



A home for life

He kāinga mō ake tonu atu

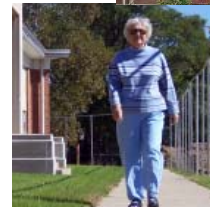
Planning ahead for older age should include thinking about your home.

Will your home be a home for life?

Our homes can enable us to live safely and independently, right into very old age, and even if we develop physical limitations. But not all homes are like this; some can be disabling rather than enabling.

It makes sense to think ahead and incorporate design features that promote independence, prevent accidents, and 'future-proof' your home so it can last a lifetime.

If you're making changes to your home or shifting to a new home, it's a good time to plan for the future. This Age Concern Information Sheet includes a wide range of things to think about.



Outside

- Access –
Should a handrail be installed, could a landing be made larger, or could steps be replaced with a slip-resistant path?
- Lighting –
Should exterior sensor lighting be installed to light the entrance?
- Managing the section so it does not become a burden –
 - Could someone who enjoys gardening look after it and share the produce with you?
 - Could you pay for a lawn mowing service, or to have the garden tidied up twice a year?
- Major maintenance –
What is needed to preserve the house into the future? e.g. roof or cladding.

Inside

- Doorways –
If doorways are being re-fitted could they be made wide enough for a walking frame or wheel chair?
- Space –
Do you need to get rid of some furniture or downsize furniture to allow more room to move around?
- Utilities –
Are power points, light switches, kitchen cupboards and door handles easy to reach?
- Telephone and computer ports –
Are these easily accessible?
- Smoke alarms –
Can they be moved to places easy to reach?
- Burglar alarm – Is one needed?
- Bathroom –
 - Is there room to fit a seat and handrail in the shower?
 - If the bathroom is being re-done, could an level-entry shower be installed?

- Bedrooms –
Could a downstairs room become a bedroom if needed?
- Heating –
Consider improving your home's insulation and heating for greater comfort, efficiency and savings. Find out about subsidies available.
- Maintenance and repairs –
Spreading out maintenance costs helps avoid a back-log and spreads the costs.

Paying for modifications

- Age Concern recommends that if you are making house modifications anyway you think ahead and consider incorporating age or disability related features at the same time.
- Costs of modifications will vary greatly depending on the size of the project.
- Always seek comparative quotes for proposed work. Your local Age Concern may be able to suggest local tradespeople for small jobs.
- Government financial assistance with modifications is limited and applies only when a person is already having difficulty managing because of some kind of disability.
- Two sources of possible funding are:
 - ACC – assistance may be given if your disability is the result of an accident.
 - Ministry of Health – may fund some equipment and modifications if they are essential to help a person manage everyday activities, and where the disability is likely to continue for at least 6 months.

Advice on modifications

- If you have a long term disability and require structural modifications to your home, whether it's your own home or a rental, you may be able to get advice from Housing New Zealand's Suitable Homes service.

Shifting to a new home

Some things to think about:

General

- Familiarity with the area and staying close to friends and family/whānau – Think carefully before deciding to move to a new area.
- Moving closer to your family/whānau or to live with them – Check that everybody's expectations have been openly discussed.
- Living alone but lonely – Have you thought about sharing with friends?
- Kaumātua housing on or near your marae – is this available?
- Purpose-built accommodation like a retirement village or an Abbeyfield house is an option for some people. Talk to other people already there to see what they say.
- Intergenerational housing or other rental housing for older people – Ask your local city or regional council.
- Signing complex contracts – Have you taken legal advice?

Community

- The neighbourhood – What's important to you and does the local area have these things?
- Services and facilities – Are you close to shops, the doctor, a dentist, and the hospital?
- Cultural meeting places to suit you – Are these close by?
- Friends and family/whānau – Can you visit them and they visit you?

- Public transport for when you are unable to use a car – Are bus or train stops within easy walking distance?
- Walking – Are there places to walk nearby that are pleasant and safe?

Inside/outside

- Suitable if a person becomes disabled? Check your house against the Lifetime Design Foundation's standards.
- Warmth and energy efficiency – Check how much insulation there is in the ceiling, under the floor and in the walls. Is there an efficient heating source?
- Maintenance requirements – Will these be manageable for your budget and energy levels into the future?
- Space –
 - Are there enough bedrooms for family/whānau or grandchildren/mokopuna to stay?
 - Is there enough space for your hobbies?
- Garden – Will it be both manageable and enjoyable?
- Interesting outlook to avoid that 'shut in' feeling – Streets, parks, and playgrounds are all assets.

Papakainga Kaumātua/Kuia housing built by Ngāti Whatua O Orakei, Auckland.





Further information

On-line information on a variety of topics for seniors:

www.ageconcern.org.nz

Lifetime Design Foundation: www.lifetimedesign.org.nz or phone 0800 227 888

Suitable Homes Service: www.hnzc.co.nz or phone 0800 801 601

The government subsidy scheme for insulation and heating:
www.energywise.govt.nz or phone 0800 358 676

Information on retirement options: Guide to Retirement Living.
Phone 0800 738 473

The Retirement Commission's independent money guide: www.sorted.org.nz.
This also has information about retirement villages, equity release and housing and care decisions.

Abbeyfields Houses: www.abbeyfield.org.nz or phone 0-3-5466459

Ministry of Health funded modifications:
call Accessable on 0508 001 002 (Auckland or Northland)
or Enable New Zealand on 0800 17 1981 (rest of New Zealand)

ACC for claims after an accident: www.acc.co.nz or phone 0800 101 996



Serving the needs of older people

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