

# RAI<sup>e</sup>

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY | THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

## **Housing Children: South Auckland The Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study**



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The report presents an analysis of interviews (2009-2013) undertaken for Housing New Zealand's Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study. Households with children in South Auckland who were living in or applicants for state houses were the focus of the analysis. An ecological analysis showed that the house, the neighbourhood, cultural ways of knowing and acting, and financial wellbeing shaped children's housing experiences. Key findings: most parents/caregivers were happy with the houses and neighbourhoods for their children. Secure, affordable tenure in state houses meant that families could provide better lives for their children. But because some houses acted as extended family hubs, crowding could result. Upgrading of houses was not necessarily matched by tenants' capacity to keep them warm and dry. Caregivers' familiarity with their neighbourhood enabled them to cope in adversity, and was therefore an important element in their satisfaction with their childrens' living environment.



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# Housing Children: South Auckland

## The Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study

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## Abstract

Parents and caregivers' views about how houses and neighbourhoods work for their children in South Auckland have been analysed to gain insights into the housing experience of vulnerable children in rental properties. The analysis is framed by three theories: an ecological framework for children, housing as a key determinant of health, and housing pathways. The report responds to a gap in the literature about households with children; their experiences of housing and neighbourhoods; and the relationships between children's living environments and wellbeing. This study draws on interviews undertaken with applicants and tenants for Housing New Zealand's Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study beginning in 2009. The research on which this report is based was completed before the responsibility for the social housing waiting list was shifted from Housing New Zealand to the Ministry of Social Development in April 2014.

## Introduction

South Auckland children living in Housing New Zealand properties (tenants) and in households that have been accepted onto Housing New Zealand's waiting list (applicants [see Table 2 for all definitions]) are the focus of this report. Housing is a key determinant of health, and strongly supports the relationship of the quality and suitability of houses to children's physical health. However, little is known about children's experiences of rental housing and neighbourhoods, and the interconnectedness of children's living environments and general wellbeing. This report analyses parents' and caregivers' perceptions and experiences of adequate and inadequate housing and neighbourhoods for children.

Twenty-seven percent of New Zealand's children live in poverty (Craig *et al.* 2013), and 70 percent of those children live in rental housing (50 percent in private rentals and 20 percent in Housing New Zealand properties) (Perry 2014). Only those households classified as being in 'high need' are eligible for Housing New Zealand properties, and they typically face multiple, cross-generational issues including poverty. This study provides insights into the housing experiences of vulnerable families.

The report draws on Housing New Zealand's Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study interviews with tenants and applicants, rather than with children. The interviews relating to children were reanalysed to provide new insights into how parents and other caregivers think about their children in relation to housing and neighbourhoods. We stress that this report could not be based on the thoughts of children themselves, as children were not participants in the original study.

The perception of tenants and applicants is that, compared to lower quartile rental market housing, social housing provides greater security of tenure and housing affordability, which in turn helps families to thrive. The report provides support for existing evidence that when families move into social housing, their health and wellbeing generally improves. The report goes further by providing a unique understanding of how and why improvements occur. It also shows that where houses are cold and damp, unsafe, crowded and/or in poor quality neighbourhoods, the benefits of secure tenure and affordability are significantly diluted, with serious impacts on children's health and wellbeing. The report shows how families cope while living in those conditions.

The findings contribute to a better understanding of children in rental housing, house condition standards, reasons for different types of household crowding, and children living in poverty.

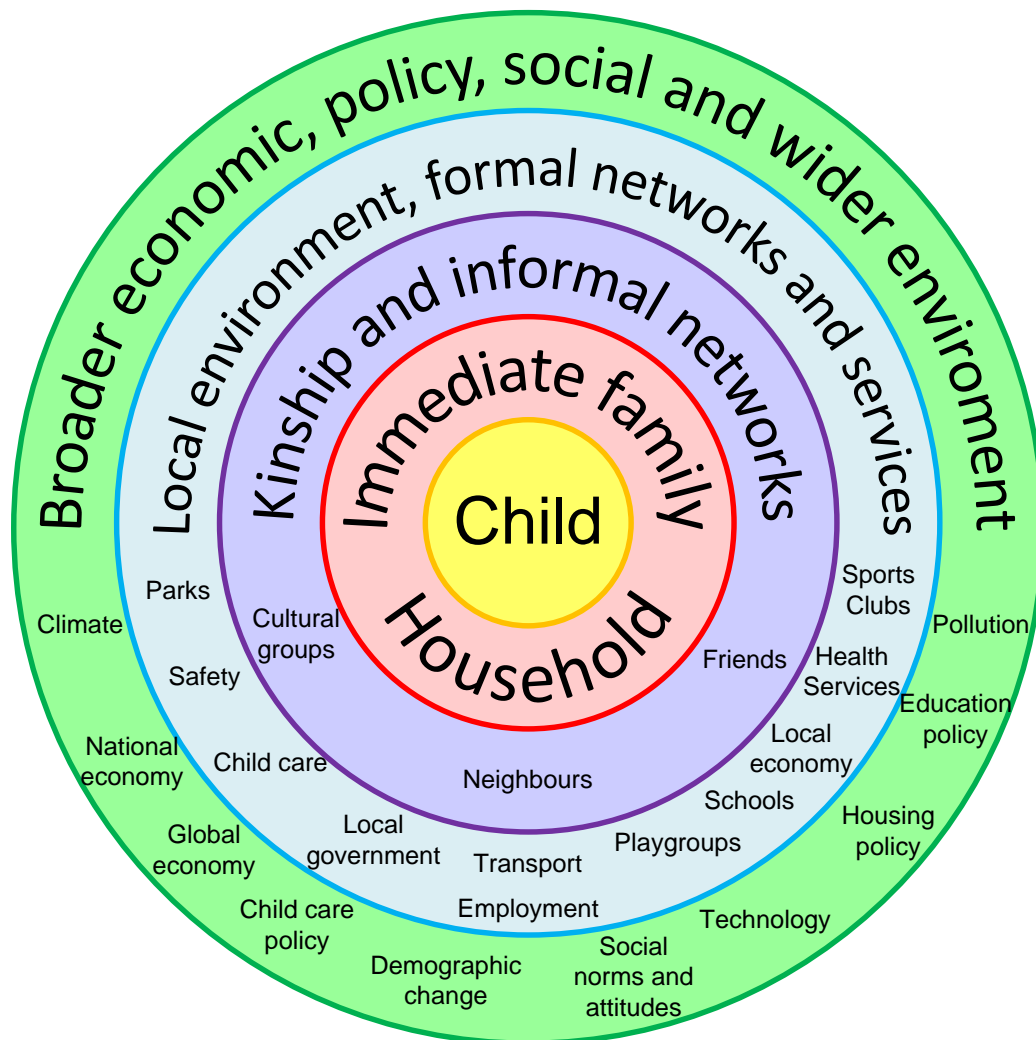
The report begins by outlining the theoretical ideas that frame the analysis and the research approach. The three key theoretical perspectives drawn on for this analysis are an ecological framework, housing as a determinant of child health, and housing pathways. Brief overviews of theories are provided, together with a discussion about how and why they are used to frame the analysis. The second section explores property characteristics that create adequate housing for children, including being warm, dry and safe, and the ways that families cope when these characteristics are absent. Safety at home is explored in the third section. The fourth section explores different types of household crowding and the reasons for these. The fifth section analyses neighbourhood characteristics that participants looked for or enjoyed, including familiar, safe neighbourhoods, and the distance and closeness of family, friends and amenities, especially schools. Finally, we present a summary of the key findings, an overview of one of the tenant's (Pania) experience of living in a state house, reflect on how the theoretical framing of the analysis contributes to unique insights into children's living environments, and make recommendations for future research.

## Ecological framework for housing children

An ecological analytic framework acknowledges the active role that families play in creating their social environment, and involves exploration of the links between children, the home, the family and the neighbourhood.



Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecocultural model is explicitly child-focused, and is based on a set of four nested systems. The child and the family are understood as a microsystem, which is nested and linked to other environments such as schools and churches, to wider social, cultural, and political contexts, and to broad ideologies and beliefs.



**Figure 1:** Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. Diagram by Joel Gibbs based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model.

More recent child-focused theories highlight children's diversity and agency, and the importance of children being included in research (Christensen and James 2000; Christensen and Prout 2005; A. James 1993, 2007; Prout 2000; Waldren and Ignacy-Marek 2012; Woodhead and Faulkner 2000). This report seeks to reveal new insights from the voices of people parenting children in rental housing, while also providing the baseline to develop a child-centred research programme.

The effects of poor quality housing on children are widely recognised. The reasons for these effects on children's development are understood in two main ways: material hardship, and family stress (Taylor and Edwards 2012). Material hardship identifies interactions between high housing and heating costs, and parents' ability to provide other basics for their children such as food and health care. The family stress model of economic hardship identifies interactions between financial hardship, parents' mental wellbeing, conflict between caregivers, parenting practices and children's mental health (Conger and Donnellan 2007).

An ecological approach was chosen because it enables a focus on the interactions between the property, the family, and the neighbourhood as key determinants of children's wellbeing. There is some evidence that children are particularly vulnerable to unsafe neighbourhoods and that neighbourhood deprivation has a negative impact on children's educational achievements, especially in early childhood (B. James 2007). Our analysis shows parents' perceptions of neighbourhoods, highlights neighbourhood characteristics that are valued for children, and describes how parents and children respond to unsuitable or unsafe neighbourhoods.

Political ecology underpins Larry Schell's (1997) model of intergenerational risk-focusing and highlights the temporal elements that shape children's living environments. Developed during a study of multigenerational effects of lead exposure, Schell's model describes how the effects of lead exposure in early life result in multiple negative outcomes throughout life including reduced cognitive performance, reduced educational and employment opportunity, and greater chance of living in an area of higher lead exposure in adulthood (Schell 1992). The model acknowledges that risk is 'focused' according to social and biological characteristics of individuals, because several different types of risk commonly occur simultaneously in individuals with shared characteristics, and the risks are compounded over generations. Any social group can experience poor health and disabilities through environmental conditions with the consequence that they have reduced opportunities for socioeconomic rewards because of poorer health. Larger economic, environmental, and social forces, rather than only individual choices, are therefore implicated in poor health and wellbeing outcomes.

More recent research identifies the perceptual aspects of risk. In relation to children, parents and teachers are shown to have become much more risk averse in their practices, resulting in reduced outdoor play, and less walking to and from school without adult supervision (Collins and Kearns 2010, Sullivan 2009). Neighbourhoods have also been observed to be stigmatised, by local residents as well as others, as a result of one-off violent incidents rather than systemic problems of crime (Damer 1974). In this report, parents' perceptions of safety are analysed, and the complexity of people's experiences of neighbourhoods and resultant parenting practices are examined.

Housing New Zealand tenants have been identified as a vulnerable group due to the high proportion of children and young people, Māori and Pacific people, and sole parent households. These demographic features are associated with low incomes, high levels of crowding and household smoking, and high hospitalisation rates (Baker *et al.* 2013). The Growing Up in New Zealand longitudinal study of 7000 children provides evidence of the cumulative effects of exposure to multiple risk factors through infancy including the increased likelihood of childhood respiratory infections that require hospitalisation (Morton 2014). The study also highlights that risk factors for vulnerable children tend to exist and cluster across multiple domains, and so solutions need to be through cross-agency interventions.

## Housing as a determinant of child health

Housing is recognised as a key determinant of health (for a more detailed review of relevant literature, see Appendix 1). Compared to most other OECD countries, New Zealand housing is of lower quality (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012a) and significantly under-heated (ECCA 2010). In addition, Auckland faces a serious shortage of housing for low-income families, particularly large Māori and Pacific families (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012a).

Poor quality housing, energy hardship, and household crowding are implicated in New Zealand's high rates of infectious diseases such as acute rheumatic fever (Jaine *et al.* 2008), childhood pneumonia (Grant 1999), cellulitis (Finger *et al.* 2004) and tuberculosis (Park and Littleton 2013). Poor quality housing in New Zealand is characterised by cold and damp conditions which promote the growth of mould and the survival of viruses. These housing conditions increase stress on the human immune system (Boston and Chapple 2014), and upper respiratory tract symptoms, cough, wheeze and asthma

symptoms in previously sensitised people (ECCA 2010). Young children are particularly vulnerable to cold, damp and polluted indoor environments because they spend much of their time at home (Boston and Chapple 2014). Energy hardship, defined as the inability to heat one's home to an adequate temperature due to a low income and/or energy inefficient homes (ECCA 2010), exacerbates the effects of poor quality homes.

Applicants referred to in this report may be living with friends or family who live in owner-occupied properties, in rental properties or temporary accommodation. This group is more likely to be living in conditions described as 'severe housing deprivation', meaning at least two of the following core dimensions are inadequate: habitability, privacy and control, and security of tenure (Amore *et al.* 2013).

Housing quality is not only implicated in children's physical health but also in their wellbeing (Lynch and Kull 2013), including educational achievement, safety, relationships, and mental health (Phipps and Young 2005, Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012b). While children's living environments ideally provide a source of security and comfort, deficient house quality can add to family stress, leading to cumulative negative impacts on children's wellbeing (Lynch and Kull 2013). There is an abundance of evidence on the health impacts of children living in poor quality housing, but much less that explores the implications for children's broader wellbeing.

## Housing pathways

A housing pathways approach recognises that changing circumstances affect people's housing options and choices over their lifespan (Seelig *et al.* 2005, Loomis 2007). Housing pathways have been defined as "the patterns of interactions (practices) concerning house and home, over time and different localities" (Clapham 2002, in Loomis 2007:10). In Australia the social housing system is organised differently and according to Beer, Faulkner and Gabriel's (2006) research on housing pathways there, tenants do not volunteer to move but experience more or less insurmountable barriers to moving. Here in New Zealand social housing tenants have volunteered to move in exchange for assistance with finding appropriate affordable accommodation, both rented and owned (Kennedy *et al.* 2012).

Grimes *et al.* suggest that housing policy in New Zealand needs to take into account the fact that people have a lifespan, as do houses. They note that "Most children make no explicit housing choice; the housing situation of the parent(s) or caregiver(s) determines their dwelling status. The early housing situation may, however, be a crucial determinant of current and future outcomes for the individual child" (Grimes *et al.* 2006:67). Grimes *et al.* identify a 'typical' housing pathway once children leave their parental home. First, young people follow educational and employment opportunities and live in rental accommodation. When they marry and have children they seek to move from private rental to owner occupation. This typical pattern is described as moving up the housing hierarchy. Using this approach, atypical patterns of housing tenure become evident such as the predicament of migrants and young people who are unable to make the transition to owner occupation because they are unable to save a deposit (Grimes *et al.* 2006). People can be seen as moving down the housing hierarchy when relationships break up, people retire or where a major employer cuts back on its workforce. Analysis of the relationship between house age, location and rental levels led Grimes *et al.* to say that "individuals towards the extreme end of the deprivation scale are not only highly likely to rent, but also appear to face higher rents relative to the standard of the housing they receive" (2006:76). Experiencing an atypical pattern, or moving down the housing hierarchy into poor quality, expensive-to-rent housing may limit people's housing choices to the extent that they resort to applying for social housing.

Housing New Zealand is the main provider of social housing in New Zealand. In 2007, 45 percent of the occupants of Housing New Zealand properties were less than 18 years old (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012a). In 2010 the median age of applicants was 20.8 years and for

tenants was 19.7 years, compared to the median age of the New Zealand population at the 2006 Census of 35.9 years (Baker *et al.* 2013).

In 2008 a programme of research was initiated to provide a profile of Housing New Zealand's tenants (Pfitzner 2008). The findings suggested that a high proportion of tenants have the expectation that they are likely to remain in Housing New Zealand properties long term ('state housing for life'), or exit and subsequently return ('housing churn'). A much smaller proportion of tenants appear to exit Housing New Zealand properties and not return ('state housing as a stepping stone'). Housing pathways differ between household types and population groups, depending on variables such as the age of the primary tenant, the presence or absence of children, and ethnicity. The differences were explored in a pilot study in 2008 that involved interviews with Housing New Zealand tenants. The results provided an initial understanding of tenants' perspectives on their housing pathways (Mackay *et al.* 2009).

In 2009 a three wave longitudinal study was initiated that was to track the housing pathways of a sample of Housing New Zealand applicants and tenants over the course of six years (the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study). The overall goal of the Longitudinal Study was to develop an evidence base about how housing pathways and life circumstances influence outcomes for Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants. The research objectives were to identify and analyse:

- the relationships between housing tenure and life circumstances of Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants that lead to positive and negative outcomes
- the resources and interventions that assist or prevent Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants achieving their housing aspirations.

The results have been reported by the location (Laing *et al.* 2010, Laing, Kendall *et al.* 2013, Laing, Knox *et al.* 2013), reasons for applying for a property (Laing and Kendall 2012), ongoing impacts of the Christchurch earthquakes (Smith 2013), experiences of debt (Knox 2013), and communication with Housing New Zealand (Laing and Smith 2013). As this report goes to press, the third wave of the study has not been undertaken.

An outcome framework was constructed based on interviews undertaken for the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study and a review of the international literature covering outcomes for tenants in social housing (Knox *et al.* 2014). Only a few studies were found that explicitly examined the needs and wants of social housing users. More frequently, evaluations of social housing measured success against policy or programme goals. These goals partially overlapped with users' goals, but often also considered the targeting of assistance to those most in need, and made assumptions about the desired effects of social housing on health, employment and educational attainment (e.g., Dockery *et al.* 2008, Feinstein *et al.* 2008, Seelig *et al.* 2005).

The outcome framework (see Appendix 3), described interviewees' desired housing characteristics. This framework describes tenure, property, and neighbourhood characteristics of good housing that helped interviewees achieve wellbeing, or that they hoped would help them achieve wellbeing. The outcome framework informs the present analysis that has used insights from the ecological, risk-focusing and housing pathways theories to focus on children.

## Research approach

The report examines parents' and other caregivers' perceptions of the relationship between children and housing, where children are understood as individuals with interconnected experiences, needs and aspirations related to housing, neighbourhood, education, relationships, health, wellbeing and disability. For the purposes of this report, children are defined as people under 18 years old. This is based on Housing New Zealand's definition of children who are legally the responsibility of the parent/caregiver (i.e., the primary tenant or applicant).

The following research questions were used in the analysis of the existing data:

- a) What do parents and other caregivers think makes a good home for children?
- b) How well are households with children matched to their house and neighbourhood?
- c) What do parents and other caregivers think makes a good community or neighbourhood for children?
- d) How do households with children respond to inadequate housing and neighbourhoods?

This report is designed to make use of existing research data to begin to answer important questions about the relationship between children's health and wellbeing, and rental housing and neighbourhoods. It is acknowledged that the research methodology for the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study was not designed to answer the research questions covered in this report. However, it was designed to identify issues important to the research participants and many people spoke about the issues relating to children explored here.

The report focuses on South Auckland, and includes some comparisons with Housing Pathways results from Porirua and Christchurch. A total of 97 South Auckland households with children were analysed in the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study, including a total of 136 interviews. This included 47 interviews with tenants in Wave One and 26 interviews with the same Housing New Zealand tenants in Wave Two. A further 20 'new tenants' were interviewed in Wave Two, meaning they were new to the research in Wave Two and new to Housing New Zealand as tenants. New tenants have been kept separate in quantitative analysis to retain the integrity of the data, but are analysed collectively with all tenant interview data. Additionally, interviews were undertaken with applicants to Housing New Zealand, including 30 applicants in Wave One, and 13 applicants who remained in the study in Wave Two.

**Table 1.** Interviews of applicant and tenant households with children in South Auckland

	Applicants		Tenants	New Tenants	TOTAL
Wave 1	30		47	--	77
Wave 2	13		26	20	59
TOTAL	43		73	20	136

As the research questions for this report were not asked directly of the participants in the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study, the data availability is not comprehensive. All of the 97 households with children in South Auckland included in this analysis had information to contribute that was relevant to the study. However, not all contributed information relevant to all the questions.

Terms and acronyms specific to housing and to the Housing Pathways Longitudinal study are defined in table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Definition of terms and acronyms used in this report

Term	Definition
Adequate housing	Habitable, private and people have control over the house, and tenure is secure (Amore <i>et al.</i> 2013).
Applicant	Primary applicant has been confirmed on to the waiting list for a Housing New Zealand property.
Children	People under 18 years old.
CoupwC	Couple-headed household with a child or children. The relationship may be to parents or grandparents.
Energy hardship	Inability to heat one's home to an adequate temperature (18 degrees Celsius) due to a low income and/or an energy inefficient home (ECCA 2010).
Housing-related illness	Some illnesses such as asthma, gastroenteritis, respiratory infections, skin infections.
Lower quartile private rental housing	Rental properties that have rents in the lowest quarter of the whole private rental sector.
Market renters	Tenants whose income has increased to the point where their income related rent equals the market rent in the local area, and therefore they pay market rent.
MultiwC	A household of related or unrelated adults with a child or children. The relationship may be to adult siblings, parents, grandparents or great-grandparents.
New tenant	Primary tenant new to living in a Housing New Zealand property, and interviewed for the first time in Wave Two.
Poverty/hardship	Being excluded from a minimum acceptable way of life in one's own society because of lack of resources (Perry 2014).
Severe housing deprivation	Where at least two of the following core dimensions of housing are inadequate: habitability, privacy and control, and security of tenure (Amore <i>et al.</i> 2013).
SolewC	Sole-headed household with a child or children. The relationship may be child to parent or grandparent.
State housing	Most social housing in New Zealand is in state ownership (hence 'state housing'), and a small proportion is owned by local authorities and community housing providers. Since the introduction of the Social Housing Reform Act 2013, Housing New Zealand has become just one social housing provider, although still by far the largest.
Tenant	Primary tenant living in a Housing New Zealand property.
Tenure security	The length and certainty of remaining in the house (B. James 2007).

At 31 October 2013, 78,850 children aged under 18 years lived in Housing New Zealand properties. Table 3 shows how children were distributed by age group in the Census 2013, Housing New Zealand administrative data, the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study, and South Auckland study. Seventy-three percent of tenant households participating in the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study have children aged under 18 years and about a third of them are in South Auckland.

**Table 3.** Age of children in Housing New Zealand properties, compared with 2013 census data.

Age group	New Zealand Census 2013		HNZ Administrative data		Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study		South Auckland study	
>5 years	292,041	28%	18,153	23%	97	24%	42	31%
5-9 years	286,758	27%	22,783	28%	111	33%	47	35%
10-17 years	431,760	41%	37,371	47%	136	42%	46	34%
No date of birth			543	1%				
Total	1,010,559	100%	78,850	100%	344	99%	135	

\*Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding

Ethnicity was a selection criteria for the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study, and the proportions were a third each for New Zealand European, Māori, and Pacific<sup>1</sup> (for more detail on the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study, see Appendix 2). Approximately two-thirds of South Auckland households interviewed were Pacific, and nearly 30 percent were Māori, and very few New Zealand European (see Table 12, Appendix 4). These proportions reflected the demographic profile of South Auckland tenants and applicants.

The households in which children in this study were living are categorised into three main types: sole adult with child/children, couple with child/children, multiple adults with child/children (See Table 2 for definitions). In this report, these household types are included in the description of participants following quotes.

The proportions of tenants living in these household types are set out in Table 4. In Wave One, there was a fairly even split between sole parents with child/children and couple with child/children. In Wave Two, approximately half of those interviewed were couples with children, and a third were sole parents with child/children. The increased proportion of couples with child/children was due to more new tenants being in that category.

**Table 4.** Proportions of tenant households with children by household type

	Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study				South Auckland			
	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 1		Wave 2	
SolewC	68	53%	92	58%	22	47%	14	30%
CoupwC	52	40%	53	33%	21	45%	25	54%
MultiwC	9	7%	14	9%	4	9%	7	15%
Total	129	100%	159	100%*	47	101%	46	100%*

\* Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding

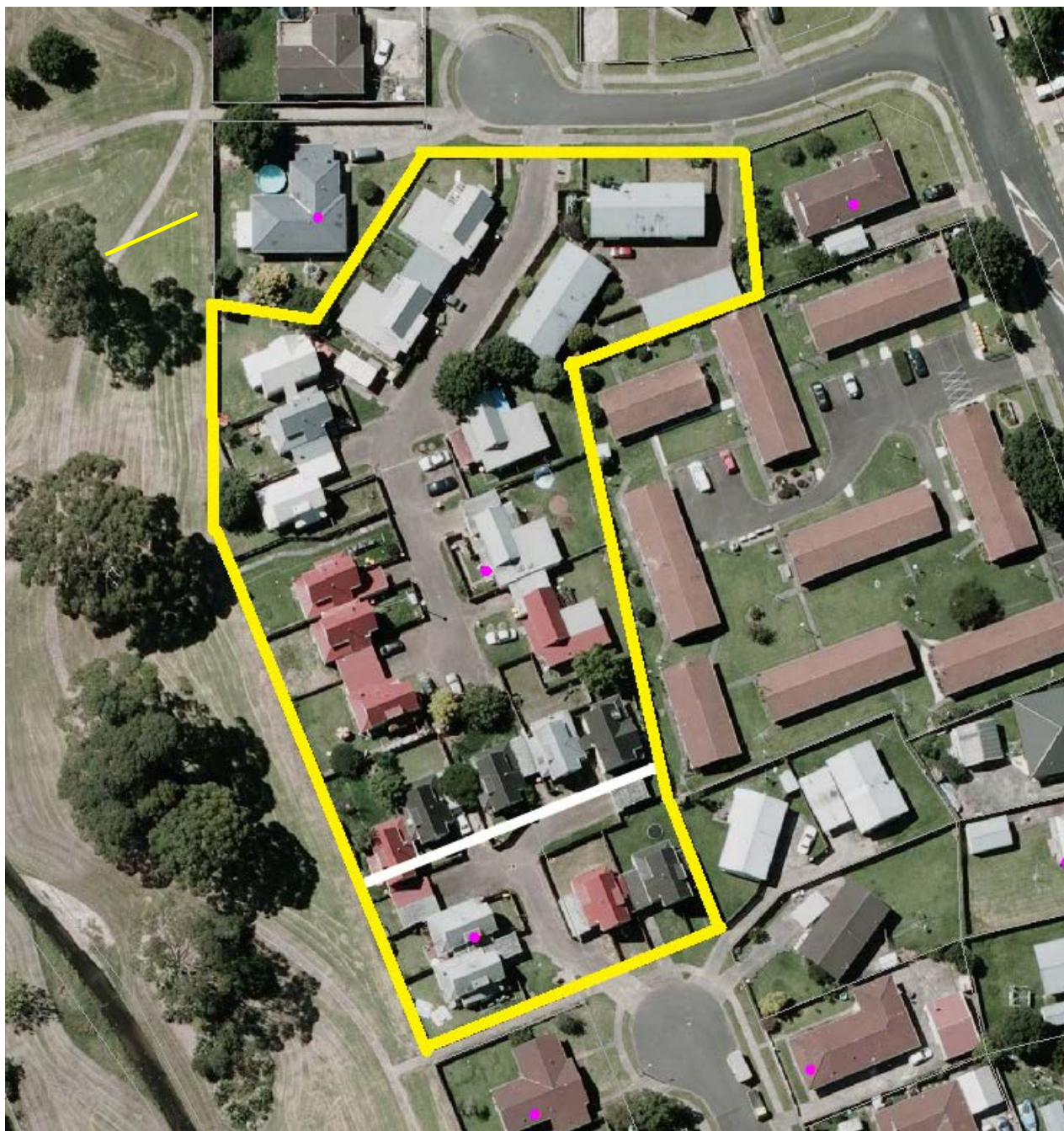
Tenants live in four main property types: single unit (stand-alone house), complex, double unit, and multi-unit. There are a range of styles within each type. Photos taken from the national housing portfolio are provided here to indicate the range of Housing New Zealand properties. Stand-alone houses on large sections are the most common.



**Figure 2.** Examples of stand-alone Housing New Zealand houses



A complex is a group of Housing New Zealand properties that have one entry point from the road, as shown in the photo below.



**Figure 2.** Example of two Housing New Zealand complexes



Examples of double and multi-unit properties are shown in the photos below.



**Figure 3.** Examples of double and multi-unit properties

The proportion of people who received their main household income from wages and salaries reduced for Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study participants from Wave One to Wave Two, and for those in South Auckland (Table 5). The proportion of people whose main income was New Zealand Superannuation and benefits remained relatively constant in both groups across both Waves.

**Table 5.** Tenant households with children by income source

		Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study				South Auckland			
		Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 1		Wave 2	
Wages/salary		49	38%	30	19%	20	43%	11	24%
NZ Super		10	8%	11	7%	4	9%	3	7%
Benefits		69	53%	81	51%	22	47%	21	46%
Other		1	1%	26	16%	1	2%	10	22%
Unknown		0	0%	11	7%	0	0%	0	0%
		129	100%	159	100%	47	101%	45	99%

\* Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding

## Property suitability and children's wellbeing

### Tenure security

Improved security of tenure is one of the three critical elements of adequate housing (Amore *et al.* 2013) and is discussed briefly here, as it underpins people's experiences of homes and neighbourhoods. Applicants talked about the difficulties of living in private rental accommodation due to the high costs and insecurity of tenure. Many told stories of moving repeatedly due to factors outside their control, such as sale of the property. Housing New Zealand properties provided the highest level of secure rental tenure, and in the majority of cases, the other two critical elements of habitable housing (warm, dry, safe, not crowded), and privacy and control over the house. Critically, social housing was also affordable due to income-related rent subsidies so that households paid no more than a third of the household income in rent.

Secure and affordable housing enabled families to have more money for food, electricity, healthcare, education and other costs. Health improvements were an important outcome. For example, hospitalisation rates decreased by 10-30 percent after applicants moved into Housing New Zealand houses and for the first three years as tenants, then reached a plateau after three years for infectious diseases, and circulatory and respiratory diseases. Furthermore, hospitalisations for mental and behavioural disorders continued to decrease over time (Baker *et al.* 2013), showing just some of the varied and profound impact of social housing as a 'safety net' for highly vulnerable people, including children.

The benefits of secure tenure and affordable housing were experienced primarily by adults, with flow-on effects for children. Many parents and other caregivers in the study described a strong desire to provide their children with a stable home, and having a Housing New Zealand home allowed them to do that.

The following case study introduces a tenant we call Pania. Pania's housing story, which we return to throughout the report, illustrates the key characteristics of properties and neighbourhoods that people valued, and how some people respond and prioritise in the face of hardship. The first part of Pania's story, presented below, demonstrates the profound impacts of affordable, secure tenure and control over the home environment that go well beyond physical health. It also provides a useful point to launch into our findings related to housing and neighbourhoods.

Pania is a Māori woman and sole parent who lives with her five children. The family lives in a standalone house within a Housing New Zealand complex in a convenient location. When asked about the main reasons she liked living in a Housing New Zealand house, Pania replied:

*Why I like it? Oh it's cheap. Like growing up with, my mum had five kids and we were going from house to house because she couldn't afford the rent. Housing New Zealand's given me and my children stability... And it's somewhere where they can come home to and...I can afford the power and I can afford the food.... I've always stayed in violent homes but that was something that I wasn't going to give my kids. And over the last nine years since I've been here, that was something that I can say that I've given my kids and it's because of Housing New Zealand...Yeah that's the main thing that it has done, it's changed the pattern, the life that we used to live, my mum used to live, my grandmother used to live, it's changed that cycle because it's, "Hey this is my house, get out, take your alcohol somewhere else, I don't drink so, I don't do drugs, so get out". And it's good because I see my kids happy and that's something that we never had. Yeah we had each other but we weren't happy.*

House quality was the most important housing consideration for households with children, including being warm and dry, safe, and not crowded. This reflects evidence from the United States that house quality is the housing characteristic most predictive of children's wellbeing, above tenure type, stability and affordability (Lynch and Kull 2013).

Tenants and applicants were asked to rate their houses overall. More tenants were happy with their houses than applicants (see Table 13, Appendix 4). In Wave One, 68 percent of tenants liked or loved their homes, compared with 39 percent of applicants. In Wave Two, more people liked or loved their homes (72 percent of tenants, and 58 percent of applicants).

## Warm, dry houses

A key priority for people in need of social housing was having a warm, dry house for their families (Knox *et al.* 2014). Health research indicates that a warm, dry house will support the health and wellbeing of a family whereas a cold, damp house will contribute to poor and deteriorating health. The evidence from this study reiterates this finding. In addition, the research shows that energy hardship, and to a lesser extent, housing quality and residents' behaviour, affected the warmth and dryness of the house. The research also identifies how people on low incomes cope with cold damp houses.

In Wave One, but not in Wave Two, tenants and applicants were asked how happy they were with the warmth of their houses. Slightly more applicants and tenants said they were unhappy than those who said they were happy with the warmth of their houses (see Table 14, Appendix 4). The difference between applicants' and tenants' responses was that for tenants, about a quarter gave a 'neutral' response, while almost all applicants said they were either unhappy or happy. Participants' levels of satisfaction with the warmth of their houses were significantly lower in South Auckland than in Porirua or Christchurch, despite being in a warmer climate zone than the other two research sites, and houses being in similar condition. This discrepancy may be because of the larger household size in South Auckland, so incomes had to stretch further, leaving less financial resources for heating costs. The dampness in Auckland may also contribute to more dissatisfaction with the thermal comfort of the home.

For most applicants and tenants, a warm, dry house was one that was insulated, carpeted and free of draughts and damp. When homes were retrofitted with insulation and carpet, some applicants and tenants experienced improved thermal comfort, decreased stress, and fewer cold-related illnesses. There was a common expectation, however, that houses should be warm and dry without requiring heating. Given the age of many of the houses, and lack of passive forms of heating and heat-retention, this expectation was unrealistic. Added to this was a widespread cultural practice of not heating homes, or heating only the living room. There was also a view that putting on extra clothing or blankets would have the same result, despite the evidence that cold homes also tend to be damp and have mould, which affects health.<sup>2</sup>

Tenants living in new houses, and in some insulated and carpeted houses, reported high levels of happiness with the warmth of their houses. One tenant described their house as warm, and talked about improvements to their own health and their children's health since moving in: "None of my kids have been sick in this house... my kids are quite happy here, and you know their breathing, their health wise has been excellent" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years).

Some tenants' homes were insulated and carpeted between Waves One and Two, accounting for some improvements. Tenants made positive comparisons with the pre-insulation period or other houses: "It's warm, it's really warm, they just recently put in the insulation up the top and the bottom. And in the other houses that we stayed in previously they've been really cold and the children have gotten sick lots of time. But here it's like, it's really nice and warm" (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years).

The insulation and carpeting of a home could improve children's health markedly.

During Wave One, Pania explained that their house was cold and damp, and that this had effects on the children's health:

*This is the most sickly I've been... It started off when we moved in about a week later, we noticed that it started to get cold, and the coldness, and it gets really, really cold, really cold, it's colder in here than what it is outside... My eldest daughter didn't actually get [asthma] that bad and neither did my son, they didn't get it that bad until we moved in here.*

Pania then explained that the two younger children also had been diagnosed with asthma. By Wave Two of the study, Pania's house had new insulation and carpet. The difference to the children's health and wellbeing was enormous. She explained:

*The house was really, really warm [compared with before when]...you'd be warmer outside than what you would inside, but now it's my kids are kicking off their blankets at night [laughter]. I've got two chronic asthmatics and those were the ones that I was rushing into the doctors with all the time... But ever since that carpet and insulation came in, man it's been wicked ... Yeah, my son he was the worst chronic asthmatic in our whole family, he's always been on the nebuliser every second day. He hasn't been on the nebuliser for six months... Ever since they put it in, there has been a real dramatic change in him and that's awesome.*

Carpet was widely seen as adding warmth to a house. A tenant said, "[W]e're fortunate to have carpet, 'cause that's another thing to keep the heat in" (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years). In contrast, a tenant without carpet said: "[T]he only problem about this house is when winter comes it's quite cold, 'cause I didn't have a floor, no carpet" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 41-50 years). A few tenants also preferred carpets to stop draughts coming through the floor boards: "[They've just put] insulation in the roof, they couldn't get underneath the floor boards 'cause it was too low for them to get under, but that carpet it blocks out a lot of draught" (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years).

A small number preferred not to have carpet, saying that floor boards made the house cooler in the summer and was easier to keep pest free and clean, especially with young children in the house. In one case, a tenant preferred floor boards due to allergy problems, but no one else described problems with carpets harbouring dust mites, the waste products of which can trigger allergic reactions.

Tenants who described no difficulties meeting their heating costs lived in warm houses that needed minimal heating, or a few had the financial means to run heaters frequently and in multiple rooms. A market renter (see Table 2) said: "Each room has a heater so when we get cold we turn our heater on. For me I use my heater quite often plus my electric blankets" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 51-64 years).

Because most participants live on very low incomes, the household budget was limited to meeting the costs of the basic essentials – rent, power, and food. Many applicants and tenants used no, or minimal, heating because heating was unaffordable. Budgetary constraints on heating were described in relation to all types of heat sources. A tenant said: "It's just cold....and it's too expensive for the heater" (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

The cost of heating was often linked to concerns about inefficient heating systems, especially where only one heater was present in the house, usually in the living room. Wall-mounted electric heaters and some fires and heat pumps were commonly described as ineffective at heating and too expensive to run. A tenant said:

We don't use that heater on the side there, it's a power heater we don't want to use that and it doesn't heat up the room at all anyway, and we've got a gas heater but we try not to use that too

often with our kids. [We just] hop in bed [laughter]. “I’m cold”. “Put a jersey on or go hop in bed, go sleep” [laughter] (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years).

## Cold, damp houses

All Housing New Zealand properties have been fitted with ceiling and underfloor insulation, wherever the building design allows. Ventilation, thermal drapes and other property improvements are also being gradually rolled out as budgets allow. However, the considerable variation in property quality affected how warm and dry the homes were (e.g., building age, construction materials, angle to the sun, and property condition). The majority of Housing New Zealand properties were built before 1960, creating a particular challenge to maintaining and keeping homes warm and dry.

Not all tenants whose homes were insulated noticed a difference, depending on the house type and use of heating. A tenant said: “In the winter it’s too cold and in the summer it’s too hot” (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years).

Some applicants said that their houses were not insulated and attributed the cold temperatures, in part at least, to this lack of insulation. An applicant said:

I think it could do with some insulation... Because in the winter it’s freezing and the windows, I wipe them down in the mornings and then by the afternoon I have to wipe them down again, the condensation just keeps coming back. But [the landlord] won’t do anything about that. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years)

A common complaint from applicants was that private landlords did not undertake necessary maintenance to provide a warm, dry home. In a few cases, the applicants described landlords’ tendency to blame them for problems with damp, mouldy conditions. An applicant said:

[This house is] not even insulated... Very cold in winter... Damp, mould. I’ve been telling them about the mould in the house but they don’t, they just tell me, “Clean it, wipe it with a damp cloth.” But when the man come[s] in to have a look at my daughter’s room because it was leaking, like water was coming in on the wall... And I said, “Yeah but that’s not good ‘cause my daughter’s got asthma.” And they just said, “You’ve just got to wipe it... They haven’t [fixed the hole in the roof] either. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years)

Having a cold, damp house was a burden for tenants and applicants: “[The bad thing about this house is] It’s freezing [laughter] yeah. It’s just coming into that time where you’ll see your breath (more laughter). Nearly for the whole day you’ll see your breath, it’s freezing in this house.” (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years)

Several tenants’ houses were extensively and severely affected by dampness and mould. A tenant said: “Mould in almost all the rooms. I try and clean it off, but that’s just ‘cause we all stay in the one room usually. In the winter time it’s the worst time, the walls get wet and stuff, the bed gets wet” (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years). Another tenant explained: “The major problem about this house is the dampness at winter. During winter the water is dripping through the walls and the ceiling. I woke up every morning and mopped the ceiling and the wall to clean out the damp...” (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 75 plus).

While most tenants recognised the importance of adequate room ventilation, draughts from poorly fitted windows and doors caused considerable discomfort and distress for some. One said: “Just during the winter you can see the flow of the curtains moving. At least it’s well ventilated [laughter]” (Wave One, MultiwC, European / NZ Pākehā, 31-40 years). Two tenants had problems with draughts coming in through their internal garage. One tenant said “the wind just roars through the house” (Wave One, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years).

No-one mentioned approaching Work and Income or any other agency for assistance to pay increased electricity costs during the winter months.

Most applicants and tenants lived on very low incomes and could not afford to heat their homes adequately. As a tenant said, a heater “chews up too much of my power” (Wave Two, MultiwC, Māori and NZ European, 18-30 years). Some people described ways that they tried to keep themselves and their children warm such as the whole family sleeping in the lounge or children sleeping with parents. Another tactic to stay warm was to all congregate in one room, which may or may not be heated. In the evenings, family members all sat close together in one room under blankets until they went to bed in their own rooms. One tenant explained that to save heating costs, the family used their only heater for 1-2 hours in the living room, and slept there. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years) Another said they all went to bed early as a cheap way to stay warm.

Several applicants and tenants reported that they had been advised to open windows to ventilate the house and to wipe surfaces to remove mould and mildew. Housing New Zealand had installed extra ventilation in some houses. These tenants said that they were aware of the need to ventilate their homes and did their best to do so, but said it was not always possible to keep windows and ventilation open as this made a cold house even colder.

For a few tenants, problems with dampness and mould were mainly confined to the bathroom or were only minor. A few tenants admitted to taping over the vents to prevent draughts. Vents over showers were unpopular: “[T]hey say that that hole in the roof helps [with mildew] but it doesn’t really do anything... during winter see the wind comes straight through [the roof vent] so you freeze while you’re having a shower” (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years).

In several cases, tenants and applicants put down carpet pieces or mats to stop draughts coming through the floor boards or to feel more cosy under foot.

The most common reason for not heating homes was energy hardship. While most people were aware of the impacts of damp and crowded houses on health, some people described some misguided views and practices related to heating that need to be discussed and challenged in the public arena. These included:

- Insulated homes do not require heating.
- Mould only appears in homes that are in very poor condition.
- Heating is an extravagance, and it is just as effective to “put a jersey on”, use extra blankets, or generally toughen up.
- Heaters cost too much to buy, so stove tops and ovens are used to warm the house.
- Children’s respiratory health is “made worse” by heating, regardless of heating type (e.g., gas heaters, heat pumps, fires).
- Any draught is bad for health, so vents around windows are sealed off, despite removing the only source of ventilation.
- Fresh air is good for health, so windows are left open at all times, creating an extremely cold and draughty home for children in winter.

## Children’s housing-related illnesses

Some illnesses have been identified that can be partially attributed to the house condition in which some people live. (For a full discussion of housing as a determinant of children’s health, see Appendix 1.) Some parents described difficulties associated with having children who were sick throughout winter. This burden was compounded by the expense of doctor visits and prescriptions, and for a few, no



transport to get the children to health care and their own poor health. An applicant described the difficulties associated with her daughter's asthma and allergies:

I've been having ups and downs with her and she gets sick. I'm putting up with her having fevers, temperatures of 40.1. I know that it's an emergency to get her to the hospital, or to the doctor's but I mean with this happening all the times, whenever it happens I can't afford to take her. I try and do it on my own. So that's giving her a cool bath and stripping her... It's hard to explain, she is sickly, a sickly baby... It's like me, since I've been here I've broken out with all this [skin irritation], it's really yuk. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years)

Some of the applicants and tenants who described their houses as cold also talked about the way that the cold affected their health, or their children's health. Comments about cold causing or exacerbating respiratory tract illnesses, including asthma, were frequent. Some people described children coughing every winter, recurrent chest infections, and hospitalisations for pneumonia and asthma.

Several applicants and tenants with ill and asthmatic children did not use heating despite knowing that a warmer house would be better for their children, because it was unaffordable. A tenant with severely asthmatic children discussed the cost that the electric heater added to their power bill: "we're talking about a hundred, but still that's a lot to me on my budget" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years). An applicant commented: "yeah [my son's] constantly sick... He got bronchitis and ... a respiratory tract infection... gets really worse in winter" (Wave One, MultiwC, NZ European, 18-30 years) Another applicant was asked how things had been for the family since they moved into their house. The applicant replied: "not too good health-wise with my son, plus we're getting colds through the winter, on and off everyone's getting sick but that's normal. But it's still here that coldness, dampness" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years)

Two tenants reported ongoing problems with draughts, damp or mould in both Waves of the study. In one of these households the children suffered from serious asthma problems to the point where the parent had stopped her own studies to stay home with sick children.

Some adults were also dealing with having very poor health themselves, making caring for sick children more difficult. A couple, both with serious health and disability problems, a very low income, few family or community connections, and with a very prematurely-born child who got sick often said: "This house is too cold...we have four seasons here in New Zealand. So this means that the most difficult season for me is coming up...[explains his condition is much worse in winter and]...My daughter gets admitted to Middlemore Hospital often because she catches cold" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years). The house was fitted with a heat pump but they did not use it, as they said it made their daughter's respiratory problems worse and it was unaffordable.



## Children's safety at home

A safe home environment enables children to play, explore, learn to walk and learn about their world. An added benefit of making homes safe for children is that the homes are then safer for everyone else in the household (Ancliffe and Kokotallo 1996). The home is the most common setting for child injuries. This is particularly the case for young children who spend more time in the home relative to older people, and because children have a relatively limited concept of danger.

The link between housing characteristics and children's safety was a common theme in the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study. Based on parents' and other caregivers' comments, safety in the home required being able to keep children safe and secure within the house and section, and prevent injuries through falls and other hazards.

## Safe outdoor play area

Many applicants and tenants spoke about the need to have a safe outdoor play area for young children, including a securely fenced outdoor area, safe from intrusion and driveway hazards.

For some tenants, having a big yard was the best thing about their home. A tenant said: "[The good things are] the backyard, it's big for the kids to play and yeah it's a nice house.... The kids can run around riding their bike and play outside, but the one that we used to stay before they can't play at the back, it's like too small" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

An applicant said: "The best thing about this house [pause] what are the best things? [laughter]. Oh yeah outside is, the kids, they're, it's a big backyard for them to play. Yeah, they like it here, they do like it" (Wave Two, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

Not all people wanted a large section, because they had older children who did not use the yard, or because they would prefer a smaller, secure space that was easier and cheaper to maintain. A tenant said: "There's heaps of room out there [to enlarge the kitchen], just leave a little piece out there for me to walk around the garden. And my kids can go to the park and play at the park [laughter]... and less lawn to cut" (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 41-50 years).

For yards to be usable by children, they needed to be free from debris and inorganic waste. A tenant said: "...and I think when we moved in, 'cause my mum and I would do the lawns and that, and up the back in the corner that hill over there and the hill over here is full of rubbish... I don't let [children] go outside if I'm not out there" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years).

A secure play area within a fence was identified as particularly important for young children, as it meant that parents/caregivers could leave a door open during the summer, and could allow children to play outside without an adult present. An applicant said:

Oh well, it's fully fenced for my grandkids, safe for the grandkids. Especially we've got little ones coming over, and, it's the main reason I got this house... I was in need of a house, so I had to, this is the only one I could sort of go to. And I thought, yea, fully fenced for the grandkids and stuff, so yeah. (Wave One, MultiwC, NZ European, 51-64 years)

Some people commented that a safe and secure play area did not need to be large, as small areas were easier to maintain. A tenant explained: "The only thing that I liked was the closed off backyard for my son, fully fenced, and it had like just enough area for him to play and easy to maintain, it wasn't that big" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years).

A common concern was that there was no safe and secure outdoor space for children to play. As a result, adults said that children had to stay inside all the time while at home. Houses on busy roads were a

particular concern for parents/caregivers. Some described not accepting homes that were on a main road and were not securely fenced. A tenant living on a busy road said:

The only other thing is we don't have a fence in the front [of the house]. This is the only thing we ask Housing New Zealand for is a fence... Because I can't stay the whole day and looking, giving my eyes to the children... You can [lock the front door] but the kids know how to open them.

(Wave Two, MultiwC, Pacific, 41-50 years)

Secure fencing requires maintenance and occasional repairs. Some applicants and tenants said that although at least part of the outdoor space was fenced, it was still not secure enough to keep young children safe because of broken fencing and/or gates. A tenant said: "It is fully fenced yeah, that's great, however the fence out there is broken and they've fixed it a few times but it just keeps breaking.... The actual gate" (Wave One, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years). In this case, a new gate latch would make the property secure for young children.

While it was not surprising that parents wanted fences to keep children inside the section, what was surprising was the high number of people who said they wanted fences to keep *out* people, dogs and even cars. A common complaint in some South Auckland neighbourhoods was that people, particularly youth, walked through properties uninvited. Low fencing did not stop this from happening. A tenant said: "Yeah [the fencing's] all right, I only wish, 'cause a lot of people crossing, use the front, yeah use short cut, I hate that" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years). An applicant said:

I even asked them if they can put up a fence around the house because neighbours, they walk past the house all the time. I don't like that... From the back... Yeah they can walk over the fence 'cause it's a low fence... I'm doing this for the sake of my kids 'cause they play outside all the time as well... 'Cause when I yelled, when I tell the kids off because there was one bad - my boys were playing outside - one of them threw, I think it was a rock and it landed to my feet. (Wave Two, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

In some cases, tenants and applicants described intruders causing minor damage to planted areas, using or stealing children's play equipment, throwing rubbish or stealing washing. Despite these being relatively low-level crimes, tenants said it made them and their children feel unsafe in their own homes. A tenant said: "They kicked all my soil, my vege plants to pieces. They keep jumping the fence and using my section as a walkway to get to the dairy and all that" (Wave One, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years). Another tenant said:

We'd like to have a fence you know? Because we got our grandchildren come in, my wife look after them and you have to be very careful not to let them go outside because if you go outside you just can... Sometimes there's people, especially in the back there. Sometimes you know just having parties and come in and fighting and come in and running inside the house. (Wave One, CoupwC, NZ European, 51-64 years)

People had different ideas about whether high or low fences were preferable. While high fences could keep people out and provide greater privacy, they could also make the house more likely to be broken into. For young children however, low fences were often regarded as ineffective to create a safe outdoor play area. A tenant said: "But with playing outside, it's not safe when we let them play outside 'cause they climb on the fence 'cause it's too low... When we let them play outside we've got to stay outside, but most of the time we just will let them stay here with us" (Wave Two, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

An applicant and two tenants wanted improved fencing to keep neighbourhood dogs out of the property. An applicant said:

I don't want that gap [in the fence] there. I found out about it, the only reason why I found out about it was 'cause a dog came through and [my child] got scared, 'cause, my oldest one got

scared 'cause she hates dogs... The dog jumped on her, and she thought it was going to bite her  
(Wave One, CoupwC, NZ European, 18-30 years).

Two tenants described cars crashing into their sections more than once, creating a hazard for children. A tenant said: "Yeah. I've only got these lot [of trees] over here to protect the house, because cars, people do donuts and they come through the fence" (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years).

Only two South Auckland research participants mentioned driveway safety specifically. This was surprising given that New Zealand has the highest rate of vehicle-related child driveway accidents in OECD countries, and the rate is highest in South Auckland (Austin *et al.* 2014, Baker and White 2011). Since July 2013, Housing New Zealand has been implementing a Driveway Safety programme in properties with children under five years old. This involves fencing and self-closing gates with child-resistant latches to separate driveways from children's play areas at standalone properties.<sup>3</sup> Where driveway hazard was mentioned, it was part of a wider concern about unfenced sections causing hazards for children. There may be some awareness but it is being expressed as a need to have an area fenced where children can play. An applicant said:

[The child has] nowhere to play... He's not allowed out at all, it's just too dangerous. And like with the neighbours coming up as well like they sort of drive fast up the driveway, not speeding but just fast enough for them to hit him so I don't let him out at all... Like pretty much the only problem with living here is the safety for my son not being able to play outside, so he's pretty much inside all the time. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years)

A tenant, living in a single unit during both Waves of the study, had ongoing concerns about the shared driveway which the tenant saw as the worst thing about the property. The tenant said:

People blocking [the driveway]. We've got one family over there who's not a very nice family and the violence and that that are in there. And the kids use the driveway as a playground while the parents are inside with the door shut. So that's I've almost hit them a couple of times. (Wave Two, MultiwC, NZ European, 51-64 years)

## Safety indoors

While in many cases, tenants described living in improved house conditions once moving into a Housing New Zealand property, some found properties in such poor condition that they felt their children's safety was at risk. Some tenants described concerns for their children due to lack of repairs, unsealed wet areas, or leaking toilets. Some said that they had reported the problems but no action, or inadequate maintenance, had occurred. Three tenants described having rotten floor boards in the bathroom that caused a hazard for the family. One tenant said:

The shower...the water just dribbled out, that finally got fixed just last week. And the floor has been replaced but only half of it because the guy that replaced the half of the floor in the bathroom by the vanity that was rotting away has informed me that the whole underneath the bathtub is rotten away. Told him to tell Housing New Zealand please, you stand in there having a shower and the bath's moving [laughter]...I feel it's not safe. My girl is bigger than me, she weighs more than me. If I can feel that bathtub moving when I'm in it, imagine what it's like for her. (Wave One, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years)

Applicants living in temporary accommodation, such as shelters and garages, described some unsafe or very poor conditions they lived in with their children, often for months on end. For example, an applicant living with a young child in a shelter described the stress of having no safe place for the child to play or rest:

[My young son] was the main reason why I wanted to get out of [the homeless shelter], because of the concrete, the walls are concrete, it's just concrete, all of its concrete. I mean he couldn't go on

the floor and crawl if he wanted to... We couldn't put him down on the floor because it was too cold. And sometimes he just wanted to play around. But we couldn't. And I didn't want to put him on the bed 'because he might just [fall off]. (Wave One, CoupwC, NZ European, 18-30 years)

Parents and other caregivers of young children wanted exit doors and windows that could be secured to keep children inside. They were told by private landlords and Housing New Zealand, that child-proof door locks were the tenant's responsibility. Some safety locking systems compromised functionality. A tenant who had restrictor stays on windows said: "[O]nce it steams up, I mean, they've got their ventilation up the top, but it's still steams up the room" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years). This suggests the need for mechanical ventilation.

The ability to heat a home without putting children and others at risk of burns was a concern for some tenants. With children in the house, some chose not to use gas heaters or open fires, even when these were the only heating sources available. A tenant said: "When winter come it's too cold in this house... But we can't use the fire thing, that one, 'cause of the kids otherwise we go do the cooking [in the other room and] they come and play with the fire...dangerous...that's why we cover it for the kids not to go and touch it" (Wave Two, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

A common concern for parents was the presence of pests, particularly cockroaches. Housing New Zealand provides pest control treatment to remove such pests before letting a property, but infestations are difficult to remove and often require repeated treatments. Typically, people saw the cockroach infestation as just part of a wider problem of a property in poor condition, and they often raised concerns for children's health and safety. An applicant, for example, was so concerned, that they eventually withheld rent until a serious cockroach and rat infestation was fixed: "I was told... Protest bro, this house isn't healthy for your kids. And so I did, I didn't pay until I told the landlord. "Oh come and fix all of this and then I'll start paying", 'cause the house was riddled with cockroaches, everything, rats... The toilet was hanging off the wall" (Wave One, MultiwC, Māori, 18-30 years).

While participants were not asked about the specific characteristics of the house that they wanted, a common preference, particularly for Pacific people was for a single storey home. This preference was due to fears, or experiences, of children falling down stairs or from windows, because older people found stairs difficult to manage, and for the convenience of having all facilities on one level.

Stairs needed stair gates and handrails for children and older people. As stair gates are not provided by landlords (including Housing New Zealand), some children were at risk of serious injury, as a tenant explained: "I wasn't quite happy with the stairs [laughter]...'Cause my girl's had a couple of tumbles down the stairs... [Need a gate at the top of stairs] but I got told I had to do that myself, so. Being on the benefit I couldn't, can't afford that, so yeah" (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

Another problem with stairs related to the positioning of the toilet or the lack of a toilet both upstairs and downstairs. A tenant said:

No, because I've got asthma and all my two girls they've got asthma too and when it's time like when we had asthma it's hard for me to climb up. Like if I want to go to the toilet and I was busy down here doing some work down here hard for me to run upstairs. (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years)

A child of another tenant had fallen out of a second floor window and been badly injured. From the parent's description, it would appear that the window frame was in poor condition and that the window did not have a secure restrictor stay in place, resulting in the injury. Understandably, however, the parent wanted to remove the risk of falling altogether by living in a single storey home. The tenant said:

[W]ell first of all I didn't really want this [multi-unit] house because I applied for a standalone but I was just desperate for housing... I don't like it... My eldest daughter fell out of the window and got a couple of deep cuts because her leg ended up smashing the window down here... Had about

six or seven stitches on each cut. It just gave way the window which is the reason why I didn't want a one storey, but I took it anyway, just trying to make it safe. But I can't be with them 24/7 if I'm cooking, or cleaning, or doing something. And I was just shocked that my eldest daughter, well she leaned, she was leaning on the window which is just above the front door to see what was the loud noise down at the front door and then it just, the bottom wood just came off and then she fell out. (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years)

## Property safety

Safety at home relies on structural and behavioural factors. Housing New Zealand has undertaken continual improvement of standards to make properties safer, and adheres to higher safety standards than is required of private landlords. In 1996, Safekids prepared a report (Ancliffe and Kokotallo 1996) for Housing New Zealand on child safety in the home, and included 10 key recommendations (see Table 6).

**Table 6.** Safekids' recommendations to HNZ 1996

Order of Priority	Recommendation	Implemented
Priority 1	Safe hot water delivery	Tempering valves in new builds
Priority 2	Provision of smoke alarms	Y
Priority 3	Safe stoves/ovens	Y
Priority 4	Fallsafe decks and porches	Y
Priority 5	Fallsafe stairs and steps	Handrails
Priority 6	Fallsafe windows	Y
Priority 7	Safe glazing	Y
Priority 8	Child resistant storage facilities	N
Priority 9	Secure play areas	Driveway safety programme
Priority 10	Safer electricity	RCD protection in new builds

Most of Safekids' highest priority recommendations have been implemented by Housing New Zealand including: provision and maintenance of smoke alarms, tip-safe stoves/ovens, decks to New Zealand Building Code standards, restrictor stays on windows above two metres from the ground, and safety glass in high risk areas. A driveway safety programme is being implemented to create a fenced, vehicle-free play area in properties with children under five years (see Driveway safety section). Additionally, new properties have tempering valves to deliver safe hot water temperatures, and Residual Current Device (RCD) protection on all electrical circuits to prevent electric shocks (not power point safety shutters).

Smoke alarms and restrictor/security stays are requirements in Housing New Zealand properties. However, tenancy managers and property assessors observed that many properties were still effectively unsafe, as tenants removed smoke alarm batteries and disconnected window restrictor stays to ventilate rooms more fully. The Safekids recommendation was for window restrictor stays that could be released without the use of a key or tool in the event of an emergency. However, the findings in this study suggest that undetachable window restrictor stays would be preferable to prevent

tampering and subsequent fall risk. Windows on a second storey are unlikely to provide a viable emergency exit route anyway, and where they could, a window could be broken to allow exit.

While Housing New Zealand's driveway safety programme is creating safer properties for households with children under five, attention needs to be turned to site design in future developments to ensure all properties can be suitably fenced to separate young children from vehicles (Shepherd *et al.* 2010). The study shows that a fenced play area is an essential requirement for children. The securely fenced area does not need to be large to provide amenity value for children. Comments from tenants and applicants showed that the lack of secure outdoor play areas limited children's levels of physical activity and ability to play with some measure of independence, which is crucial for achieving normal child development milestones. Parents and other caregivers found that the efforts required to keep their children safe when appropriate safety features were not present created considerable stress. The commonality of complaints about unwanted intrusion onto properties reflects broader neighbourhood safety concerns. This issue is discussed in the section on neighbourhoods, and may overshadow the more life-threatening risk of children being run over in driveways.

The general principle related to the provision of child-proof locks and stair gates in rental housing is that this is the responsibility of the tenant, not the landlord. Housing New Zealand considered tenants responsible for some aspects of safety. Findings in this research suggest that such features are imperative to child safety for some households, and provides support for Safekids Priority 5 recommendation that these be provided by the landlord. Additionally, the findings suggest that collaboration between tenants and tenancy manager is required to achieve greater safety for children in Housing New Zealand properties.

## Household crowding

Household crowding is a common issue in South Auckland and is reflected in this research. Internationally, the Canadian Housing Occupancy Standard (CHOS) is commonly used to assess levels of crowding. However, Housing New Zealand's assessment of crowding and the number of bedrooms required is based on the 1947 Housing Improvement Regulations (HIR) which differs from the CHOS. In Housing New Zealand properties, children up to 10 years old (rather than 5 years old under CHOS) of different sexes can share a room. Housing New Zealand defines a house as overcrowded if it has a deficit of two or more bedrooms. Couples, adults over 18 years, and children over 10 years of age of different sexes are expected to have their own rooms. The HIR does not include children under one when counting the number of people per bedroom, while children over one and under 10 are counted as half a person. A deficit of two or more bedrooms is sometimes called severe household crowding in the literature.

Nationally, severe household crowding is much higher for Housing New Zealand applicants (at 25.4 percent) and tenants (15 percent) than for New Zealand households overall (3.5 percent) (Baker, Zhang *et al.* 2012). Crowding reduces significantly after applicants move to a Housing New Zealand house (Baker *et al.* 2013), which is one of the important benefits for people living in social housing. However, in South Auckland, large household sizes, very low household incomes and lack of affordable large rental houses result in higher levels of household crowding than in the rest of the country (Ministry of Social Development 2010). While the 2013 census data on crowding was not available at the time of writing, a recent study of available data on dwelling occupancy rates and bedroom numbers suggests a persistent, though perhaps not worsening, problem of crowding in South Auckland (Johnson 2014).

All people living in a Housing New Zealand property are named on the tenancy agreement, and any changes to household numbers are notified to Housing New Zealand. Where more people have joined the household, this may trigger a requirement or request for a transfer to a more suitable property. However, at the time of the interviews in South Auckland, tenants did not expect their request for a transfer to be successful. The shortage of 4+ and 1-2-bedroom properties in South Auckland meant that Housing New Zealand was placing people in properties to which they were not well matched and maintaining people in houses for the same reason.

While some of the participants' houses were already structurally crowded (had a deficit of one or more bedrooms), others had sufficient bedrooms but the occupants were functionally crowding their homes. Functional crowding refers to crowding a house as a result of the behaviour of the occupants rather than a deficit of rooms. In this sense 'functional' does not imply that the crowding is effective.

## Levels of structural and functional crowding

In South Auckland, structural crowding was the most common 'main reason' that people applied for a Housing New Zealand property. In contrast, in Porirua the most common 'main reason' for applying was health, and in Christchurch it was tenancy terminated (Housing New Zealand 2013). As would be expected, the study found a higher proportion of South Auckland applicants lived in crowded conditions than tenants, as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Number of structurally crowded households with children in South Auckland

	Applicants		Tenants		New Tenants	
Wave 1	19	63%	15	32%		
Wave 2	7	54%	12	46%	5	25%

Sixty percent of crowded applicant households had a bedroom deficit of two to four bedrooms, except one extreme case of crowding where seven more bedrooms were needed. Over half of crowded tenant households were crowded by one bedroom, and so these tenants lived in conditions that met the Housing Improvement Regulations (1947). Smaller proportions were crowded by two or three bedrooms.

Five tenant and five applicant households were living in crowded conditions in both Waves of the study, suggesting that these households with children had been living in crowded conditions for at least three years.

Functional crowding of homes was much less common than structural crowding, reported by two applicants in each Wave, three tenants in Wave One and eight tenants in Wave Two.

The interviews reveal new insights into the effects of, and reasons for, household crowding. The effects of crowding were the same for applicants and tenants, and are discussed together. The reasons for structural crowding differ between applicants and tenants, but are shaped by the same underlying problems of severe housing deprivation and/or energy hardship.

## Effects of household crowding

People living in crowded conditions commonly described problems with health and general wellbeing and disruptions to family routines and relationships. Insecure tenure, children of mixed age/gender sharing rooms, and impacts on housing condition were also described.

Overcrowded applicants and tenants mentioned feeling unsettled, frustrated and unhappy when they were describing their circumstances. They told of the impact of overcrowding on their health. An applicant said:

Overcrowding, and my children getting sick, more sick, ‘cause it’s too damp in the room... But saying [that] there is six of us in a room, my five children and myself. It can get a bit smelly with four babies, different smells. And where my room is based I’ve got the front door and the toilet, everything comes into my room, the outside smell and the toilet smell. (Wave One, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

A serious health problem associated with crowding is rheumatic fever. Housing New Zealand is part of the project Better Public Services: Supporting vulnerable children (Result three: Rheumatic Fever).<sup>4</sup> A tenant couple with eight children were waiting for a transfer to a bigger house. The tenant explained that her daughter’s rheumatic fever was caused by household crowding:

[M]y oldest daughter...she was discharged at Middlemore, she had rheumatic fever. Yeah and she affected her heart...she’s home from school till next term... But now there’s two other of my kids are positive with their throat swab [for strep throat]...they had their antibiotic now...And I think it’s caused from the overcrowded house, it’s spread...My daughter’s having injections once a month for ten years. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 41-50 years)

An applicant linked living in crowded condition to her children getting skin infections: “They’re getting sores, it’s not neighbours it’s just my kids getting [Staphylococcus] sores on their bodies. And my little



one, she's got sores in her head. It's started ever since my sister moved in a while ago [with her children]." (Wave One, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

Pania lived with five children in a two-bedroom Housing New Zealand property. In Wave One, problems with children's health, children getting older and needing more room, and taking on the care of an orphaned family member had converged to create a difficult living situation:

*I've asked for a bigger house because my daughter sleeps in the room with my eldest son ... I need a warm house, and an extra room for my daughter ... because I have the two chronic asthmatics in my room, so I can pump them up with their medication and keep an eye on them and make sure they'll always got their blankets on. ... My daughter's reached that stage where she's becoming a teenager and... Yeah and she needs her own space instead of cramped up with her brother.*

By Wave Two, Pania was still waiting for a larger house. The property was now insulated and carpeted leading to some improvements in the children's health. However, Pania was aware that continuing to live in crowded conditions made the children vulnerable to illness:

*You know and I've been pushing, trying to get an extra room you know, but I just try and back off a bit because I don't want to sound, you know, ungrateful... I don't wanna sound like that but when it comes to my kids' health I have to.*

Applicants and tenants often said that they applied for a Housing New Zealand property because they were seeking more space to create a healthier living environment for their children. One tenant described this need as "breathing space to help my children grow". She explained this further saying:

Well you know, like, if you're in cramped conditions with children it becomes overpowering and annoying, and everyone gets in one another's faces. And whereas here there's a lot of space for everyone to actually just chill out and do their own thing and there's not so much pressure. (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years)

An applicant said: "I think [what I want is] just freedom for the kids 'cause they're usually cooped up upstairs" (Wave One, MultiwC, Māori, 18-30 years).

Several tenants and applicants said their young children slept with them in the parent's bed due to crowded conditions. This could cause sleep disturbance, as this applicant explained: "I have six children ... In one room we're living four now and one of my sons, because we don't have a bunk bed, is staying with me. I cannot sleep well every night he kick me there, he kick me here" (Wave One, CoupwC, NZ European, 41-50 years).

Several applicants described sleeping on mattresses on the floor, including a pregnant woman who also slept with a young child and experienced back problems as a result (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years).

While some parents said they liked living with their own parents for the support they were able to provide, most found parenting children more difficult when living with family in crowded conditions. Some tenants and applicants said it was difficult to establish children's routines, assert discipline, and create space for children to do homework.

A tenant lived in a four-bedroom house with extended family, with a total of five adults and seven children. The couple slept in the garage, while elders and children slept in the bedrooms. The tenant said:

For my husband and I we get like our own privacy [here in the garage], we don't have to deal with the clutter that goes on in the house with my in-laws, so that helps more. My children are, whenever we need to do homework, or we need to discipline our children, like tell them what they should be doing and not, it'll be easier in here [in the garage] to sort that out. (Wave Two, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

The advantage of having extended family members around to provide support with children was traded off against disruptions to family routines. An applicant said: "Yeah it's overcrowded but I like the family around and that, but it is overcrowded like now that my daughter's in school and I want her to have her own time doing her own schoolwork and that" (Wave One, MultiwC, NZ European, 18-30 years).

A tenant with five children in a three-bedroom house, including three boys aged sixteen, thirteen and seven in one bedroom, said: "my oldest one want[s] to have their own space for his study" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years). In this case, the house was the right size when the family moved in, but the family had grown since then.

An applicant described the need to be separate from other family members and the difficulty of parenting when living in crowded conditions, saying:

They will listen, yeah routine, get them back into their routine. They're not in a routine now. They are all over the place 'cause Mummy's all over the place. Once we get settled the ears will turn back on. "Oh I can do what my cousins do, I can do this, see?" They are offline, they're off track, gone off track. If I get myself set up then they'll be fine, and they'll find themselves again. (Wave One, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

An applicant was glad to be independent from family members because of concerns about effects on the children: "Yeah, yeah I get to spend time, play with them. But, which is over there, no I, it's too many people that lives there. Smoke, drink, party. So it's a big difference. Which is here, eh? I don't drink, I don't smoke, I spend time with my kids" (Wave Two, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

Living in crowded houses could be very stressful. Privacy could be difficult to achieve. Amenities such as bathrooms could become overloaded. An applicant said: "See because once everybody's awake you have to, it's a queue in the kitchen like all one, so you have to wait your turn yeah...[and waiting for the bathroom] That's the problem, not about really like the bedroom, but it's about our space" (Wave One, MultiwC, Pacific, 31-40 years).

While it was predominantly Māori and Pacific people<sup>5</sup> who crowded houses with extended family members, this appeared to be more due to family obligations than cultural preferences for living together. Most people living in crowded conditions said they did not like it and wanted a place of their own. Living with extended family members meant that they could not control the immediate living environment of the children, for example, could not create a smoke-free home. A Pacific man, for example, who had previously lived with family explained that having a Housing New Zealand house made a "huge difference" as it enabled them to have control over their own living environment and lives. He said: "When you live on your own you have freedom. As you are well aware, when you live with family you don't have any freedom for yourself. As for here, I can choose the options for our future and things like that". Another applicant living with a partner, child, and a friend with five young children found it very stressful because "there's heaps of kids and they're noisy" (Wave One, MultiwC, Māori, 18-30 years).

Cramped conditions often led to tensions in the household between adults, and between adults and children. An applicant said: "We don't *get along* here. My grandmother's had a stroke, and she finds,

struggles to cope with this one [child]. And then I have try and stick up for her, and then my mum's sticking up for my grandmother and, I know it's just a big confusing freaking situation" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years).

As children grew older they no longer wanted to share rooms, in some cases creating friction within the family. One tenant said: "And my kid, my girl she needs her own room, yeah. ...Sometime she hate[s] my boy [laughter], yeah" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years).

Another applicant living in crowded conditions described children fighting: "Yeah, my girls, they end up fighting. My big girl end up clouting my little one but that one's quite big, my baby [laughter]. So their niggles and their jiggles" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 31-40 years).

Crowding led to some family members living in worse conditions than others. One applicant, for example, explained that the oldest son lived in the garage, which was cold and not suitable for sleeping in, but the son chose this over sharing an already crowded bedroom with his brothers (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 31-40 years). A tenant described her son's complaints about having to sleep in the lounge:

[We] had to actually turn the living room into a bedroom for my son 'cause he couldn't fit in with my twin girls who are six... To us it's just a bit too, it's a bit wrong for him because he's a teenager now and his first year in high school... My son he does want his own room, he's talking about his own privacy...he's complaining, "I want my own room. See look at that, the girls they've got my room and now I've been demoted downstairs." And I say, "I'm sorry." (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years)

Living with extended family members, whether as an applicant waiting for a home of their own or as a primary tenant with extended family members staying, created an insecure tenure situation. Applicants told of threats of prosecution and evictions due to overcrowding. Fear of eviction created considerable stress for adults, with likely impacts on children. A tenant explained that crowding the house was not by choice. The tenant appeared to feel obliged to justify having so many children in the house: "...because they came and saw there's too many of us, I have a lot of children and I can't just give them away because they're my kids I must still hold them, they're still little" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 41-50 years).

Housing New Zealand regulations state that children of different sexes should not share a bedroom after the age of ten. Some applicants described having children of mixed age/gender sharing a bedroom because of crowding. An applicant was living with extended family: A seventeen year old boy and a sixteen year old girl shared a room because of crowded conditions and because two non-sibling girls "just argue all the time" (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years). However, most tenants and applicants living in crowded conditions put girls in one room and boys in another. This sometimes meant the mother slept with the girls and the father with the boys, and one gender was more crowded than the other. An applicant said: "I've got a room of my own, the kids and their mum, oh she sleeps out here and the other girls [aged nine, eight, three and eight months] sleep in the room and the boy's [aged 14] got the other room" (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 51-64 years). Another applicant said: "Well there's three of us in our bedroom, and a boy and a girl and myself. My daughter (aged eight) sleeps on the bed and my son (14) and I sleep on the floor" (Wave One, MultiwC, Pacific, 51-64 years).

People who lived in a recombined family situation tried to keep children who were not directly related in separate bedrooms to prevent conflict. Children with mental health and behavioural problems also needed their own room to keep other children safe. However, under current housing requirements, children of the same gender and similar age are required to share a room. This suggests that the 1947 regulations require updating to suit the increased prevalence of adults raising grandchildren and other children, and for families living with mental and behavioural disorders. A tenant explained that because

they became primary caregiver to two grandchildren, Housing New Zealand transferred them to a larger house, which prevented such problems:

Because my daughter came back to live with us and she had a baby and we had [another] grandchild, bringing up, and then so rather than her go apply for a state house they said what about us all move in together, so that's what happened. We've still got the two granddaughters, but my daughter's gone, so [laughter] yeah. And it's good 'cause they've got their own room, 'cause they're inclined to, you know [laughter] don't get on that great. So they've got their own bedrooms which is good. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 51-64 years)

Overcrowding had an impact on house condition, for example, through heavy use of living areas and amenities. There were also problems with achieving adequate ventilation in the winter when a family slept in the same room causing damp and mould problems. Tenants who had moved out of their parents' homes because of overcrowding also tended to comment on the poor condition of the overcrowded house, including its lack of maintenance, tidiness and cleanliness.

## Reasons for crowding

Living with extended family members, whether as an applicant with nowhere else to live, or as a tenant offering a place for relatives with nowhere else to live, was the most common reason for household crowding. Other related reasons included having large families, meeting responsibilities to adult children, and extended family members who were unwell, transient or otherwise in need. Natural increase in the size of the family accounted for a small number of tenants living in crowded conditions.

The underlying issue in most crowding situations was what Amore *et al.* (2013) described as 'severe housing deprivation', or put more simply, poverty and lack of habitable, affordable housing. Moving into a state house (as the primary tenant) typically creates security of tenure, reduces crowding, provides a habitable home, and allows the household to have more money to spend on essentials other than rent. However, applicants crowding tenant households created household crowding for the tenants. This was most commonly amongst Māori and Pacific.

Fifteen tenants in Wave One and 17 tenants in Wave Two were crowded. All but one of these households had extended family members living with them, while one had a caregiver. These tenants living in severely crowded conditions shared their homes with their parents, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, and nieces and nephews. This included three families that already had large families (five to seven children) themselves, making an already crowded house more crowded.

A Pacific tenant, who had been living with her husband's in-laws in an overcrowded situation, was happy to accept a one-bedroom house for herself, partner and young child. The woman said:

I hate to see someone suffer because another three family members move and try and feed their kids and put them to school. I'm not just like other Island people, they like to do things together and just live in one room, too crowded for me. So that's another reason we were so pleased to get an answer from the Housing to get this place really fast... Yeah this is the first house we seen and then I said, "Let's go for it." I'm dying to have my own place. (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

Most applicants living in crowded conditions lived with extended family members because they did not have any other housing choices – this included 15 applicants in Wave One and four in Wave Two. Most of these people lived in severely crowded conditions (two or more bedroom deficit), and they had no control over or security of tenure, therefore they could be described as being severely housing deprived. Often they lived with extended family on tolerance, which could change at any time, thus reflecting a lack of control over their property and tenure.

In a few cases, applicants were living in crowded conditions by hosting extended family members who had come to stay because they had nowhere else to live. For example, an applicant lived in a two-bedroom home with two daughters aged 10 and 13, and also had her niece and three-year-old child staying. The applicant said:

I sleep in the lounge, my niece sleeps in the room with her son and my daughters in the back room which fits just two beds. [laughter] [niece been there a year]...She used to live in our garage but it just got flooded in winter, the rain just sort of just come down and I said, "No that's it, come upstairs."...But then, 'cause her son's quite sick and I didn't like him, them being down there...she had nowhere to go, yeah she had nowhere else to go. (Wave Two, MultiwC, Māori, 31-40 years)

A common reason for crowding, usually linked to severe housing deprivation, was people seeing it as their responsibility to house relatives who had nowhere else to live. Some family members were also regarded as their responsibility for other reasons, particularly adult children, relatives' children who required fulltime care, and other family members who were unwell.

Adult children were commonly seen as just part of the family and when the house was too small, they made do with what they had. A tenant couple lived with their four children, including a 21-year-old, in a three-bedroom home. When it became untenable for the 13-year-old boy to share with his younger sisters, they converted half of the lounge for him. The tenant explained that their willingness to accommodate an adult child conflicted with Housing New Zealand's expectations. The tenant said:

No matter how many times, I'm always telling them [I need a bigger house]. "Yes we know that but you're lucky you have a roof over your head, when do you think your daughter's going to be moving out?" And I said, "You've got no right to tell me to tell my daughter that she needs to move out." So it's just, it was just ongoing, this is, the only reason why I'm staying here is because yeah it's affordable and it's close for my children to go to school and that's what I've always wanted. That's what I kept on telling them, they said, "You can do that when you go private." (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years)

Obligations to older children were particularly evident when the older child was experiencing difficulties with health or other issues. For example, a tenant lived in a three-bedroom house with her three children aged two, 12, and 13, but then an older son with mental health problems had come back home to live, resulting in a crowded household. The tenant said:

But since I've had him up here he's in my care, and you can take in you know the first thing he was looking for was a home, was his family, was his mum. And I only just got this [three-bedroom] home and my son moved in with us about three months [later making it crowded]. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years)

In Wave One, another tenant lived with her children aged six, eight, and 21 in a three-bedroom house, but was expecting another child to return shortly. The tenant said:

So one more, is going to be back home in the end of this month, my sixteen years old, been a naughty boy, a naughty kid, so he's up [north] and the plan is he's going to be back home. The people, the health people came around, had interview with me, they ask me to apply for a new house, another house. (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 41-50 years)

By Wave Two, the teenager had come home and then left again, but for the last two years, one of this tenant's older children had returned with a partner and their three children. As a result, the household became severely crowded (deficit of two bedrooms). The tenant and two children slept in the lounge, the tenant on the couch and the children on airbeds, leaving the three bedrooms for the adult child, partner and three children.

A few tenants and applicants had become the primary caregiver for grandchildren, nieces/nephews, younger siblings and children from former relationships, resulting in the house being crowded. A family of ten that included an infant niece managed by having the parents sleep separately:

Eight kids with us...yeah ten of us, but only three bedrooms...The first bedroom, my husband and the three boys...The other bedrooms, me and my two boys and my niece, the kids, my little ones, there's four of us [in the bedroom], yeah. And the other room is for my girls...[aged] fifteen and nine. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 41-50 years)

A tenant lived in a two-bedroom home with a young daughter and 21-year-old brother. The tenant shared a bedroom with the nine-year-old daughter. The brother had come to stay because they had experienced repeated burglaries and felt unsafe. The brother had stayed on due to his own mental health problems that prevented him from working. The tenant said: "I've been on the waiting list for like since I've been here...[They keep saying] I'm not a priority...Yeah there's needier families, which is understandable, yeah".

Tenants described how their homes acted as nodal houses, caring for sick and disadvantaged family members or friends, and providing a hub for their extended family. The stability of their tenure enabled them to take this role. A tenant said: "I've got a grandson who I quite often look after overnight and I've got a spare room for him... 'cause he's got cerebral palsy" (Wave One, SolewC, NZ European, 51-64 years). Another tenant explicitly described her role in the family as the network hub: "[B]oth my parents have gone now, I've got five older brothers and I'm the baby and my mum passed on seven years ago and since then I've become mama, nana, counsellor, bank account, you know...I'm a network for my family" (Wave One, MultiwC, NZ European, 31-40 years).

One of the things Pania liked about living in a Housing New Zealand property was that it provided a base for her extended family. Despite already being crowded, with six people living in a two-bedroom house, Pania provided a base for many young relatives. She said:

*[There are] twenty-two grandchildren on our side, so they all come here 'cause it's home. That's the good thing, it's not just home for me and my children, it's home for all my family... [D]uring the holidays my, all my nieces and nephews they'll come here, 'cause they know that I'm the one that'll get up and cook a feed... They've come here to stay while they've been looking for somewhere.*

Pania had lived in crowded conditions most of her life. One of the main reasons she had applied for a Housing New Zealand property was because she lived with extended family members, including "about twenty of us" in a four-bedroom house. Now it was her turn to provide a base for the extended family.

Other people had extended family members come to stay from overseas, sometimes for extended or regular periods of time. An applicant said:

[M]y mother-in-law who comes and she's always here for at least six to nine months with us... when extended family come and stay we need the space... 'cause my daughters need their own space as well. So just have a two-bedroom house, with everyone here [laughter] it don't work ... We put the two girls with us, we have them in our room and then the mother[-in-law], yeah she has their room. (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

A few applicants and tenants described times in their lives when they had shifted frequently because of changing life circumstances and/or insecure housing tenure, and as a result, often lived in crowded conditions with the extended family. A woman was in the 18 to 30 year age group and was living with family in overcrowded circumstances with her children in South Auckland. Between Wave One and Wave Two of the study, she had been an applicant, a tenant, a previous tenant and was now trying to get on the waiting list again. In one year she had accepted the offer of a Housing New Zealand house that was too small, moved out into private rental and moved back to her mother's place where she was when we interviewed her in Wave One. She said:

"I just want that house, could you give me?" So they gave me the house, when a four-beddie comes up I'm entitled to that to move straight in. But because my dad took sick, I wanted to take my dad on, but I couldn't stay in that Housing New Zealand house, so I moved out [to private rental]...Because I had him and it's like overcrowding... I didn't like that, so I moved out of that house to another private house and then because my dad had moved on to one of my other sisters, it was better for him. And then I had issues with that house and I moved back here, so this is where I am now. And that's all done in one year. (Wave One, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

When we interviewed the woman in Wave Two she had just reapplied to Housing New Zealand for a house and was told she had to try for a private rental before her application would be considered. She said: "I have to go and look for some real estate homes and if I don't get approved there then I can make that application with Housing New Zealand...it's a long process".

Limited variety in housing types in South Auckland meant that some families, particularly large families (five or more children) but also single parents with one or two child families, could end up living in crowded conditions.

Three tenants in Wave One and five in Wave Two had large families and lived in crowded conditions, with deficits of between one and three bedrooms. Most large families were crowded due to natural increase or living with extended family members.

A few applicants had large families and were unable to afford to rent houses with enough bedrooms. Some applicants struggled to find any house to rent at all. For example, an applicant with six children explained how relieved they were to finally rent a house, despite it being too small for the family:

[T]here is no place, this is still a small house for me...I have six children and two people in every room. In one room we're living four now and one of my sons, because we don't have a bunk bed is staying with me... but I want to thank God that I found this house because these agencies you know Barfoot & Thompson and they, they refused me in a house of three bedroom...they want me to go four bedroom, four bedroom is over four hundred dollar. If I don't earn four hundred dollars, no way I'm going to be in there...I apply for the house, when they see six children they told me write four children. How can I write four if I have six?

A tenant who was living in crowded condition due to natural increase said:

Yeah so there's seven of us all up [in a three-bedroom house]... Yeah it's quite cold and plus it's overcrowded now. I mean like three years ago when we moved here I only had the three kids, but I've had two kids since we've been here so it's way too overcrowded. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

A tenant who was paying market rent wanted to transfer to a bigger home, but was not eligible. This tenant was planning to move out of Housing New Zealand housing within a year.

Yeah it's very small rooms, very, very small. ...Oh I have two kids, a boy and a girl. The boy is five and the girl is eight, so they share their room, and the room is very small. Yeah and the problem is we applied for transfer two times and they still declined because we are both work so

they said we are not qualified anymore for New Zealand house. The option they give us is to go and buy a house or to private rent. (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years)

Not knowing about the ability to apply for a transfer to another house led a family to live in extremely crowded conditions unnecessarily. The applicant couple with seven boys aged between one and 13 slept in two bedrooms in a relative's house. The applicant explained that they used to live in a Housing New Zealand house for 12 years but when one of them lost their job, they decided to shift to a more familiar neighbourhood where they thought there would be more job opportunities. They did not know that they could have applied for a transfer, so gave up the Housing New Zealand property. The applicant said:

No, we let that house go because at the time there was, oh I didn't like the neighbours, they sucked and we knew that there were better job opportunities out here, 'cause we'd been here most of our lives anyway. And we knew that there were better work opportunities out this way. So we let that house go and we came over here, well with the intention that we weren't going to be here this long and get a job and get some money and get a house. (Wave One, MultiwC, Māori, 18-30 years)

They moved in with the parents of one of the couple who rented a three-bedroom Housing New Zealand property. They informed Housing New Zealand and had lived in the house for a year and a half at the Wave One interview. Asked if they had ever thought of renting privately, the couple said:

Participant 1: Yes we have. I think it was just mainly the bond you know trying to get that bond up, 'cause some of them were two grand, two and a half and that, oh well let's go to the tree and get some money off it.

Participant 2: At the time we had saved some money, we had no vehicle so shopping was terrible for me, but we bought that van and every time we seem to have an increase we seem to have an increase on the van as well.

Researcher: 'Cause WINZ, WINZ has Accommodation Supplement and they usually give a helping out wouldn't they, have you ever approached WINZ?

Participant 2: No, I haven't really?...

Three years later, the family was not living in a Housing New Zealand property and did not take part in Wave Two of the study.

Cost of heating was the main reason whole families slept in one room. Sleeping together in one room created problems with condensation and children's health, but some families chose this over being cold. A tenant said: "My kids are bound to end up in hospital this year... 'cause I already know the house is too cold...this winter, like last winter and the winter before, we'll be all sleeping in the lounge because it's a lot warmer" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years).

One couple shared with two young children because the children did not feel safe to sleep in the second bedroom which was on a different floor of the house from the parents.

One applicant and one tenant explained that one of the bedrooms was uninhabitable due to damp and mould. The applicant explained that the house they were renting had a leak, so they had been sleeping in the living room:

I had a hole in the ceiling in the girls' room, but they've got asthma and the mildew, it's just setting in on the roof now... they sent a roofing man in, a tiler, but he said there's a hole in the roof and the water's getting in through there and it's, he was saying that it's no good for the kids' asthma so usually we sleep out here sometimes on the floor...that's been like four months now through winter. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years)

A Māori sole parent and young son had recently shifted into a two-bedroom Housing New Zealand property at Wave One, ending a long period of severe housing deprivation. The tenant described how



pleased they were to have their own home and for the child to have his own room for the first time in his life:

Just me and my son had been jumping from couch to couch for a little while and we needed our own space, yeah. And our lifestyle wasn't too healthy, like for...my son, moving around all the time...I love just having my own place...And that [son] has his own room and he's adjusted really well to this house and he's sleeping in his own room, like first time ever we've had our own place and he sleeps in his own room, he's fine with it, he loves it. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years)

The property worked well for the parent due to having secure tenure and because of its convenient location. However, by Wave Two, some concerns for the child's health and safety had appeared. There was nowhere for the child to play outside safely and because they shared a driveway with neighbours, the boy had to stay inside all the time unless the child was with the parent. The house was also very cold. Unable to afford to heat the house, and concerned about the condition of the child's bedroom, the boy slept in the parent's bedroom during the winter. The tenant said:

'Cause my son's room gets no sun at all through winter. Like at the moment there's a bit of sun but towards the end of summer he gets, oh winter he gets no sun and it's really damp and cold... Yeah in my son's room there gets quite a bit of mould in there. Just have to wipe the walls down quite often. And the ceiling. So I don't like to chuck him in there through winter 'cause it's just too cold...He sleeps with me or depending he can go in his bed if he wants, but he usually sleeps with me. (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years)

Asked how moving into a Housing New Zealand home has made a difference for them, in Wave Two the tenant said: "Yeah well it's given us somewhere to live. That's been really good. I won't move out of here until I get a job, which I've got, like my casual job, but once I finish studying then yeah. So it's helped a lot...Yeah, a cheap somewhere to live, yeah".

A Pacific couple with four children lived in a two-bedroom Housing New Zealand property. They were waiting for a transfer to a larger house. The couple and their two small daughters slept in one bedroom and their two boys slept in the second bedroom. In winter the house felt very cold. An open fireplace in the living room was available to heat the house. The cost of power was too expensive for the family to use other types of heating. The tenant said: "We just use the fireplace and sometimes we end up just sleeping in the living room. Another reason for the family all sleeping in the living room was when the neighbours have loud parties which frightened the boys" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years). Another tenant family lived in crowded conditions due to an inadequate number of bedrooms, extended family living with them, and the need to stay warm in winter. The tenant said:

But we're just looking for the kids 'cause they're growing up and seems like we need to get a three bedroom...[we have] two-bedroom but we have one boy and two girls but now that my husband's [teenage] sister is moving in [with] us... We let the Housing New Zealand know that she live with us, because she can't rent a house for herself so we support her...Right now, 'cause it's coming up to winter, we sleep all with the kids in one bedroom and just my sister-in-law sleep in one bedroom. (Wave Two, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

## Crowding – a symptom of severe deprivation and energy hardship

The main reason for structural crowding for applicants and tenants was severe housing deprivation. Applicants were severely housing deprived, and tenants had relatives living with them who were severely housing deprived. The common perception that Pacific and Māori like to live together and do not mind crowding was not supported by the interview data. People said they did not like living in crowded conditions and it was only tolerated as this was the only option due to low incomes, debt, bad

credit ratings, health problems or other difficult life circumstances. All aspired to have their own home over which they had control, but to do that, the home needed to be affordable and habitable, which was often difficult to attain. The advantage of living with family was they had a “roof over their heads”, and often it was cheaper and came with some support for childcare and housekeeping. However, the benefits were often outweighed by the impacts on children’s health and wellbeing. These impacts meant that for most people living in crowded conditions, having adequate housing for all family members was urgently needed. It can also be inferred that for some families, crowding resulted in poorer health, lower educational achievement, and poorer quality family relationships. These effects were borne by individuals and families but also by the state, for example, through health care costs for rheumatic fever, infectious diseases and respiratory diseases.

The study shows that parents did not consider that their obligations towards their children ended when the children turned 18 years old, particularly when their adult children were in need of support due to financial, health or other forms of stress. Young adults now live at home longer in New Zealand due to higher participation rates in tertiary studies and delayed entrance into full time employment, marriage and parenthood (Statistics NZ 2006:2, in B. James 2007:36). This sense of responsibility is also reflected in financial support for tertiary students, which mostly falls to parents until their children’s age of 25. Yet when it comes to housing adult children (aged 18 years or over), policy is based on these young adults being financially self-reliant.

Baker, Goodyear *et al.* (2012) highlight that the number of people affected by crowding is significantly higher than the number of crowded households. Our study suggests that these people who are not usually represented in crowding statistics are mostly children, and that ill-effects of crowding are at least as evident for children as for adults. Another compounding factor for young children is that they are home more than older household members and so are more vulnerable to the effects of crowding.

The study shows that families who were themselves facing hardship were providing support to other family members, in the absence of alternative options. This results in the families facing further risks to themselves, and making children’s health and wellbeing more vulnerable.

Functional crowding of houses was largely a response to living in a cold, damp house, combined with energy hardship. Merely installing a heater in the lounge (or any other room) did not prevent functional crowding as tenants lived on very low incomes and heating was one of the few expenses that they could limit. Other measures such as those described in the Warm, dry houses section, have helped (e.g., thermal drapes, full insulation, and houses built to maximise passive energy). Additionally, support with heating costs for those most vulnerable to cold, such as children with asthma, would make a significant difference to these households.

Applicants and tenants living in severely crowded conditions lack at least two of the core dimensions of housing adequacy identified by Amore *et al.*’s research: habitability, privacy and control, and security of tenure. Whether a person lives in a Women’s Refuge home, and so is currently categorised as homeless, or is living in very crowded conditions with relatives, they are urgently in need of adequate housing. The study therefore supports Amore *et al.*’s (2013) view that ‘severe housing deprivation’ is a more appropriate term than ‘homelessness’ for people who lack access to minimally adequate housing. The term also avoids the negative and often inaccurate stereotype of homeless people being those who live on the streets.

## Neighbourhoods and familiar places

A limited evidence base exists on effects of neighbourhood on New Zealand children. Researchers have investigated the link between neighbourhoods and physical activity in the study *Understanding the Relationship Between Activity and Neighbourhoods (URBAN)* (Badland *et al.* 2009). Research has highlighted the lack of a family voice in urban planning in New Zealand (Carroll *et al.* 2011). A more recent paper examines children's use and experiences of urban neighbours in Auckland (Carroll *et al.* 2015).

Poor quality neighbourhoods are found internationally to be detrimental to children's emotional, behavioural and learning outcomes (Edwards 2005, Edwards and Bromfield 2009). Concentration of social housing is often understood as a major contributor to the creation of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, recent research suggests that tenancy and property management are critical intermediary factors and that well managed neighbourhoods with a concentration of poor people in them can provide positive living environments for children (Arthurson 2012).

The outcome framework (see Appendix 3) constructed on the basis of interviews with tenants and applicants participating in the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study identified the characteristics of a good neighbourhood as including low neighbourhood crime, having considerate neighbours, a supportive peer group for children, close to family, friends and chosen community, and close to amenities. However, our analysis of the types of neighbourhood attributes that adults wanted for their children placed a greater emphasis on neighbourhoods where children and adults felt safe, in places that were familiar, and where family, friends and amenities, especially schools, were close by.

Most tenants and applicants with children liked their neighbourhoods and felt safe living there (see Table 15, Appendix 4). Over 80 percent of applicants were happy or very happy with the neighbourhoods they were living in, and this did not change between Waves One and Two. Tenants presented a different picture from applicants. Sixty-four percent of tenants in Wave One were happy/very happy with their neighbourhoods, and 84 percent in Wave Two. The results for new tenants were similar to the results for tenants in Wave One. The neighbourhoods were the same as applicants', so there is no obvious explanation for the increase in Auckland tenants' happiness with their neighbourhoods.

In Porirua and Christchurch, tenants with children were also happier in Wave Two than in Wave One, but in those situations we know the probable reasons. The Porirua neighbourhoods had a Community Renewal Project running which finished shortly after Wave One interviews were completed and this could have had ongoing positive impacts on how people felt about their neighbourhoods. The Christchurch earthquakes resulted in neighbours working together to keep safe. People whose houses had come through the earthquakes with minor damage were very thankful for this. These experiences may explain some of the increase in happiness that people felt about their neighbourhoods in Christchurch.

Applicants and tenants reside in the same neighbourhoods and therefore the findings about neighbourhoods from these two groups are not distinguished in this discussion. This section covers the neighbourhoods children live in, and considers this in relation to the neighbourhood attributes that households with children valued: family, friends and neighbours, close to amenities, and safe neighbourhoods for children. This is followed by a discussion of the crosscutting theme of familiarity with a place and its people and reflections on what these findings about neighbourhoods for children contribute to the literature.

## Family, friends and neighbours

Being close to friends and family was a characteristic of the relationships with people that made a good neighbourhood. Neighbours were a pool of people within which friendships developed. In this section we report tenants' and applicants' views on family, friends and neighbours.

The majority of tenants said that having family in the neighbourhood was important (see Table 17, Appendix 4) because of shared values, companionship and support. On companionship a tenant said: "Well, it's nice to have company 'cause it's just me and my kids and it's lonely, and 'cause I've always been around a big family, it's quiet and boring" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, Pacific, NZ European, 18-30 years). Strong family relations were also valued by some. A tenant said: "It's just nice to have the whānau around... Our kids are always amalgamating together which means as they get older they know who their family are, the whānau is definitely good there for support and likewise" (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years). Family gave support with child care, transport and caring for unwell family members. A tenant said: "'Cause one of my child got asthma when he was little. So what we had to do, just drop them to grandma... with my daughter in hospital" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years).

A few people did not want to live near family, or said that it was not important to have family nearby. Several people said that as parents, they needed to be away from negative effects of family members such as anti-social behaviour and high expectations of gifting and other forms of support. A tenant said: "Well that's why I came here, to get away from them...'cause half my family are, I'm not being mean, are half-wits... But being here you know my sister don't come over much. If we were closer to her she'd be here being a pain every day" (Wave One, CoupwC, NZ European and Pacific, 31-40 years).

About half of the tenants thought it important to live near friends (see Table 18, Appendix 4). Friends living nearby was particularly important for some people who did not live near family, creating a support network for parents and companionship. A tenant said: "I, it's very important like, because I don't have really lots of family around so my family, my friends will be around, yep, support me and, yeah" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years).

Overall, more people wanted family rather than friends living in the neighbourhood. This preference was because people saw relationships with family as more enduring than with friends. A tenant said: "'Cause friends they come and go, family they're tight forever" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years). Some people were not concerned that they did not have friends in the neighbourhood. The reasons for this varied from being "too busy", preferring to keep to themselves, and wanting to prevent intrusion or conflict in their living environment: "'cause friends do bite sometimes" (Wave One, MultiwC, Māori, 31-40 years).

For some people, friends in the neighbourhood were important for support with parenting. A tenant said: "[J]ust if I need help with anything, they're not too far away, or if I have problems with my car or if the kids are sick, they're not too far for me to..." (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years). Another tenant said: "To help look after the kids and that friendship, fellowship" (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years).

In many cases, parents and other caregivers described their children having friendships with children nearby, and this was often used to describe a good neighbourhood for children. A tenant said: "Yeah, I feel safe with [neighbours] 'cause the kids they can just play around, my kids can just go to their house, their kids just come here, they play around" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years). Another tenant said: "It's [an] awesome neighbourhood down here. Has its troubles but every street has its troubles. It's really kids oriented street. Yeah we've got the park over there so, my kids know just about everyone around here" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years).

Two tenants said that, as parents, they valued being away from "bad influences" of old friends. A tenant said:

To be quite honest, it's taken us away from all the bad influences [laughter] we were surrounded by too many of our mates that drunk a lot and stuff. And here they're all very quiet so you tend to be like the neighbours. So yeah our neighbourhood's good like that so we've adjusted to it... Yeah it's been excellent. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years)

Another tenant said: "I'll get into old habits again. [laughter] No, they've been moaning at me 'cause I don't go out with them anymore and just stay home and look after my kids" (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years).

Where adults had friends nearby themselves, then children were more likely to have friends nearby also. An applicant said: "It's perfect, yeah, it's actually perfect 'cause, well I actually know the whole neighbourhood really, I'm the only brown person in it [laughter]. But the kids actually know everybody, so they can run around and do their stuff" (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years). Conversely, adults who did not socialise a lot locally tended to have children who did not have friends nearby either. A tenant said: "Oh no they haven't [got friends around here] eh 'cause all the kids are bigger, a lot bigger than them and the girls...Oh no they don't really worry about that, they just sort of play here" (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 51-64 years).

What counts as being 'close by' for adults may be quite different for children. A tenant living in Otara, asked if she had friends living nearby said "Yeah in areas like Dannemora and Manukau Heights". The child spoke up and said: "and Papakura". The researcher later asked:

Researcher: How's it been for the children living here?

Child: It's kind of terrible.

Researcher: Why?

Child: Because I don't have anyone to play with.

Researcher: You don't have any friends around here?

Child: No

Housing New Zealand complexes (see Figure 3) or multi-unit properties provided a great peer group for some children. A tenant living in a complex said: "My kids, my boys they play with all the kids around here, you know?...Yeah my kids are out there every afternoon with all the neighbours. They play touch here...Even the other kids from those houses over there, they come up here and play" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years). Another tenant in a multi-unit property said: "They love living in the neighbourhood, they go play...Oh 'cause the neighbours, little kids their age, they play outside, they go on the scooters or up and down and they go play netball and rugby and, yeah" (Wave Two, MultiwC, Pacific, 41-50 years).

In some neighbourhoods, however, other children caused considerable problems for adults and children, and so adults preferred their own children not to socialise locally. People's concerns were about young people roaming the streets, being verbally and physically abusive, stealing, vandalising property, and generally making the place feel unsafe. Adults were concerned about the lack of supervision and discipline of local youth. A tenant said:

At least once a year my oldest boy's been given a hiding, by a couple of kids in the neighbourhood. My youngest one, he got stood over by some high school kids coming home... we need to get law and order back...There's parents out there that just don't [care]. They just let the kids drink...Down the reserve...It's just the thing, you just got to tell your neighbourhoods, "If you see them doing it ring the cops, don't hesitate". (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years)

A major parenting concern for some tenants and applicants was that their own children and grandchildren would be influenced by these neighbourhood children and that they would end up joining local gangs or otherwise taking up crime and anti-social behaviour. An applicant said: “Oh I just don’t want my kids growing up in a[n] ugly environment. I don’t want my kids growing up and they wanna fight like those people” (Wave One, MultiwC, Māori, 18-30 years). A tenant said:

[A]round here the kids they are running around and they come here and make trouble around the block...they are drinking, swearing ...when I heard something going on around at the back I keep my kids safe in the house...but they can’t, I mean the boy. He always want to go out and play with their friends...Before they told me, “Mum I don’t want to stay, I don’t want to stay in this house and around this street”, they’ don’t like it but...but my sons now I think they know what those kids are doing and they are thinking “no”, all those things. But it’s too late. I should have to move away before he learn from them...now he wants to go walk around. (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years)

‘Neighbours’ for some people were the people who lived immediately either side of them. For other people neighbours included all the households living within sight or hearing of their home. For example, for those in Housing New Zealand complexes, neighbours included many households that used a common access point from the road.

The concept of ‘good neighbours’ ranged from little or no interaction, through being reasonable or considerate, looking out for each other’s kids and property, becoming friends, to being treated like an extended family. As a tenant said, “you can’t choose your neighbours. But it makes life a bit easier if you get on with your neighbours, it does make life easier if, you don’t want to be rowing with your neighbours, that’s gonna make life hard” (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 65-74 years). The inability to choose their neighbourhood may be particularly relevant to Housing New Zealand tenants and people in the lower quartile private rental sector.

While some people deliberately cultivated friendships with neighbours to help themselves feel safe and secure, others said they preferred to ‘keep their distance’ from neighbours, and were happy as long as neighbours did not disturb the peace or otherwise intrude. A tenant said of the last Housing New Zealand property they lived in:

Oh I talked mostly to the kids but the parents around there, I’m not saying all but I definitely know some of them, as soon as they woke up they’d be drinking in their driveways, just the young idiots. And I notice the older people they just, they did stay to themselves. Probably didn’t, well you wouldn’t, and I’ll speak for myself, I wouldn’t want to really know anyone there anyway ‘cause then that’s just like inviting trouble to your house. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years)

Some people lived by the old adage of ‘Good fences make good neighbours’. An applicant said: “[O]h they’re sweet, ‘cause they keep on their own side of the fence and I keep on mine” (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years). A tenant explained that keeping an eye out for each other’s houses was all they could manage: “Yeah we prefer to keep to ourselves, we find there’s enough going on inside our own gate without having to worry about what, but we do keep an eye out for the houses you know like strangers and that. ...Yeah they do the same for us too, they help us when we go away” (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years).

Asked in Wave One if it was important to have supportive neighbours, most applicants and tenants said it was important or very important (see Table 19, Appendix 4). A tenant said:

To have reasonable neighbours, yeah is important...because supportive means having a connection with them and when you get support from someone, you’re experiencing something from them...it’s just in this day and age it doesn’t, you don’t feel the opportunity arises that everyone just wants to stick to themselves, that’s what people do, that’s how they live their lives you know.

So it's just, yeah so I don't know about that support part. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori and NZ European, 41-50 years)

Another tenant said: "Yeah, I like to have the support of everybody, neighbours, friends, whānau, Housing New Zealand, everybody and the Church... Oh with the neighbours around I feel very safe, it's my other families, yeah my extended family" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years). Having children made it particularly important to have neighbours who were considerate and looked out for each other's children. A single parent appreciated having people around to provide support and help out in a crisis:

I'm really close to all my neighbours, I don't have to worry about my kids... Yeah, they watch my house... She watches my kids if I can't take them with me, like when I go to Housing it's safe, it's a safe neighbourhood... it's mainly raising my family. I don't have to do it all on my own. I don't have to think that I can do it all on my own. There are people that will help me. Oh, I don't know how to explain it... I think it's more about my kids than anything else. If I really need a ride, any of my neighbours would help me to get there if I needed to go somewhere. (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years)

Some people also described the importance of having neighbours who "look out for the kids". A tenant said:

It's a good neighbourhood and we look after, well the kids when they're playing on the road that you can see there, yeah it's good... friendly... Look out for one another, when it's like crime, anything to do with crime and that they're right in there, yeah it's good... Yeah, parents are getting onto it with their kids. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years)

Another tenant said:

My next door neighbour that's my really good friend... like I have a sore tooth so I had to go early to pull it off, so I asked my next door, yep all my five kids with them, with her... [some things with the neighbours' children] I wasn't happy about... but like helping each other it's good. (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years)

Having a neighbourhood with some older people was valued by some adults as it provided support in parenting. A tenant said:

Oh that side neighbours it's a eighty, seventy odd... The other lady she's a seventy year old-ish lady, the daughter goes there and the kids go there... they just come over now and again and adopted her as our nanny. Yeah this side they had mokos, she's a nanny with a couple of kids and their kids were mingling with our kids and across there, they're nice... Oh good, 'cause our daughter's not fear of the road yet, she goes about the end of that street down there and down here and next minute whoever lives down there is bringing her home... next minute oh they're best friends with their children, or they go to the school with our kids... Yeah bit of a mixture of age groups in the street which helps a lot, 'cause I grew up with elderly people more than young ones. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 31-40 years)

The neighbourhood turned 'bad' when neighbours hosted regular, loud parties. Tenants and applicants were concerned that their children were disturbed by the noise, preventing children from sleeping in some cases, and exposing them to the sounds of obscene language and fighting, which sometimes spilled over into their own properties. A tenant said that their children were kept awake by the neighbour's parties, and commented: "Okay, the bad thing, sometime the next door neighbour they like party a lot and like it's too noisy... Yeah, sometimes they like party like starting from Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday they finish" (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years). Another tenant said: "Because my kids are too small, yeah... because the other neighbours they are drinking beer and they have swear words, yeah, and I don't want my kids to hear those words" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 41-50 years).

## Close to amenities

Being close to amenities is a characteristic of a place that makes a good neighbourhood. In Wave One tenants and applicants were asked how easy it was to get to places of importance such as work, schools, shops, the doctor and public transport. Most applicant and tenant households with children lived close to amenities that were important to them (see Table 16, Appendix 4).

For a few people, being close to amenities was the best thing about the neighbourhood. A tenant said: “The main reason that I love living in this house, it’s close to everything... Like school, doctors, shopping centre, the flea market, and it’s handy” (Wave Two, MultiwC, Pacific, 41-50 years). Another tenant said: “The best thing about this neighbourhood is that it’s close to the doctor’s...The school...All the community is right there...Local to everything. We’re local to everything. The hospital” (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 31-40 years).

From adults’ perspectives, the most important amenities to have nearby for households with children were shops and schools. A tenant said: “It’s close to everything and it’s handy to shopping centre’s just next door down here yeah, Manurewa High that’s where my boys go yeah, so it’s a good location” (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years). An applicant said: “I’m happy that it’s close to things like the bus stop, my children’s school, shops and those sorts of things” (Wave Two, SolewC, Pacific, 51-64 years). For those with medical conditions, easy access to medical centres and hospitals was very important (Wave Two, SolewC, Pacific, 51-64 years).

A few people mentioned parks or other outdoor public spaces as important amenities to have nearby. Asked how their ten-year-old boy liked living in the neighbourhood and multi-unit home, the parent said:

I think he likes it and ‘cause we only discovered the park around the block...He told me he was standing there and he goes, “We’ve got a park over there,” and, “No there’s not, it’s houses.” He goes, “It’s a park,” and I go, “It’s not.” He goes, “Walk around, it’s a park”. (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years)

A tenant living with six grandchildren aged between two and thirteen said that having sports fields close by was important to the older children: “Oh yes, they love it, because they like the sports, and the fields are so handy [laughter]...and if it’s not touch rugby that they’re playing, they’re playing netball, and soccer [and] rugby league” (Wave One, MultiwC, Māori, 65-74 years).

An applicant living with grandchildren near the local school, said there was not much for the children around the neighbourhood:

Yeah like I always have to travel outside of the community for them to play, like the good parks, there is a park [in the suburb] but that doesn’t cater for little kids. And then the park down here...is just for, it has a slide, two swings and that’s pretty much it. So there’ like if you go to Botany Park they’ve got all sorts, if you go to the park in Mt Albert they’ve even got exercise equipment for the parents and this huge massive playground for the kids... (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 51-64 years)

Being within “walking distance” to schools was important for many tenants and applicants, especially for primary age children. Walking to school reduced financial and time stress on families. A tenant said: “yeah very easy like it’s just a hop, skip and a jump away to the supermarket, to the schools you know it’s just, the boys’ school is just two streets down so it’s easy” (Wave One, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years).

No-one mentioned the health benefits of walking to school for children. However, two tenants identified health reasons for the parents to walk children to school. A tenant said: “Yeah my doctor says that it’s a good idea to try and walk at least twenty minutes a day, so in the afternoon I usually walk down and go



pick up my daughter and walk back again, that's my daily exercise. Besides negotiating the stairs [laughter]" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years).

Some people talked about prioritising children's needs over their own, and this often related to proximity to children's schools. A tenant said: "Well you know once you become a parent you've got to get yourself established and I thought well the kindy's there, the school's there, it didn't go to intermediate back then and I thought well it's nice and ideal" ( Wave One, MultiwC, NZ European, 31-40 years). Some people prioritised proximity to schools over proximity to work, or chose to drive children across town to better schools. An applicant said: "I've got family who goes to the schools around here and I didn't want bad influences on my kids so I took them to their own school where they can just be themselves, learn their own things" (Wave Two, MultiwC, Māori, 18-30 years).

A high priority for tenants was living in neighbourhoods where children already went to school. A tenant said: "I had the choice out of this house and another house in Otara, but this is a better area, closer for my kids for their schools" (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years). Another tenant was not happy with the locality because of schools: "I felt that the neighbourhood is not where I would have moved to 'cause my first choice was actually Mangere because I wanted close to [son's] school and I wanted around either Mangere, Papatoe[toe] area" (Wave One, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years).

Applicant households were particularly concerned about children being close to their schools when asked where they wanted to live. An applicant said: "Possibly somewhere within this area, which is close to the school for my children" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years). Another applicant said:

I'm looking in Otara or Manurewa, mostly Otara because all my older kids go to the same school and I don't want to be jumping here and there...Or Manurewa, I can give it a go, it's the next best to Otara...[but Manurewa would] leave me no choice but to go to the closest school for them...I'm just worried about the schooling. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years)

Some applicants preferred to keep children in the same schools until they shifted, while a few refused to accept a property that was too far from the same neighbourhood schools. In one case, a family kept their children at home until they were housed by Housing New Zealand. The applicant said:

Oh my kids won't go to school, my oldest boy won't go to school...Nah he just don't wanna go to school anywhere. He said he's sick of moving, until his mother settles down he will not go to school...[the five-year-old] Nah he wants to go to school. But my husband don't wanna put him into school in case we don't get a house around here. 'Cause we're willing to take any house that comes up as long as it's not in that ugly types of environment where people are fist fighting and stuff like that. (Wave One, MultiwC, Māori, 18-30 years)

An applicant described shifting with her child and parents to a new property, and driving over an hour to take her child to school in South Auckland. Similar efforts to maintain continuity of schooling were noted in the Christchurch study after the earthquakes. Prior to the interview, the applicant moved back closer to the school:

Yeah, so I don't want to move him from there 'cause he really likes it at that school and he's doing really well. It took him a while to like adjust there and he's loving it now so I don't really want to move him...Yeah, and his cousins go there, I went there when I was younger so it's like, it's really good. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years)

While most people preferred primary-aged children to be within walking distance or a short drive to school, older teenage children were considered able to walk longer distances or catch buses to their colleges. A tenant said: "Schools, shopping, everything, it's close to everything. It's just around the corner for my children, for my girls, my [teenage] son it's just maybe about a fifteen minute walk, it all depends, fifteen to twenty minutes to high school. So yeah, no it's really good" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years).

A few people said that their older children liked the independence of being able to walk to school or catch the bus with other local children. A tenant said: “Yeah close to school... Yeah very easy and also [the teenagers] love going with friends” (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 41-50 years). Another tenant said: “I’ve got one at uni, one at [tertiary] over the Shore...they get to places, my kids are independent... Yeah they know which buses to catch and all that, we’ve taught them to do that, so yeah” (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years). And a few people said that teenagers preferred close proximity to school. A tenant said: “I think my son, he likes it here ‘cause it’s closer to school, school wise” (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years). An applicant saw their home as a roof over our head and not too far to drive to the teenagers’ school. The applicant said: “For my kids’ schooling and that I have suggested to my kids there’s kuras over [this side of Otara] but I mean, they’re doing well at Sir Edmund. My oldest has come out of there seventh form prefect. I’m happy with that ...as long as my kids are happy I’m happy”. Asked what the teenagers thought of their locality, the applicant said: “Oh they had a lot of questions. Why here? But I say, ‘Hey. Like I said, in the beginning it’s a roof over our head. Mum’s the one that has to get off her butt to get you fellas to and from school’” (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 31-40 years).

When children were older, adults described other amenities such as shops and doctors as more important to be close by than schools. A couple with a teenage son was very satisfied with their location:

[Work is ] about fifteen minutes [drive]... we got a shop there, we got Pak’n Save, we got Countdown, yeah it’s five minute or two minute, you know... My son is going to... school in Mt Roskill... On the bus yeah... the bus it’s not far from here, my son catch[es] the bus there... It’s close to everywhere, the airport, shopping doctors, hospital. (Wave One, CoupwC, NZ European, 51-64 years)

Another tenant said: “[Teenagers] oh they don’t really care. [laughter]. As long as they got a roof over their head they’re happy” (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years). Another tenant, asked if they lived close to the places that they needed to get to, responded: “well no actually it’s not close to my kids’ school but they still walk to school regardless” (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years).

## Safe neighbourhoods

Safe neighbourhoods for children were often described as places free from unwanted intrusions and where people could leave windows open and doors unlocked. Living in a safe neighbourhood was important for households with children. For some, how safe they felt determined whether they liked or disliked the neighbourhood. A tenant said: “The best things [about living here], it’s safe” (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years). An applicant, asked where she wanted to live, said: “I just, really, just want a safe house, and I don’t care where it is... I just want to be in a safe area. And yeah, feel safe” (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years).

The majority of applicants and tenants said they felt safe in their neighbourhood (see Table 20, Appendix 4). Applicants’ perceptions of how safe they felt in their community changed very little between Waves One and Two. Tenants’ perceptions improved considerably, from 66 percent saying they felt safe or very safe in Wave One to 84 percent in Wave Two. Possible reasons for an improvement in feelings of neighbourhood safety could be increased presence of Housing New Zealand contractors working on property improvements in the area, improved access to Housing New Zealand on the 0800 number, and/or the feeling that talking to interviewers meant that their voices were being heard and improvements made that assisted them to achieve their housing aspirations. For those who had remained in the same house, increasing familiarity with their neighbourhood may also have contributed.

In Wave One, Pania was asked how satisfied she was with the neighbourhood. She said:

*Very damn happy [laughter]. Does it have it [on your scale], oh no it doesn't, yeah nah love my neighbours, I wouldn't wanna be anywhere else, they all stick to themselves but when it comes to the crunch, we all stand together as a neighbourhood, make sure our kids are safe.*

Pania had lived in crowded conditions for a lot of her life. An important reason that she was happy to stay in the property was because it was a safe neighbourhood for her and her children. In Wave Two, Pania was asked if she would like a bigger place. She responded:

*In the same area, bang smack here?... It depends, like I think in all reality I think I'm the one that's scared to move, I'm the one that's safe here and if I feel safe, because being a single mum if I'm safe my kids are safe. I don't think, I've seen a lot of my family and they've moved and they've moved into some real cruddy areas and their stuff's been stolen, their house has been broken into and that's the thing about this area where I am now, I can trust the people. Like I could leave my back windows open and nothing's been touched if I come back two hours later.*

Asked whether there were problems with neighbours having parties, Pania said: No, that's one thing that's good about this place is that you just hear them laughing, there's no violence and that's awesome, that's why I love this place.

Several people said they were initially frightened by the reputation of a place and they were relieved, and sometimes surprised, to find they liked the neighbourhood. An applicant said: "It's quiet as... Yeah, I like the location itself. The first time I moved here it was, when they said Otara, oh God, 'cause I've heard the stories, but it was better to move here to find out exactly what it's like and it was a good move" (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years) A tenant said: "Yeah I really like this neighbourhood. I mean people have this thing about South Auckland is really bad, it's ghetto, but not really" (Wave Two, SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years).

A tenant living in a neighbourhood complex and off the main road described it is as safe: "Yeah 'cause it's safe as for my children. I don't have to worry. If we were living on a main road, this kind of little village situation we have going on here, it's safe as I don't have to worry about my kids getting taken or somebody coming to run away with them, or anything like that" (Wave One, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years).

While concerns about busy roads were more common, one tenant saw living on a main road as advantageous in a dangerous neighbourhood: "I feel quite safe 'cause it's on the main road" (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years).

Most tenants wanting to transfer properties reported that they wanted to stay within the same neighbourhoods. Some people described prioritising living in a safe neighbourhood over other important factors such as being close to familiar people and places.

A minority of tenants and applicants said they felt fairly scared or very scared in their neighbourhood and spoke extensively about their fears for themselves, their children and property. Things identified as making them feel unsafe for themselves and for their children included loud parties, drunkenness, arguments, gangs, street fighting, assaults, property and home invasion, theft and drug-related activities especially when these activities spilled into their properties. In some neighbourhoods, such incidents

were infrequent or involved just one neighbouring household, but had a profound impact on people's sense of safety.

Some people described more systemic neighbourhood crime that threatened their safety, or an alarming familiarity and tolerance for violent or threatening behaviour. For example, a tenant observed street fighting and other anti-social behaviour from their home "you know, someone just got their leg broken with a baseball bat, that sort of stuff". The tenant said:

[T]here's been times where [15-year-old son] has been a bit scared, yeah. When he's experienced a bit of a fear due to things that have happened or transpired, so he'll do things like close the bathroom window when he has a shower, stuff like that, or he locks the doors when he's home if I go up shop and leave him home by himself, yeah. He'll feel scared you know, but that's just due to influence, you know where he's living you know. The school he goes to, yeah, pretty rough I suppose in a way eh... So yeah, answering your question, he does feel a bit scared at times and I have at times too, you know. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori and NZ European, 41-50 years)

For some people, such concerns were just a part of daily life that they did not like, but accepted. A tenant said:

Oh it's only 'cause at the moment we've been squabbling [with the neighbours] because of our teenagers since we've moved here and you know their [gang] colour... Oh [I'm] not really scared of it, just all the friction in the air...like we're all alright, but it's just... It's pretty stink that we live on a street that don't really communicate with neighbours and things like that. (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years)

A common description of an unsafe neighbourhood was where the adults themselves would not feel safe to walk to the dairy for a bottle of milk, *let alone* the children. A tenant said:

I'm not flash and I don't want anything flash, but I wanna be able to go into my yard and do what I wanna do without being abused, I want to feel that I can walk down the street with my kid without having to worry. I just feel that the neighbourhood is not where I would have moved to...[My daughter] doesn't go outta the house very often, she stays inside and she goes when I go, but apart from that, I can't even get her to walk up to the dairy for milk. (Wave One, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years)

Busy roads and speeding traffic were concerns for households with children, and often meant that children were not allowed outside the house. A tenant who lived on a main road and had to close the windows during the interview because of the heavy traffic noise said: "[The children] hate it here... They know it's not safe, they've both witnessed a kid getting run over just outside there, yeah" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years). For several people, fear for their children's safety because they lived on a main road was their main safety concern. A tenant described repeated, unsuccessful efforts to improve road safety for children:

Probably the hooners on the road, only 'cause there's heaps of schools here... That's one of the big downfalls... I just freak out cause my baby can open our gate out here. And he's gone out on the road a few times, I thought I've almost lost him... We've tried to inquire to the council of putting speed bumps down our road... even the islands... [The neighbourhood have done] petitions and petitions [laughter] and [no change]. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years)

People described ways of protecting children in neighbourhoods where they felt unsafe. The most common way was by keeping children inside the property or house at all times. A tenant said: "But I'd never let him go anywhere by himself" (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 31-40 years). Some people also called in other family members to stay over when threats to safety occurred or while adults were out. For example, a tenant described safety concerns when they first shifted into their home, and said: "I'd call on people, 'Can you come and stay the night?'" (Wave Two, MultiwC, Māori and NZ European,

18-30 years). There were some descriptions of children resenting or challenging such requirements for constant adult supervision. A tenant said: “No she begs me [to go outside] but I won’t let her unless I’m out there with her” (Wave One, MultiwC, Pacific, 18-30 years). This could be interpreted as a mismatch between adults and children’s perception of safety, but given the dire conditions some adults describe and their own unwillingness to walk around the neighbourhood, it seems likely that in some cases, adults were more aware of threats to safety than children.

Another common strategy to keep themselves, their children and property safe was by making friends with one or more neighbours and watching out for each other’s home. A tenant said:

Yeah my kids are out there every afternoon with all the neighbours. They play touch here, you know. Even the other kids from those houses over there, they come up here and play. It’s like, and my kids, my, especially my girls are safe...’cause they know there’s too many kids so there’s no speeding down here. Or else that neighbour over there, he’s just gonna, “Stop bloody, ra ra.” (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years)

Less commonly, people worked collectively in community projects or groups to create a safer neighbourhood. Some people described initiating Neighbourhood Watch to improve neighbourhood safety and keep their children safe. An applicant said:

Well we’ve become Neighbourhood Watch now but before that there used to be break-ins...this is during the day time...I don’t hate the area, I mean I love it and now, especially now that there’s Neighbourhood Watch and we’ve got the dog I’ve got no qualms living here by myself, I go to sleep with the windows open at night time. (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 51-64 years)

Other strategies adults used to keep their family safe were to take care to lock the house and other property, have a dog, and call the police. A few tenants described the need to stand up to people who threaten their safety. A tenant said that in conflicts with neighbours, “we always have to not back down” (Wave Two, CoupwC, NZ European, 31-40 years). Another tenant said:

The teenagers, causing trouble and you know, coming over and throwing stuff over the fence, you know?... I’m straight up [laughter]. Everyone around here knows that [laughter]. I’m basically like the leader of all the houses. You know, if I’ve got something to say, I’ll just say it straight up...regardless of whether the parents are there. (Wave One, CoupwC, Pacific, 18-30 years)

Some of the tenants who said they had to stand up for themselves also talked about their children’s fears and assaults by local youth, suggesting that standing up for yourself is not a tactic that necessarily works well for children. An uncommon but effective approach for one tenant was to work with the school. This was in response to the tenant’s children being attacked by other local children:

You have kids in the neighbourhood that come up to you with sticks and my children got attacked when we first shifted in this area from the kids in the neighbourhood with sticks and I thought “Well, I’m not getting the cops involved”. I actually got the school involved. Being a newcomer to the area and the school tried to help me out and they found the culprits and they got them to do apology letters, and they personally came over and apologised. (Wave One, SolewC, NZ European, 41-50 years)

Some tenants looked to Housing New Zealand to control tenant behaviour, and felt let down by them for failing to do so. A tenant said: “[It] was just the amount of disrespect. No, these ones have got two young children and they’d be partying hard core and the other ones behind, they didn’t care. It’s like far out man, you know, Housing Corp, come on, pull your finger out, it’s called morals, if they’ve got none, don’t house them” (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 31-40 years).

A parent described being so afraid of the neighbour at their Housing New Zealand home that after six months, they had chosen to move out. Now an applicant once more, the parent said:

[N]ot that we can afford it or anything, but I had to think of my daughter's safety so that's why we moved here...the neighbour was crazy [laughter]...they were always having domestics and everything like that and she came over to my house one day and stood on the front doorstep and actually threatened me with a tyre iron while I had my daughter in my hands, so it was crazy...It was quite scary. (Wave One, MultiwC, NZ European, 51-64 years)

This person was extremely frustrated that even with letters from multiple agencies, the tenancy manager and the police were not able to resolve the situation.

## Neighbourhood priorities for households with children

What came through clearly in the interviews was that neighbourhoods were about places *and* people. Applicants and tenants with children wanted to live in safe, familiar places that were in close proximity to (or some distance from) friends and family, and near their children's schools. Having a good place to live seemed largely to come down to luck. It related not just to structural aspects of the place but also to the people, and in particular how considerate the neighbours were. Most people liked or loved their neighbourhood and felt safe there. A tenant said: "Yes, I love this area. And the neighbours around, they [are] all just like family now. ... [T]hey always say hello. Yeah, just like the whole street, everybody knows each other, yes" (Wave Two, MultiwC, Pacific, 41-50 years).

Where neighbours or their children were abusive, threatening or unpredictable; however, this created a very unpleasant living environment for some families. Structural attributes of the neighbourhood were therefore less important than the people who lived there. This was something that people felt they had very little control over. Neighbours came and went, and some neighbours' household composition changed frequently, creating neighbourhoods in constant flux. Familiarity with the place and having important networks nearby therefore acted as a resource enabling many people to manage. Pania was one of only a few people who said they deliberately chose not to live near some friends or family in an effort to create a safe living environment for the children.

Most often, familiarity was related to longevity in a neighbourhood, street or property, and included familiarity with the place and the people (neighbours, family, and friends). A tenant said: "[W]e feel more comfortable around [here 'cause we've been here] about eighteen years...[My children] actually grew up around the area and I think they've gotten to know everyone around here and everyone knows it, so no they like it" (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years).

In Wave Two, new tenants were subject to the Reviewable Tenancies<sup>6</sup> policy introduced in July 2011 which stated that all new Housing New Zealand tenancies would be regularly reviewed by the Ministry of Social Development. It is unknown how the reviewable tenancies policy will impact on tenants' ability to stay in familiar places. What is known is that new tenants who were interviewed in Wave Two, and so were subject to reviewable tenancies, came into their properties with the knowledge that the house was not theirs for life. Few had specific plans for moving beyond where they were, because dealing with the demands of daily life was all they could cope with initially. Asked how long they expected to stay in their current home, the majority said "no idea" or "maybe forever". These expectations were very similar to longer-term tenants. A new tenant said:

For me, I don't intend to live in a Housing New Zealand house for a long time. Because it's not my house. It's the Housing New Zealand house. When Housing New Zealand tells me there's no more house, I sit and think about having my own house one day for me and my son. If I have enough money.

Familiarity with a neighbourhood could outweigh the suitability of the house. Pania did not push for a transfer from an unsuitable house because of her attachment to the neighbourhood. She was not the only one who put up with difficult living conditions because of satisfaction with the place and people in the

neighbourhood where she lived. For example, another tenant explained that health workers had encouraged them to apply for a transfer because of health effects of overcrowding and mobility problems that made it difficult to climb the stairs. Nevertheless, the tenant still wanted to stay because of familiarity with the place: “Hmm, it’s a hard question to answer eh? [Researcher: ‘Cause you love the neighbourhood?] Yes ...I love where I am, and I know everything this place for fourteen years” (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 41-50 years).

Several tenants and applicants said that their children also valued living in a familiar place, and described the benefits to children and themselves of living in a place for a long time. A tenant said: “but we’ve got lots of good memories, a couple of not so good ones but it’s our roots basically now, it’s my children’s youth. They don’t want to move” (Wave One, MultiwC, NZ European, 31-40 years).

In some cases, parents set out to create a familiar base for the family. Being Housing New Zealand tenants could help create a family base. A tenant said:

It’s home...It’s where the heart is...Basically with having my own Housing Corp home, in the beginning it was just I needed that place for me and my kids...I thought, right, I have to situate myself, because we grew up in the same neighbourhood, all went to the same school for our entire life, so we knew people. So I thought that’s the life I want for my kids, so if they get in trouble they can run to a house ‘cause they’ll know someone there. But because of my [mental health problem]...it’s actually given me, it’s like my security blanket...my family know this is home base. (Wave Two, SolewC, NZ European, 31-40 years)

An applicant said: “it’s actually perfect ‘cause, well I actually know the whole neighbourhood really...Yeah [it will be hard to move] especially with the boys yeah. Only ‘cause my kids actually understand the fact that we have to move out, but they don’t like the fact that we actually have to move out. Having to move to another neighbourhood, another new house, getting used to it” (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) observes that neighbourhoods are a key element of a child’s living environment, and therefore an important determinant of childhood health and wellbeing. Safe and satisfying neighbourhoods provide formal and informal settings for children to be physically active as they play and socialise locally in their daily lives. The ability to explore and learn independently in safe spaces beyond the supervision of adults helps children to develop resiliency, as they experience assessing risk, problem-solving, encountering strangers, and independent decision-making (Chawla *et al.* 2014). Spending time in parks and other green outdoor spaces such as school playing fields has also been shown to reduce stress in children, increase focus, build competence, and help form supportive social groups (Chawla *et al.* 2014).

A common concern is that children’s physical activity and independent mobility has greatly reduced in the last 30 years. Far fewer children walk to school, thus limiting their independent movement in their neighbourhoods (Collins and Kearns 2010). An issue that is partly attributed to this reduced mobility is an alarming rise in childhood obesity (Ministry of Health 2013).

Lack of independent mobility is often attributed to increased parental aversion to risk (Ergler *et al.* 2013). A recent study entitled *Kids in the City* examined children’s mobility and experiences of Auckland suburbs (Carroll *et al.* 2015, Witten and Kearns 2013). Children in low-income suburbs were found to be twice as likely as children in middle-income suburbs to move independently in the neighbourhood. The researchers noted a striking diversity in children’s mobility patterns in all the suburbs studied.

However, they observed that the frequency and places that children went independently were largely determined by their parents. Where parents were averse to risk, children tended to internalise parental fears about neighbourhood dangers. Children generally preferred to play at home, at the homes of friends or family, or in nearby places such as stairwells, front porches and driveways. They would like to feel safer in streets and moving between home and their destinations. The study concluded that cities need to include not just amenities such as parks and swimming pools for children, but also ensure streetscapes and neighbourhoods are designed to support children's independent exploration and mobility.

The demographic profile of children in both the *Kids in the City* study and the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study were similar. The Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study is likely to be conducted in neighbourhoods with higher concentrations of social housing. In some neighbourhoods in this study, keeping children safe had to take priority. Some parents walked young children to school, but interestingly, no-one talked about the health and wellbeing benefits of this, and only a few mentioned parks and other public places where children played. People's highest priority was to keep their children at the same school, have a support network nearby, and live in a familiar place. Teenagers were understood to have greater levels of independent mobility, so proximity to schools was slightly less important once children reached secondary school age level. Independent mobility, physical activity and access to stress-reducing green spaces were not priorities for most adults interviewed.

Accounts of people – including children – being threatened, abused, or otherwise made to feel unsafe were so frequent that it was difficult to discount parental concerns as overly risk-averse. People who liked their neighbourhood and felt safe provided some of these accounts. A tenant described frequent home invasions and other neighbourhood threats and said: “Oh my gosh, I just found out there was a dairy over there a couple of months ago [laughter]... ‘cause I was scared to walk around, I didn’t...I don’t know anybody around here” (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years). An applicant said: “Well sometimes you have to sort of pick and choose what time you’ve got to go up to shop, ‘cause there’s like scary people up there. [laughter] Hanging around that wholesale eh” (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years). Rather than being overly risk averse, a lot of people appeared to downplay risks, treating threats to their safety as a normal part of daily life.

A related critique in the literature about perceptions of neighbourhood safety is that poor communities tend to take on the negative stereotypes of their neighbourhood imposed by the outside world. A seminal study in Chicago by Sean Damer (1974) noted that such self-stigmatisation was often based on one-off adverse events rather than systemic criminal behaviour. Consequently, people retreated to their homes and retained their negative views of the neighbourhood long after problems disappeared. Neighbourhoods included in the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study were often stereotyped as unsafe and unpleasant places to live. The study shows that some tenants and applicants had concerns based on reputation, especially when they first moved into an unfamiliar neighbourhood. Counter to Damer's observations however, people's views did change over time. Some said they admitted being pleasantly surprised to find that some neighbourhoods that were widely slated as ‘bad’ were in their own experiences good places to live. A common experience described by tenants and applicants was that they were targeted with threats and burglaries when they first moved into a home, but that this stopped after a short time, and they now felt safe and satisfied with the neighbourhood. People also often talked about the impact of one difficult neighbour shifting out of a neighbourhood, leading to the neighbourhood being a much nicer place to live (or the opposite, one new household creating havoc). Most recognised violent incidents as one-off rather than as systemic criminal activity. In fact, despite living in neighbourhoods that could be categorised as poor quality, most said they liked or loved their neighbourhoods, and staying in the location was a high priority. However, the minority who said they felt unsafe and unhappy in their neighbourhood retreated to their homes and were suspicious of others. With very limited control over their neighbourhoods, people developed tactics to keep their children safe. A tenant said: “Yeah, [my friends and family would] always say, “Oh we’re not going to the



Bronx,” you know [where I lived]...I think it all depends where you’re placed makes a big thing on your life as well” (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years).

People mostly relied on themselves to deal with threats to children’s safety. The most common approach was to keep children at home and to politely avoid neighbours. Other tactics included standing up to difficult neighbours, getting a dog, or having a trusted friend or family members come to stay. A tenant said:

The neighbourhood is a bit rough eh? So the children are safe because we simply do not allow them to go out of the gate. ‘Cause even if she walks up to the park, within 10 minutes, I’m getting anxious. So I will go and follow up and see what’s going on, ‘cause the children around here just run around. It’s even at time for school, you see them wandering around, you wonder whether they go to school or they don’t, it’s not really safe for the children outside the house. (Wave One, CoupwC, NZ European, 31-40 years)

A few people said that they would act immediately in the face of threats to local children. A tenant said: “If I ever hear a kid screaming that’s it, straight 111, you know I won’t even think twice about it, ‘cause those kids [next door] don’t have the choice, eh?” There was limited evidence of people working together to make neighbourhoods safer. No-one mentioned being involved in a ‘walking school bus’. Only a handful of people described Neighbourhood Watch or other community activities they were involved in. Resorting to individualised tactics and retreating to the home limited people’s ability to develop a sense that lack of safety was a shared problem. This was compounded by busy lives, multiple responsibilities and the reduced importance of localised networks in some people’s lives.

One of the biggest perceived threats to children was from other children or youth. It would be useful to examine how children understand and act in the face of danger and violence. This observation aligns with anthropological studies that seek to understand the rise of violent acts by children and youth as a contemporary social phenomenon rather than in pathological terms (Korbin 2003). Children’s experiences matter: they are of interest not merely as ‘adults in the making’ but as citizens with rights to a violence-free childhood (United Nations 1989), albeit with limited ability to assert these rights.

Findings from this study are consistent with the *Kids in the City* study that quality of place and amenities support children’s independent mobility and safety in cities. Housing complexes, which operate like mini-communities, are a design format that provides good neighbourhoods for some families. Housing New Zealand complexes (see Figure 2) typically have one road in to a group of a dozen or more properties, with shared grassy areas, trees, and narrow roads with traffic calming devices in place. A balance is needed between traffic mobility and children’s mobility. Children’s mobility and independence would be cultivated by pockets in neighbourhoods that are free from fast traffic, visible from homes/streets, and with natural features such as trees. An applicant who lived in a short cul-de-sac said: “Yeah. They always play down on the street, yeah it’s safe ‘cause they’ve got older kids and they watch out too for the little ones” (Wave One, SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years).

Where some people recognised the configuration of public open space (such as walkways, shared driveways) as flawed, people considered that the “scary people” and fast drivers made children unsafe. A tenant said:

We do have a lot of respect for everyone around here. It’s just that I feel more comfortable knowing that my children are playing ...that everyone always checks [and is] watching out for everyone’s children as they’re reversing up...So that’s another thing, it all depends who your neighbours are and that you get on well with, and that’s how we more or less like it. (Wave Two, CoupwC, Māori, 41-50 years)

One tenant had taken to heart the view that parents alone were responsible for keeping their children safe regardless of the safety elements in the design of the driveway. She said, “I will not let my kids play

on the driveway, I won't even let them out of the gate, unless I'm outside, and I feel sorry for them...even if I'm on the drive, I won't let go of their hand, I'm scared" (Wave One, SolewC, Pacific, 18-30 years).

The views of tenants and applicants suggested that people and places overlap to create neighbourhoods. Increasingly, international literature recognises that place management, community development and other approaches that involve local people are needed (Chapman 2011, Hulse *et al.* 2004, TIES team 2010).

The outcome framework (see Appendix 3) developed from the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study identifies direct effects that are anticipated when households live in suitable neighbourhoods. These include 'Children able and willing to attend school and other activities consistently, safely'. For most tenants, these effects were evident. However, some tenants reported that their children were too scared to go to school and to other neighbourhood places. If housing is understood as nested within, and intimately linked to, neighbourhoods, it would seem that Housing New Zealand's place-making initiatives may need to take into account establishing and maintaining safer neighbourhoods for children.

## Discussion

Pania's story is a reference point for our discussion about the relationships between children's health and wellbeing and rental housing and neighbourhoods. Overlapping broad social and economic complexities which parents struggle to manage, and multiple risks to children's health and wellbeing were evident and clearly linked to their living situation.

### Pania's experience parenting in a state house

Pania and her overall experiences of parenting five children in a state house shows that while the house was not perfect she had traded its imperfections for being in her preferred, familiar neighbourhood. The house had only two bedrooms and therefore was overcrowded but she saw it as more than just a roof over their heads. The excerpts about Pania presented in the report are gathered here so they can be read as a story. While it is her unique story, parts of her story linked to other stories shared in the interviews that comprise the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study.

Pania is a Māori woman and sole parent who lived with her five children. The family lived in a standalone house within a Housing New Zealand complex in a convenient location. When asked about the main reasons she liked living in a Housing New Zealand house, Pania replied:

Why I like it? Oh it's cheap. Like growing up with, my mum had five kids and we were going from house to house because she couldn't afford the rent. Housing New Zealand's given me and my children stability... And it's somewhere where they can come home to and...I can afford the power and I can afford the food.... I've always stayed in violent homes but that was something that I wasn't going to give my kids. And over the last nine years since I've been here, that was something that I can say that I've given my kids and it's because of Housing New Zealand... Yeah that's the main thing that it has done, it's changed the pattern, the life that we used to live, my mum used to live, my grandmother used to live, it's changed that cycle because it's, "Hey this is my house, get out, take your alcohol somewhere else, I don't drink so, I don't do drugs, so get out". And it's good because I see my kids happy and that's something that we never had. Yeah we had each other but we weren't happy.

During Wave One, Pania explained that their house was cold and damp, and that this had effects on the children's health, especially since the two younger ones had been diagnosed with asthma:

This is the most sickly I've been... It started off when we moved in about a week later, we noticed that it started to get cold, and the coldness, and it gets really, really cold, really cold, it's colder in here than what it is outside... My eldest daughter didn't actually get [asthma] that bad and neither did my son, they didn't get it that bad until we moved in here.

By Wave Two of the study, Pania's house had new insulation and carpet and the difference to the children's health and wellbeing was enormous. She said:

The house was really, really warm [compared with before when]...you'd be warmer outside than what you would inside, but now it's my kids are kicking off their blankets at night [laughter]. I've got two chronic asthmatics and those were the ones that I was rushing into the doctors with all the time...But ever since that carpet and insulation came in, man it's been wicked ... Yeah, my son he was the worst chronic asthmatic in our whole family, he's always been on the nebuliser every second day. He hasn't been on the nebuliser for six months... Ever since they put it in, there has been a real dramatic change in him and that's awesome.

In Wave One, problems with children's health, children getting older and needing more room, and taking on the care of an orphaned family member had converged to create a difficult living situation:

I've asked for a bigger house because my daughter sleeps in the room with my eldest son ... I need a warm house, and an extra room for my daughter ... because I have the two chronic asthmatics in my room, so I can pump them up with their medication and keep an eye on them and make sure they'll always got their blankets on. ... My daughter's reached that stage where she's becoming a teenager and... Yeah and she needs her own space instead of cramped up with her brother.

By Wave Two, Pania was still waiting for a larger house. Insulation and carpeting had led to some improvements in the children's health. However, Pania was aware that continuing to live in crowded conditions made the children vulnerable to illness:

You know and I've been pushing, trying to get an extra room you know, but I just try and back off a bit because I don't want to sound, you know, ungrateful... I don't wanna sound like that but when it comes to my kids' health I have to.

One of the things Pania liked about living in a Housing New Zealand property was that it provided a base for her extended family. Despite already being crowded, with six people living in a two-bedroom house, Pania provided a base for many young relatives. She said:

[There are] twenty-two grandchildren on our side, so they all come here 'cause it's home. That's the good thing, it's not just home for me and my children, it's home for all my family... [D]uring the holidays my, all my nieces and nephews they'll come here, 'cause they know that I'm the one that'll get up and cook a feed... They've come here to stay while they've been looking for somewhere.

Pania had lived in crowded conditions most of her life. One of the main reasons she had applied for a Housing New Zealand property was so she could get out of living with extended family members, including "about twenty of us" in a four-bedroom house. In her own house she was the head and could set the rules.

In Wave One, Pania was asked how satisfied she was with the neighbourhood. She said:

Very damn happy [laughter]. Does it have it [on your scale], oh no it doesn't, yeah nah love my neighbours, I wouldn't wanna be anywhere else, they all stick to themselves but when it comes to the crunch, we all stand together as a neighbourhood, make sure our kids are safe.

An important reason that she was happy to stay in the property was because it was a safe neighbourhood for her and her children. In Wave Two, Pania was asked if she would like a bigger place. She responded:

In the same area, bang smack here?... It depends, like I think in all reality I think I'm the one that's scared to move, I'm the one that's safe here and if I feel safe, because being a single mum if I'm safe my kids are safe. I don't think, I've seen a lot of my family and they've moved and they've moved into some real cruddy areas and their stuff's been stolen, their house has been broken into and that's the thing about this area where I am now, I can trust the people. Like I could leave my back windows open and nothing's been touched if I come back two hours later.

Asked whether there were problems with neighbours having parties, Pania said: "No, that's one thing that's good about this place is that you just hear them laughing, there's no violence and that's awesome, that's why I love this place".

In Wave One, Pania was happy to have a Housing New Zealand house because it was affordable. She said:

[I]t's cheap you know [laughter]. Gives a roof over my kids' head and it's somewhere I can call home for my kids... [I'd like to transfer] hopefully in a bigger house, and a house that's going to be more favourable to your kids' health.

By Wave Two, with the home warmer and drier due to upgrades but still crowded, Pania was used to making do with what she had:

I don't get much off the benefit but... you learn to budget, you learn to go without... if a stew's all you've got and you've got no bread, well a stew's all you have.

Affordability of the Housing New Zealand house remained a priority because it meant she had money for visits to the doctor, the children's education and after-school activities, and for transport to get them there. Having a Housing New Zealand house enabled Pania to focus on providing the best possible start for her children:

[M]y kids do a lot of sports, taekwondo, so we're going backwards and forwards [in the car]... [School fees] that's all paid... I budget during the holidays, I always ask the schools beforehand how much it's going to cost and then by the time it comes up I've got that money, so I go and pay it...

It also provided Pania and her family with continuity even as the composition of her household shifted and changed:

[I want to stay here as] long as Housing New Zealand will have me, because my daughter will be moving in another two years, she'll be going into the army and then after that my son he'll be going into boarding school and then I don't know what the little ones are doing... Yeah, they take up a lot of my time.

## Housing as a determinant of children's health

Our reanalysis of the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study's interviews available for South Auckland confirmed initial observations that housing is a key determinant of children's health and that children have very limited choices over where they live, with whom and for how long. Our readings of the interviews identified what parents and caregivers saw as important characteristics of satisfactory housing and neighbourhoods within which to parent children. (The Outcomes Framework presented in Appendix three provides more details of the housing and neighbourhood characteristics to which parents and caregivers aspired.)

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model suggested what we needed to study children's experiences in order to understand how housing and neighbourhood contributed to children's ability to thrive or not. His model frames the child as nested within a household – in a house that is preferably a home and more than just a roof over household members' heads. Many households have informal networks including family and/or friends that live in the same neighbourhood. Households had either chosen the Housing New Zealand property they lived in because they had friends and/or family in the neighbourhood, and/or because they were familiar with it. Their familiarity resulted from it being their neighbourhood at some other time in their lives.

Using Bronfenbrenner's terms, in a familiar neighbourhood, people find formal as well as informal networks. People knew the local amenities – shops, health services and play areas – and transport to them. Most important to parents and caregivers was the easy proximity of the schools which their children attended. Very occasionally parents and caregivers traded the proximity of their child's school for a warm, dry house in a good, familiar neighbourhood.

Pania, like many parents and caregivers, had to save carefully to pay school fees. Their anticipation of the payment of school fees illustrates how the broader economic, policy and social factors influenced a household. Cultural ways of knowing and acting shaped children's living environments, and financial wellbeing. The following three instances show how these interact.

- Improvements to houses to make homes warmer and drier created some reported improvements in children's health and wellbeing. However, energy hardship, and to a lesser extent, the age and orientation of the house, as well as cultural norms and practices, such as treating heating as an extravagance, meant that too many families continued to live in cold, damp homes.

- Living in a state house provided better security of tenure than the private sector, affordable rent, and in the majority of cases, a house and neighbourhood that people liked. However, the scarcity of state housing or other affordable housing was revealed as a major contributor to both applicants and tenants living in crowded conditions. Severe housing deprivation on the part of wider family members resulted in tenants' homes becoming crowded, thereby limiting the health and wellbeing benefits to children of having a state house. Additionally, the suitability of a home often changed due to other changes in household composition, for example, through merging of families, adult children returning home, children going to live in another household, and adults taking on primary care of grandchildren. These factors were largely outside of children's control, yet had serious impacts on them.
- The neighbourhood and the people who lived there were very important to people's sense of satisfaction with both the house and the location. Living in a familiar place near family and friends was critical for some people to feel safe and to get by in the face of material hardship and other difficulties.
- Our reanalysis indicated that secure tenure and affordable housing provided an opportunity for families to thrive which supports existing evidence that when families moved into state housing, their health and wellbeing generally improved. However, the benefits of secure tenure in affordable housing could be significantly diluted with serious impacts on children's health and wellbeing which would extend over their life course and future generations. The diluted benefit results from broader social and economic policies, and cultural ways of knowing and acting.
- Improvements in children's health and wellbeing was often attributed to living in a warm, dry house. Tenants and applicants judged the quality of their property in terms of how warm and dry it was. Compared to applicants, tenants were more likely to be happy with the quality of their properties. Housing New Zealand properties have been fitted with ceiling and underfloor insulation, wherever the building design allows. Ventilation, thermal drapes and other property improvements were also being rolled out as budgets allowed. Not all tenants whose homes were insulated noticed a difference, depending on the house type and use of heating. The considerable variation in property quality affected how warm and dry the homes were (e.g., building age, construction materials, angle to the sun, and property condition). The majority of Housing New Zealand properties were built before 1960, creating a particular challenge to maintaining and keeping homes warm and dry.

Too many families continued to live in cold damp houses because of energy hardship, and cultural norms and practices such as treating heating as an extravagance. Research participants who described no difficulties meeting their heating costs lived in warm, dry houses; however, more commonly, people did not heat their homes, usually due to energy hardship. Most people were aware of the impacts of damp and crowded houses on health but some people described some misguided views and practices related to heating that need to be discussed and challenged in the public arena. These included:

- Insulated homes do not require heating.
- Mould only appears in homes that are in very poor condition.
- Heating is an extravagance, and it is just as effective to "put a jersey on", use extra blankets, or generally toughen up.
- Heaters cost too much to buy, so stove tops and ovens are used to warm the house.
- Children's respiratory health is *made worse* by heating, regardless of heating type (e.g., gas heaters, heat pumps, fires).
- Any draught is bad for health, so vents around windows are sealed off, despite removing the only source of ventilation.

- Fresh air is good for health, so windows are left open at all times, creating an extremely cold and draughty home for children in winter.

Recognising that many children are injured at home because they spend so much time there, Housing New Zealand has undertaken continual improvement of standards to make properties safer, based on Safekids' 1996 priority recommendations. These include provision and maintenance of smoke alarms, tip-safe stoves/ovens, decks to New Zealand Building Code standards, restrictor stays on windows over two metres above the ground, and safety glass in high risk areas. Ongoing safety programmes are prioritising driveway safety, and safe electricity and hot water delivery. Many applicants and tenants spoke of the need to have a safe outdoor play area for young children. A securely fenced area did not need to be large to provide amenity value for children. Child-proof locks and stair gates were also not typically provided by landlords but the research suggests that such features are critical to child safety at home.

## Safe neighbourhoods for children

The majority of applicants and tenants said they felt safe in their neighbourhoods. Applicants' perceptions of how safe they felt in their community changed very little between Waves One and Two. Tenants' perceptions improved considerably, from 66 percent saying they felt safe or very safe in Wave One to 84 percent in Wave Two. This improvement in feelings of safety could possibly be attributed to the increased presence of Housing New Zealand contractors working on property improvements in the area, the ease with which tenants were able to access Housing New Zealand on the 0800 number, and/or the feeling that talking to interviewers meant that their voices were being heard and improvements made that assisted them to achieve their housing aspirations. For those who had remained in the same house, increasing familiarity with their neighbourhood may also have contributed.

Familiarity with the neighbourhood and having significant networks nearby were important resources that enabled many people to manage their daily lives. Familiarity was related to longevity in a neighbourhood and could outweigh the priority placed on the suitability of a house as in Pania's story. Like Pania, some tenants described how their homes acted as nodal houses. Having secure tenure enabled them to care for sick and disadvantaged family members or friends, and provide a hub for their extended family. More people wanted family rather than friends living in the neighbourhood. This preference was because people saw relationships with family as more enduring than with friends. Where adults had friends nearby, then children were also more likely to have friends nearby. A common strategy to keep themselves, their children and property safe was by making friends with one or more neighbours and watching out for each other's homes.

A common definition of a 'bad' neighbourhood within which tenants and applicants struggled to keep themselves safe was when neighbours hosted regular, loud parties. They found it scary when neighbours used their properties as a thoroughfare or invaded them. But worst of all was when other people's children in the neighbourhood were verbally and physically abusive to parents and caregivers, and their children. When schools were aware of these issues they provided minimal support for their students. Adults' experiences suggested that rather than being overly risk averse to violence in the neighbourhood, a lot of people appeared to downplay risks, treating threats to their safety as a normal part of daily life.

The extent to which Housing New Zealand should or can take responsibility for the safety of tenants, and tenants' children, in neighbourhoods where there is a high concentration of Housing New Zealand properties has often been discussed without a clear resolution. Currently Housing New Zealand treats households as autonomous decision-makers but our analysis shows that for many households their allegiances go much wider to include the households of friends and families in the neighbourhood. Where social housing providers have a high concentration of properties, then, responsibility for the safety of their tenants in the neighbourhood should perhaps be a legal requirement.

## The impacts on children of living in crowded condition

Pania's story indicates that household crowding had been a feature of her housing situation for most of her life. For Pania and many other applicants and tenants living in a crowded house has, over generations, become a normalised experience. Applicants crowded the homes of relatives because they had nowhere else to live. Tenants shared their homes with relatives who had nowhere else to live providing them with at least a roof over their heads, if not a home. People living in crowded conditions described very few benefits and multiple detrimental effects on health, parenting, children's homework and other routines, extended family relationships, privacy, security of tenure and house condition. Adults stories of crowding were not of children happily playing with members of their extended family oblivious to crowding, but of conflict and discontent. Everyone who described overcrowding, regardless of cultural background, did not want to live in crowded circumstances. Living in a crowded house was not a 'lifestyle choice' or 'a cultural preference' but an alternative to homelessness.

Two types of crowding are commonly identified as impacting on children's health and wellbeing - functional and structural crowding. Functional crowding occurred when families slept together in one room, usually the lounge. The most prevalent reason given for functional crowding was to stay warm and was usually the result of energy hardship and/or poor house condition. Functional crowding was much less common than structural crowding where there are insufficient bedrooms in the house for the age and gender of the household's members. Structural crowding affected twice as many applicants as tenants. One of the insights from the study was that in almost all cases, for both applicants and tenants, structural crowding was the result of severe housing deprivation somewhere in the kinship network.

Finding an affordable, habitable home, especially for a large family, was very difficult in South Auckland. Lack of affordable housing and secure tenure, particularly in the private rental market, cause particular problems in New Zealand. Renting is seen as second class relative to home ownership and New Zealand has been described as having one of the least renter-friendly rental policy settings in the world. Insecure tenure is an important element of this, and is seen in the way that landlords typically treat the rental property as 'their' house that they can make available to themselves at any time. Social housing becomes particularly important in this situation.

Our reanalysis showed that when crowding, cold and damp properties, low incomes and insecure tenure came together for families the multiple risks to health and wellbeing were, in Schell's terminology, 'focused' in their children. For the children the impacts of these risks were likely to be experienced throughout their lives and in the lives of future generations. Our study showed that when one risk is addressed, such as insecure tenure, then people's lives improved and adults could put more resources (time, money and effort) into what was important for them. In many cases this was their children's health and wellbeing. Pania is an example of a state tenant whose children were statistically highly vulnerable to multiple risks, but with security of tenure Pania was able to focus on her children's life trajectories and break the cycle of intergenerational risk. The housing pathways approach to our analysis has meant that at the same time as understanding Pania's central focus we have been aware that she has kept this focus as children have moved in and out of her household. Following Grimes' typology of housing and the life course, this movement of children means that households often move through the life course in an 'atypical' housing sequence.

## Limitations to this study

Understanding how children experience rental housing was the aim of a proposed research project for which this reanalysis of the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study interviews was the first step. While the report stands on its own merit, the insights into children's experiences are restricted to the perspective of parents and caregivers who were applicants for, and tenants of, Housing New Zealand properties. This is only one perspective of many that could include the perspectives of health and social service



providers, teachers, community advocates and others. The most important perspective needed to complete the story is that of children talking about their own experiences.

The children came from three cultural groupings – Māori, Pacific and European/Pākehā. Separate reports based on cultural analyses were in the original plan for Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study but they have not been undertaken. Reading this report from a cultural perspective it is possible to glimpse the interaction of physical, family, mental and spiritual dimensions in people's lives (see Durie 1998, Laing and Mitaera 1994). These are the dimensions that we refer to when we have used the term 'wellbeing', knowing that much is lost in conflating and translating these ideas. A complete story of children's experiences of rental housing would need to take into account their diverse cultural backgrounds.

## Endnotes

1. Ethnicity is recorded for the primary applicant or tenant only, so may not accurately reflect the ethnicity of household members.
2. Landlords are not required to provide curtains under the Residential Tenancies Act. Due to proven health and economic benefits, Housing New Zealand was halfway through a major curtaining installing programme (2013-15) which involved installing curtains in 20,000 properties. Housing New Zealand also installed heating in approximately 10,000 properties as part of an effort to warm up properties. Requirements for heating are regulated under the Housing Improvement Regulations 1947 for houses built before 2004, and the Building Act (2004) and the Building Code, for houses built after 2004. The Housing Improvement Regulations (S6) states: "Every living room shall be fitted with a fireplace and chimney or other approved form of heating". Local Authorities are responsible for enforcing these regulations under the Health Act 1956. Some interpret this requirement as the provision of a power point for an electric heater in the living room.
3. Housing New Zealand has inspected about 13,000 properties where there were children aged under five years old. At the time of writing (2015), driveway safety measures had been implemented in 6,400 properties, and the rest were to be undertaken over a four year period. Traffic calming techniques (speed humps, speed limit signage, convex mirrors) have also been implemented in Housing New Zealand complexes.
4. The Rheumatic Fever project is led by the Ministry of Social Development.
5. It is acknowledged that the majority of South Auckland participants were Māori and Pacific people. However, crowded households were also Māori and Pacific households in Porirua and Christchurch, despite ethnicity being more varied in these sites.
6. Reviewable tenancies' mean that eligibility for social housing will be reviewed every three years. This policy was introduced for new tenancies in July 2011 (prior to Wave Two of the study). Reviewable tenancies are being extended to all tenancies by the Ministry of Social Development as part of a suite of changes to social housing policy introduced in April 2014.

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## Appendix 1: Research and evaluation literature that informed the concept of housing as a key determinant of child health

Housing as a key determinant of health is a key concept that frames the analysis in this report. The following is a brief review of issues and related research and evaluation on housing, health and wellbeing, and children. Research in New Zealand is a particular focus.

New Zealand homes are significantly under-heated compared to homes in other countries for which there are records (ECCA 2010), with an average living room temperature of 17.9 degrees Celsius. Many homes fall well below the World Health Organisation's recommended minimum temperature of 20 degrees Celsius for the very young and for people who are ill or disabled (B. James 2007). Only 15 percent of households heat their bedrooms (B. James 2007). As a result of poor quality housing and lack of heating, between a half to two-thirds of all babies, whether in disadvantaged households or not, live in cold, damp houses (Morton *et al.* 2014). When compounded with living on very low incomes, households with children often struggle to find habitable, affordable homes.

New Zealand also has higher rates of infectious diseases, such as acute rheumatic fever (Jaine *et al.* 2008), childhood pneumonia (Grant 1999), cellulitis (Finger *et al.* 2004) and tuberculosis (Park and Littleton 2013). Infectious and respiratory diseases were responsible for the majority of infant hospital admissions (2008-2012) and pneumonia was the leading reason for infant deaths from medical conditions (2006-2010) (Craig *et al.* 2013). Hospitalisations for Housing Related Potentially Avoidable Hospitalisations (HR-PAH) illnesses (e.g., asthma, gastroenteritis, respiratory infections, skin infections) of Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants were significantly higher for the same period, as were hospitalisations for acute rheumatic fever (Baker, Zhang *et al.* 2012).

Poor quality housing and low levels of household energy affordability are implicated in HR-PAH illnesses. Energy hardship, defined as the inability to heat one's home to an adequate temperature due to a low income and/or an energy inefficient home (ECCA 2010), was estimated to affect 14 percent of households in Auckland in 2008. Much higher rates of energy hardship were estimated for Wellington (24 percent), Christchurch (40 percent), and Dunedin (47 percent) (ECCA 2010).

Cold, damp homes are prone to the growth of mould and the survival of viruses, and increased stress on the human immune system (Boston and Chapple 2014). The literature shows evidence of an association between damp homes and upper respiratory tract symptoms, cough, wheeze and asthma symptoms in previously sensitised people (ECCA 2010). Young children are particularly vulnerable to cold, damp and polluted indoor environments, because they spend most of their time at home. A study of 1000 households in Taranaki found that children's respiratory health and risk of injury were more dependent on housing conditions than adults' (Keall *et al.* 2012, Keall *et al.* 2013). Other studies have shown that children's thermo-regulator systems are not fully developed. Their lungs are still developing and therefore sensitive to pollutants, such as second-hand tobacco and particles from unflued gas heaters (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012a).

A recent study showed that hospitalisation rates decreased by 10 to 30 percent after applicants moved into Housing New Zealand houses and for the first three years as tenants. Hospitalisation rates then reached a plateau after three years for infectious diseases, and circulatory and respiratory diseases. However, hospitalisations for mental and behavioural disorders continued to decrease over time (Baker *et al.* 2013). Such improvements in health support the view that social housing provides a useful 'safety net' for highly vulnerable people, including children (Baker *et al.* 2013). Additionally, it is estimated that a third of children's hospital admissions would have been prevented with improved house condition, which at \$2,645 per admission, would amount to significant saving (Denning-Kemp *et al.* 2012, in Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012a).

Another factor that has been found to have a significant reduction in hospitalisations (27%) for children under 20 years old, was the Housing New Zealand's Healthy Housing Programme (Baker *et al.* 2013). This programme was trialled in 2001-2002 and implemented in South Auckland in 2003. It was later extended to Northland and Wellington, and again more recently extended to address problems with rheumatic fever. The programme aims to improve housing ventilation and heating, and reduce household crowding. The cost/benefit ratio of installing insulation in existing housing is almost 4 to 1 (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012a). The programme found that its strongest influence was on psychological and social dimensions of wellbeing, including reduced stress, increased happiness and connection with family (Clinton *et al.* 2007).

The Warm Up New Zealand: Heat Smart programme commenced in 2009 and also involved retrofitting homes with insulation. It was found to be effective in improving children's school attendance and health, reducing mortality, and decreasing heating costs (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012a).

Regional differences in the availability of affordable housing are evident. Auckland and Christchurch have serious shortage of housing for low-income families, particularly Māori and Pacific families, driving household crowding (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012a).

A study of 2,437 low income families in three cities in the United States found that of four housing characteristics (housing quality, tenure type, stability and affordability), housing quality was most consistently and strongly predictive of children's wellbeing across the lifespan (Lynch and Kull 2013). Housing quality included structural, maintenance and environmental deficiencies, and unsafe and unclean environments. These housing features also influence levels of unintentional injuries, particularly falls, which are a leading cause of home injuries in children (B. James 2007).

Public Policy and Research (B. James 2007) reviewed literature on the influence of housing-related factors on outcomes for children and young people. Some of the key influences described in this literature review included the dwelling condition, overcrowding, housing affordability, tenure security, and neighbourhood on outcomes, such as health, safety, offending and educational attainment. Phibbs and Young (2005) describe the findings from a study in which over 150 tenants were interviewed just after they had moved into social housing, and again six months later (Phibbs and Young 2005). Among the outcomes reported, more than half of the parents in the study said that their children were doing better at school, with the main reasons being that: the children were happier (often due to decreased tension in the home), their situation was better at home (for example, they now had a private space in which to do their homework), children now had a more motivated group of friends, or their teacher or school was better.

While some concerns with housing condition and crowding exist for state tenants, children living in the lower quartiles of the private rental market in New Zealand are likely to be just as, if not more, vulnerable (Centre for Housing Policy no date). The problems with social housing are rarely compared with those in the private rental housing market (Howden-Chapman 2013). Over 70 percent of all children living in poverty live in rented housing (50% in private rentals and 20 percent in Housing New Zealand properties) (Perry 2014). Until recently with some work being done to develop a Housing Warrant of Fitness (NZ Government no date), government responses to lack of housing affordability have focused on providing the regulatory environment to encourage housing construction (Bierre 2013).

An investigation by the Children's Commission (Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty 2012b) found that children raised housing as a primary concern, in particular the effects of cold, damp and crowded housing. Children noted that improvements to rental properties, such as the installation of insulation, would enable families to heat homes more affordably. Children said that



crowded houses led to lack of privacy, arguments and conflicts within the household, and difficulties in doing homework. Insecure housing tenure was also a concern for the stress and upheaval it caused for children. This study showed that, when asked, children can provide profound insights into their own experience of housing. This study also illustrated the importance of looking beyond health outcomes towards wellbeing in its broadest sense.

Nationwide, structural crowding at two or more bedroom deficit level in 2006 was much higher for housing applicants (25.4%) and tenants (15%) than for New Zealand as a whole (3.5%) (Baker, Zhang *et al.* 2012). Crowding reduced significantly after applicants moved to a Housing New Zealand house (Baker *et al.* 2013), which is one of the important benefits for people living in social housing. However, in South Auckland, very low household incomes and lack of affordable housing result in higher levels of household crowding than in the rest of the country. In 2006, 25 percent of people living in households in Manukau City (South Auckland) required one or more extra bedroom, well above the national average of 10 percent (Ministry of Social Development 2010).

Detrimental effects of crowding on children's physical and mental health and wellbeing are well established (e.g. Baker *et al.* 2000, Jaine *et al.* 2011, Harker 2007, Milne and Kearns 1999, Baker, Zhang *et al.* 2012). Growing up in crowded conditions affects children's wellbeing and results in intergenerational transmission of social inequality (Solari and Mare 2012). Plunket workers observed that they found it difficult to promote health messages, such as providing a safe, smoke-free home for children when people lived in crowded conditions. However, there is little known about people's lived experience of crowding (B. James 2007). Effects of poor quality housing (e.g., thermal comfort, indoor air quality, noise) and household crowding are known to fall on children more than any other age group, and disproportionately on Pacific, Māori and Asian children (James and Saville-Smith 2010). Pacific communities are the only ones in New Zealand in which there is active transmission of TB, with adults infecting children (Park and Littleton 2013). However, there is little research knowledge about children's housing experiences, and limited information about what drives families to live in crowded conditions (James and Saville-Smith 2010) and the effects of crowding on children (Taylor and Edwards 2012).

Reducing household crowding is one of the most beneficial improvements that can be made for children's health and wellbeing. Assessment of the impacts of the Healthy Housing Programme on Housing New Zealand tenants found that reduction in crowding generated the biggest benefits for children and young people, ahead of ventilation and heating, with a 61 percent fall in acute and arranged hospital admissions in people under 20 years old (Baker *et al.* 2011).

A recent study by Amore *et al.* (2013) identified 'severe housing deprivation' as a significant driver of household crowding, particularly in South Auckland (Manukau), which was the Territorial Authority area with the highest rate of severe housing deprivation at 18 percent and affecting at least 5,661 people. Severe housing deprivation was offered as an alternative term to 'homelessness' as it better described the situation of many who had no choice but to live in temporary, inadequate and/or crowded conditions. Based on the 2001 and 2006 census data, the Amore study found that severely housing deprived people were predominantly children and young adults, ethnic minorities, and part of sole-parent families or not accompanied by family. By far the largest proportion of people defined as severely housing deprived resulted from living temporarily in a severely crowded permanent private dwelling. A deficit of two or more bedrooms was defined as severe crowding. People were defined as being severely housing deprived when at least two out of three core dimensions of housing were inadequate: habitability, privacy and control, and security of tenure.

## Appendix 2: The Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study

The Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study was a Housing New Zealand research programme that sought to establish an evidence base about how housing pathways and life circumstances influence outcomes for Housing New Zealand applicants and tenants. The research objectives were to identify and analyse:

- the relationships between housing tenure and life circumstances of Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants that led to positive and negative outcomes
- resources and interventions that assisted or prevented Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants achieving their housing aspirations.

A pilot study in 2008 interviewed tenants to gather their perspectives on their housing pathways (Mackay *et al.* 2009), and in 2009 a three wave longitudinal study was initiated (Laing *et al.* 2010).

The plan was to collect data in three waves of interviews, over the course of six years. A sample of tenants and applicants in three locations (Porirua, South Auckland, and Christchurch) was interviewed at three-yearly intervals. Wave One and Wave Two interviews have now been completed for all three locations (Table 8).

**Table 8.** HPLS Schedule of Waves One and Two interviewing by location

Location	Wave One	Wave Two
Porirua	May 2009 – 102 interviewees	Jun 2012 – 104 interviewees
South Auckland	Nov 2009 – 95 interviewees	Apr 2013 – 79 interviewees
Christchurch	Mar 2010 – 72 interviewees	Nov 2012 – 80 interviewees

At Wave One, 269 people were interviewed, across three sites. Of these people, 183 were Housing New Zealand tenants, and 86 were applicants (Table 9).

**Table 9.** HPLS Wave One count of participants by location and whether they were an applicant or a tenant at the time of the interview

Site	Applicant	Tenant	Total
Porirua	35	67	102
South Auckland	31	64	95
Christchurch	20	52	72
All sites	86	183	269

Wave Two interviews were held with 263 people, including all of the Wave One participants who could be located and who agreed to participate, and 87 new tenants who were added to the sample (Table 10). The new tenants had started their Housing New Zealand tenancies after 1 July 2011. Wave Two interviews included:

- 5 applicants who were still on the waiting list
- 27 previous applicants who had exited the waiting list
- 117 Housing New Zealand tenants
- 11 previous tenants who had exited Housing New Zealand
- 87 new tenants who were new recruits to the study
- 16 new tenants who had been applicants at Wave One

**Table 10.** HPLS Wave Two count of participants by location and whether they were an applicant, exited applicant, tenant, previous tenant, or new tenant at the time of the interview

Site	Applicant <sup>1</sup>	Exited Applicant <sup>2</sup>	Tenant <sup>3</sup>	Previous Tenant <sup>4</sup>	New Tenant <sup>5</sup>	Total
Porirua	3	13	49	1	38	104
South Auckland	1	6	35	3	34	79
Christchurch	1	8	33	7	31	80
All sites	5	27	117	11	103	263

- 1 Applicants were on the waiting list for a Housing New Zealand home at both Wave One and Wave Two.
- 2 Exited applicants were on the waiting list for a Housing New Zealand home at Wave One, and then were not housed and exited the waiting list before Wave Two.
- 3 Tenants were Housing New Zealand tenants at Wave One and Wave Two.
- 4 Previous tenants were tenants at Wave One or Applicants at Wave One who became tenants afterwards, and who exited their Housing New Zealand tenancies before Wave Two.
- 5 New tenants were either new recruits to the study, who became Housing New Zealand tenants after July 2011, and were interviewed for the first time at Wave Two, or were applicants at Wave One, and became tenants in between their Wave One and Wave Two interviews.

Three quarters of participants had children living in their households (Table 11). This included all households in which under 18 year olds lived, including the participant's child(ren), grandchild(ren), great-grandchild(ren), niece(s), nephew(s), or in a few cases children unrelated to the participant.

**Table 11.** HPLS Presence of children in participant households at Wave Two

Household composition <sup>1</sup>	number	percent
Children in household	192	73%
No children in household	71	27%

<sup>1</sup> This was derived from interview data. For most, but not all households these data matched Housing New Zealand administrative records. The most frequent point of difference was where grandchildren living in the house were not listed in Housing New Zealand administrative records (14 households).

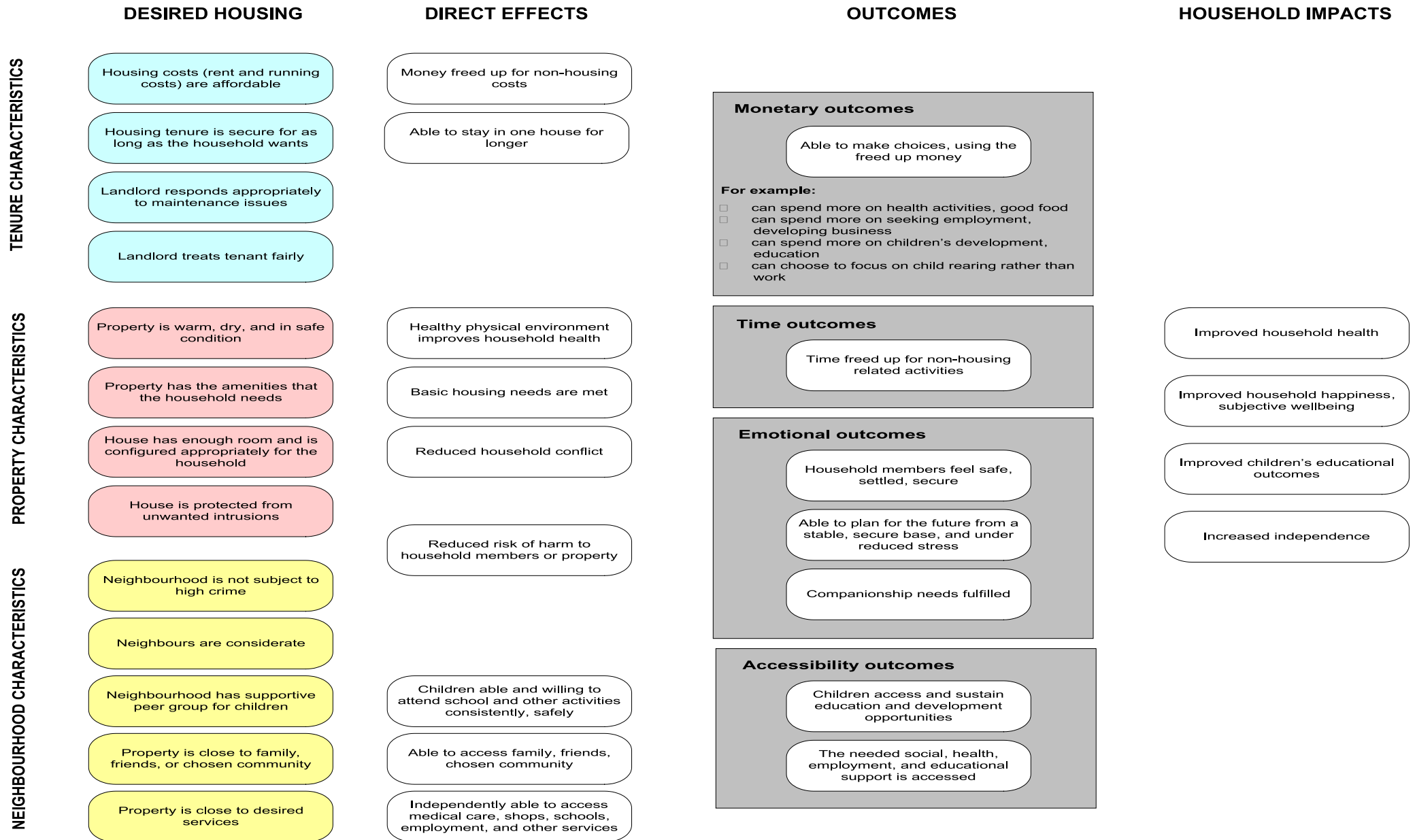


Figure 5. Tenants and applicants' Outcome framework

## Appendix 4: Children in rental housing: supplementary tables

Ethnicity was a selection criterion for the overall Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study, and the proportions were about a third each for New Zealand European, Māori, and Pacific. South Auckland tenant households had higher proportions of Pacific peoples to reflect the demographics of the area (Table 12).

**Table 12.** HPLS and South Auckland Wave One and Two-Proportion of tenant households with children by ethnicity

	Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study				South Auckland			
	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 1		Wave 2	
Māori	38	30%	49	30%	16	34%	13	28%
European	30	24%	47	30%	7	15%	5	11%
Pacific	51	40%	56	35%	21	45%	26	57%
Other	6	4%	7	4%	3	6%	2	4%
	**125	99%	159	99%	47	100%	46	100%

Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

\*\* Four tenants chose not to identify their ethnicity.

Tenant and applicant participants were asked how satisfied they felt about living in their house. The resulting answers are summarised in Table 13 below.

**Table 13.** South Auckland households with children at Waves One and Two: Overall, how do you feel about living in this house?

		Wave One						Wave Two				
		Don't like/hate		Neutral		Like/love		Don't like/hate		Neutral	Like/love	
Applicants	South Auckland	7	30%	7	30%	9	39%	3	25%	2	7	58%
	Porirua	9	32%	11	39%	9	32%	5	21%	9	10	42%
	Christchurch	No data		No data		No data		2	18%	3	6	55%
Tenants	South Auckland	10	21%	7	15%	30	64%	1	4%	6	18	72%
	Porirua	4	8%	10	20%	35	71%	5	13%	4	30	77%
	Christchurch	No data		No data		No data		2	8%	4	19	76%
New tenants	South Auckland	NA		NA		NA		3	17%	1	14	82%
	Porirua	NA		NA		NA		1	4%	3	19	83%
	Christchurch	NA		NA		NA		2	8%	3	20	80%

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Tenant and applicant participants were asked how happy they were with the warmth of their houses and the resulting answers are summarised in Table 14 below.

**Table 14.** Households with children in Wave One: How happy are you with the warmth of your house?

		Unhappy/very unhappy		Neutral		Happy/very happy	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Applicants	South Auckland	13	52	1	4	11	44
	Porirua	No data		No data		No data	
	Christchurch	No data		No data		No data	
Tenants	South Auckland	19	40	12	26	16	34
	Porirua	23	61	4	11	11	29
	Christchurch	3	9	7	21	23	70

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Tenant and applicant participants were asked how they felt about the neighbourhood within which they lived their answers are summarised in Table 15 below.

**Table 15.** Households with children at Waves One and Two: How do you feel about the neighbourhood you're living in?

		Wave One						Wave Two					
		Unhappy /very unhappy		Neutral		Happy /very happy		Unhappy/ very unhappy		Neutral		Happy /very happy	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Applicants	South Auckland	0	0	4	17	19	83	2	15	0	0	11	85
	Porirua	5	19	5	19	11	41	4	16	6	24	15	60
	Christchurch	No data		No data		No data		1	8	3	25	8	67
Tenants	South Auckland	10	21	7	15	30	64	1	4	3	12	21	84
	Porirua	6	12	6	12	37	76	3	8	2	5	34	87
	Christchurch	3	9	8	24	22	66	2	8	3	12	20	80
New tenants	South Auckland	NA		NA		NA		3	18	4	24	11	65
	Porirua	NA		NA		NA		0	0	4	17	19	83
	Christchurch	NA		NA		NA		5	20	2	8	18	72

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Tenant and applicant participants were asked to rate how easy it was for them to get to important places and their answers are summarised in Table 16 below.

**Table 16.** Households with children at Wave One: Overall, how easy is it for you to get to places that are important to you - like work, schools, public transport, shops or the doctor?

		Hard/ Very hard		Neutral		Very easy/easy	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Applicants	South Auckland	2	9	1	5	19	86
	Porirua	No data		No data		No data	
	Christchurch	No data		No data		No data	
Tenants	South Auckland	2	4	6	12	39	83
	Porirua	0	0	0	0	40	100
	Christchurch	1	3	3	9	29	88

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Tenant and applicant participants were asked about the importance of being near family and their answers are summarised in Table 17 below.

**Table 17.** Households with children at Wave One: How important is it to you to live near family?

		Prefer to live away from friends / Unimportant		Neutral		Important / very important	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Tenants	South Auckland n = 47	6	13	7	15	34	72
	Porirua	No data		No data		No data	
	Christchurch n = 34	5	14	6	18	23	64

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Tenant and participant applicants were asked to rate the importance of being near friends and their ratings are summarised in Table 18 below.

**Table 18.** Households with children at Wave One: How important is it to you to live near friends?

		Prefer to live away from friends / Unimportant		Neutral		Important / very important	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Tenants	South Auckland n = 46	9	20	14	30	23	50
	Porirua	No data		No data		No data	
	Christchurch n = 34	9	27	8	24	17	50

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Tenants and applicants were asked about supportive neighbours and their answers are summarised in Table 19 below.

**Table 19.** Households with children at Wave One: How important is it to you to have supportive neighbours?

		Prefer to keep to myself / Unimportant		Neutral		Important / very important	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Tenants	South Auckland n = 46	5	11	5	11	36	77
	Porirua	No data		No data		No data	
	Christchurch n = 34	9	27	8	24	17	50

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding



Tenant and applicant participant were asked about how safe they felt in their neighbourhood and their answers are summarised in Table 20 below.

**Table 20.** Households with children at Waves One and Two: How safe do you feel in this neighbourhood?

		Wave One						Wave Two					
		Unsafe/ very unsafe		Neutral		Safe/very safe		Unsafe/ very unsafe		Neutral		Safe/very safe	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Applicants	South Auckland	2	8	3	13	19	79	1	8	2	17	9	75
	Porirua	2	10	4	19	15	71	1	4	4	16	20	80
	Christchurch	No data		No data		No data		0	0	3	25	9	75
Tenants	South Auckland	9	19	7	15	31	66	2	8	2	8	21	84
	Porirua	5	10	6	12	38	78	0	0	5	13	34	87
	Christchurch	2	6	8	24	23	70	0	0	6	24	19	76
New tenants	South Auckland	NA		NA		NA		1	6	3	18	13	77
	Porirua	NA		NA		NA		0	0	2	9	21	91
	Christchurch	NA		NA		NA		4	16	2	8	19	76

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding



**Artist:** Samuel Patana



**Artist:** Matteo Patana