chinese, and are included in this pack. You can also read full translations of this issue at kaingaora.govt.nz. Please let us know if this was useful by emailing editor@close2home.co.nz



Kāinga Ora customers are a big part of New Zealand's 'team of 5 million' who have been helping the country respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your efforts as we worked to slow the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. The country moved to Alert Level 1 on 8 June but we must all continue to look after ourselves and others.

Simple steps to help stop the spread of COVID-19:

- Follow the Government's instructions and self-isolate if necessary.
- Avoid close contact with people with cold or flu-like illnesses.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing.
- Stay home if you're unwell.
- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap and dry them thoroughly:
 - before eating or handling food
 - after using the toilet
 - after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or wiping children's noses
 - after caring for sick people.

Please remember to be kind, be patient, and look after one another.



More support for budget and financial advice

Budgeting services have received more funding to help Kiwis facing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It's important to get this free advice and support early – to find out more go to govt.nz/browse/family-and-whanau/financial-help-for-your-family/getting-help-budget/

MoneyTalks is a free financial helpline for advice and support from trained financial mentors, and can also connect you with services in your community.

Freephone **0800 345 123** Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm.



Rent increases frozen

There will be no increases in residential rents for six months from 25 March this year.

If you want to discuss this, call us free on **0800 801 601** from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and 24/7 for urgent calls.



Additional support is available

If your financial situation has been affected by COVID-19 and you need help to make ends meet, contact Work and Income on **0800 559 009** to check:

- you're paying the right amount of rent
- if you can get a benefit or other financial help
- about help with an unexpected bill or other urgent need, even if you're working (eg, food, accommodation, power, medical or school costs).

See also the Benefits and payments section on workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/index.html – or use the online tool to find out about assistance, at msd.govt.nz/

If your circumstances have recently changed, let us know on **0800 801 601** from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and 24/7 for urgent calls.

My Kāinga Ora – here to help you



My Kāinga Ora – an easier way to manage your home and tenancy.

My Kāinga Ora is an online service for our customers to check their accounts, rent balances, maintenance requests and so much more – very much like MyMSD and MyIR.

If you have My Kāinga Ora you can access your tenancy information online, any time from the comfort of your home and without having to call us.

Several thousand Kāinga Ora customers are already using My Kāinga Ora and enjoying what it can do.

Anyone wanting to sign up needs to be a current tenant and have an email address registered with us.

It's then really easy – click online at <https://my.kaingaora.govt.nz>

Please have your Customer Reference Number and email address handy.

Rheumatic fever starts with a sore throat and can lead to heart damage

If your child (4-19 years old) has a sore throat and is Māori/Pacific get their sore throat checked straight away, every time.



You can tell us about any dishonesty or fraud concerns in confidence. Call any time on 0800 8355 469.

Lockdown help a great relief for Dunedin tenant



Photo courtesy of The Star, Dunedin

A Dunedin mother with a newborn baby was grateful to Kāinga Ora and our tradies for their quick response to her plumbing emergency during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Just days before the birth of her daughter, Kāinga Ora tenant Geane found sewage had overflowed into her backyard from a blocked pipe.

She was impressed when she called Kāinga Ora for help and a plumber arrived just two hours later to sort the problem.

“Getting help quickly was so helpful. And everyone has treated me with respect and kindness, which has been really nice.”

That’s great feedback. If you need a maintenance job done at your home, call us free on 0800 801 601 from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and 24/7 for urgent calls.

Customers at the centre of our new maintenance contracts

From July you’ll see changes in the way your repairs and maintenance work is carried out in your home, as a result of feedback you gave us.

So what will change?

- We’ll make an appointment to do the repair at a time that’s good for you.
- You’ll get text reminders of appointments, and can reschedule if you need to.
- You’ll receive a reference number for your repair requests so you can track progress via My Kāinga Ora or by contacting our Customer Support Centre.

You can still:

- call us free on 0800 801 601 from 8am to 6pm
- notify us via My Kāinga Ora
- talk to your tenancy manager.



NEED TO TALK?

1737

free call or text
any time

Are you feeling out-of-sorts or depressed? Are you feeling anxious or just need someone to talk to? Or advice on mental health or addictions issues?

Whatever it is, you can call or text 1737 any time. It’s free, completely confidential and is an independent service.

Fire safety saves lives and property

Smoke alarms

To keep you safe in our homes we put a long-life smoke alarm in each bedroom, the living areas, hallway and attached garages.

Test them once a month and when you get home after being away. To test, press the test/reset button for about two seconds. The alarm will sound. When you take your finger off the button it will have reset and the light will blink continuously.

It's also important to clean smoke alarms every six months by gently dusting with a vacuum cleaner brush.

Let us know straight away if you think a smoke alarm is faulty. Call us on 0800 801 601 if the:

- red light stops blinking
- alarm doesn't sound when you press the test/reset button
- smoke alarm continuously makes an unusual noise or chirps.

If you set off the smoke alarm by accident, open the windows to air out the house and press the hush button if it has one.



Other fire safety advice

Keep furniture, clothes and curtains at least 1 metre from heaters and the fireplace.

Put ashes in a metal container well away from the house – they can take up to five days to cool.

Always turn off your electric blanket at the wall before getting into bed.

Avoid cooking fires:

- Don't leave anything cooking on the stove unattended.
- Turn off the heat if the oil or fat is smoking.
- Keep curtains, plastic electric jugs and tea towels away from the stove.
- Regularly empty crumbs from the toaster and clean the oven.

Let's be smart about saving water

TOP TIPS:

- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Take shorter showers – and **save both water and money.**
- Flush toilets less often.
- Don't turn on the washing machine until you have a full load. **Turning the wash to cold also saves power.**
- Keep a large bottle of water in the fridge, instead of running water from the tap while you wait for it to run cold.
- Put the plug in the sink while you wash vegetables or rinse plates – use the leftover water on your pot plants.
- Use a bucket to wash and rinse the car – or leave it dusty.
- Sweep your paths rather than hosing them.
- Check your taps for drips or leaks and call us on 0800 801 601 if they require fixing.

Check out smartwater.org.nz for more ideas, including tips for gardens and great activities for the kids.



Keep everything at least 1 metre away from a heater or fireplace. Never place or hang clothes on a heater to dry.





What the Healthy Homes Programme means for you

Our homes need to comply with new healthy homes standards by 1 July 2023.

One of our contractors will visit your home to check whether:

- your ceiling and underfloor insulation needs upgrading
- your heating device is adequate
- your windows and doors are air-tight
- rain and surface water is draining to the right places
- your home has kitchen and bathroom extraction fans
- you need carpeting and curtains.

How can you help?

Our contractors will contact you to make an appointment to visit your home, at a time that suits you and that you can be home when they visit.

Fresh dry air is easier to heat – to get more fresh air inside your home you can:

- open your windows for 20 mins in the morning and afternoon
- cover pots when cooking on the stove
- dry washing on the line outside – not inside your home
- try not to use portable gas heaters as they add moisture to your home and can be unsafe.

There are lots of ways to warm your home. If you haven't got a heater in your main living area, or it's not working properly, call us on 0800 801 601.

If you have a heat pump

- Set it at 18-20 degrees – don't blast as it won't last, and setting it higher will cost more to run.

- Keep the outside unit clean and free from dirt and plants.
- Set the timer for 30 minutes before you get home.

If you have a wood burner

- Burn only dry wood.
- Don't burn treated wood, driftwood, plastic or rubbish.
- Let us know if you are missing a safety guard.

If you have an electric heater on the wall

- Turn it on when you are in the room; turn it off when you leave.
- Keep toys or furniture at least 1 metre from the heaters.

If you need any help, contact the Healthy Homes team on 0800 801 601.

Keeping warm and dry this winter



Remember that cooking, showering and hanging washing inside adds moisture inside your home which can be unhealthy.

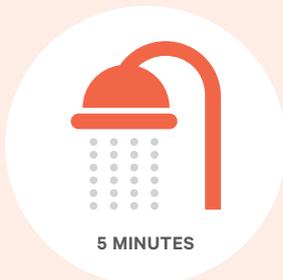


Open curtains during the day to let warmth in and close them just before dark to keep it in.



Stop draughts getting in around doors and windows.

SAVE POWER SAVE MONEY



Building careers and homes

Kāinga Ora has helped more than 70 young people into an apprenticeship that will launch their careers.

One of those is budding electrician Matt, who has just celebrated his first year under the Kāinga Ora apprenticeship programme, and couldn't be happier.

Matt's boss, Craig Wright, Director of Wright Wire Electrical,

is extremely pleased with his apprentice. "Matt's brilliant. I think he just needed an opportunity to prove himself, and he's done that far and beyond."

Now in its second year, the apprenticeship programme has 32 Kāinga Ora build partners and subcontractors employing cadets and apprentices across public housing building sites.

Have a read of our Clean & Green booklet

Go to <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/assets/Tenants-and-communities/Documents/Clean-and-green.pdf> for tips on other products you can use to keep your house clean – but be sure to store them safely too.





Kāinga Ora team at Creekfest.



Grace, Mackenzie and Dante with their mother, Stevie.

Creekfest 2020 promotes health and wellbeing in Cannons Creek

Cannons Creek tenant Stevie was pleased to see a Kāinga Ora stall at this year's Creekfest. Stevie is deaf and talking face to face with a Kāinga Ora staff member gave her the chance to ask questions and get answers in person.

Kāinga Ora uses iSign to support our tenants who are deaf. We also use the New Zealand Relay Service, which helps the New Zealand Deaf, deafblind, hearing impaired and speech impaired communities keep in touch by phone without needing the assistance of friends or family.

Our stall at Creekfest also highlighted the then upcoming Neighbours Day Aotearoa and

My Kāinga Ora – the new online way for you to manage your home and check on your account, your rent, your maintenance and much more.

Given the success of Creekfest this year, we're looking forward to being involved in many future community events. Stevie thinks that's an excellent idea.

Have your say by voting



New Zealand's General Election will be on Saturday 19 September. Make sure you're enrolled to vote so you can have a say in this election, as well as local elections and referendums, on the issues that affect you, your friends and your family.

Because of COVID-19, measures will be in place to help keep people safe while they vote. An optional postal voting service will be available for voters at high risk from COVID-19.

Enrol and check or update your details on www.vote.nz

Upgrades for older Kāinga Ora homes

We're making our homes warmer, drier and healthier to improve the wellbeing of our customers and bring our older homes up to, or above, the new build and Homestar 6 standards.

This work, through our Retrofit programme, includes full insulation (walls, ceiling and floor insulation), double glazing, improved air-tightness, ventilation and new heating.

We may also upgrade bathrooms and kitchens, convert homes to a more modern, open plan living layout, and make the home more accessible.

Following the Retrofit pilot in the Hutt Valley, we are now looking to carry out this work in more regions across New Zealand. We will be in touch with you if Retrofit is a potential option for your home.



Barbara's house before and after upgrade work.



Retrofits are good for your health and happiness

Barbara has been in her Lower Hutt house for 12 years, and was beyond excited to have her home retrofitted.

“Nothing in my life has happened like this to me before ever. It's just a dream come true,” she says.

When Barbara saw her new home for the first time, she was over the moon at the transformation:

“I can't believe it's mine, it's just so new and beautiful.”

Tenancy Liaison Officer Carol stepped Barbara through the process of temporarily relocating, showed her how her home would be transformed and let her choose between three colours for the carpets, vinyl and exterior paint colour.

Gardening tips

It's winter, and growth has really slowed down. If you didn't plant winter veg like broccoli, cabbage and cauli in March, it's not too late, but they won't grow much until spring hits. Plant a few things every few weeks for an ongoing, steady supply.

Broad beans are the thing that germinate best in winter, and they're easy to sow straight into the ground. Don't let them get leathery and grey, pick them smaller, as sweet, young green things - they taste more like peas and can be eaten raw or lightly fried or steamed. Broad beans don't need good soil, but they will improve the soil for the next crop. Plant them where you plan to put tomatoes in spring, and they'll not only add nitrogen into the soil but can be cut down and used as straw mulch to protect the young tomato seedlings in October.

Plant out: broad bean (seed), broccoli, cabbage, garlic, kale, lettuce, mesclun, pak choi, radish, snow peas and strawberries.



Thanks to Hannah Zwartz,
Urban Kai Co-ordinator/
Educator, Common Unity
Project Aotearoa

www.commonunityproject.org.nz



Ian loves gardening and feeding his housemates and community



Ian loved working in his local community garden, but breaking his leg meant he couldn't continue.

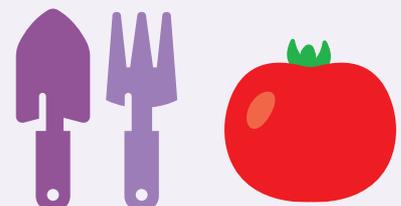
The Claddagh Haven Trust helped Ian get his green thumbs back in action, helping provide fresh produce for his housemates in the group's West Melton home.

Claddagh Haven supports people with intellectual disabilities, including – in partnership with Kāinga Ora – providing group homes for people like Ian.

Each of the trust's three homes across Canterbury has a vegetable garden producing food that feeds staff and residents.

“With their beehives and gardens, they're not just providing fresh, beautiful produce for their residents, but helping to build useful skills that can change people's lives,”

says Vivienne, Kāinga Ora
Community Group Housing
Project Manager.



Pasta with roasted pumpkin, basil and bacon

 Serves 4-6 people

You will need:

2 cups pumpkin cut into 1 cm cubes

2-3 tbsp olive oil

1 handful of torn basil leaves,
or 1 tbsp basil paste from a tube,
or 1 tsp dried basil

1 medium onion finely chopped

2 cloves garlic crushed

200g chopped bacon,
rind removed

700-800g jar of passata –
cooked sieved tomato available
in supermarkets

½ tsp sugar

400g dried spaghetti

Salt and pepper

1. Preheat oven to 230°C.
2. In a roasting pan pour 2 tbsp of the oil and stir in the pumpkin cubes, toss to coat with oil and roast them, turning them occasionally, for around 20 minutes – till tender.
3. While the pumpkin is roasting heat the remaining oil in a frying pan and cook the onion gently



4. until soft. Add the garlic and chopped bacon and cook until the bacon is golden but not crisp.
4. Pour in the passata then add the sugar and basil and season well with salt and pepper.
5. Put a large pot of water on to boil for the spaghetti, and cook according to the packet directions. When cooked save ¼ cup of the water the pasta was cooked in.

6. Gently fold the roasted pumpkin into the sauce and add a splash of the starchy pasta cooking water – this makes the sauce glossy and silky. Serve the pasta with the sauce spooned over the top.

Cook's tip: use whatever pasta shape you have – spirals or macaroni will taste the same as spaghetti, just not as fun to eat.

Thanks to Sophie Gray for providing this recipe – www.destitutegourmet.com



Make sure your rent goes through on time

It's important to use the correct payment reference number when making a rent payment – it's on your tenancy agreement or you can call us to find out.

If you use the wrong number it can take up to five working days or more for this money to show up in your account.

Make your rent payment by internet or mobile banking

Select 'Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities' from the list of Bill Payee options and fill in the payment fields.

Or visit any BNZ branch

Simply use one of the Smart Machines, select 'Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities' from the list of Bill Payee options and fill in the payment fields.



If you need to talk to us, call

0800 801 601

enquiries1@kaingaora.govt.nz



Non-urgent calls between 8am and 6pm weekdays only. Urgent calls 24 hours, 7 days a week.



Local offices open for drop-in between 9am and 4pm weekdays only.



My Kāinga Ora for checking your account, rent balance, maintenance and much more.



Driveway safety reminder

Safekids Aotearoa suggests three things you can do to make driveways and other places safer for children:

- **Check** for children before driving off
- **Supervise** children around vehicles – always
- **Separate** play areas from driveways.

Contact us if something is not right



Step 1: Contact us and we'll record your complaint the first time, so you don't have to repeat the story if you contact us again.

Step 2: If you're not happy with the way we've sorted out your complaint, ask us to have another look at it.

Step 3: If you're still not happy with a complaint decision, we can refer your complaint to the Office of the Complaints Commissioner for an independent review of the decision. Even if you don't need us to respond on something, we'd like your feedback so we can improve our service to you.

It's easy to contact us – use what works best for you:

- Call us free on 0800 801 601 from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and 24/7 for urgent calls.
- Talk to your tenancy manager.
- Call into your local office between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday.
- Email enquiries1@kaingaora.govt.nz
- Use the feedback form on our website: <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/contact-us/feedback-form/> – or click on 'Contact Us'.
- Write to us at Kāinga Ora, National Office, PO Box 2628, Wellington 6140.

Thanks to:



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