

## Lifewise Newsletter stories

### Welcome from our new Chief Executive

**Kia ora tātou te whānau o Lifewise.  
Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou!**

**Ko Tutumapu te maunga, Ko Opaoa  
te awa, No Waiharakeke toku whanau,  
Ko Jo Denvir ahau.**

It's an honour to have become Lifewise's Chief Executive in April, following Moira Lawler's six years leading and inspiring Lifewise's groundbreaking solutions to homelessness. I come from six years leading non-profit organisations, including with Lifeline Aotearoa and in the housing sector. I look forward to working together with your support to ensure that we continue to innovate to end homelessness and discrimination.

As we enter a second COVID-19 lockdown, it's chilling to see the virus's effects once again so close to home. Thankfully, as a result of Lifewise's excellent work during the March-May lockdown, most of the people we serve have been able to access transitional housing and a good number are now sustainably housed through Housing First. Find out more inside this newsletter about what your support has enabled us to do.

I am also really proud to introduce Ken Kerehoma, who's taken on the role of Pou Manukura - Cultural Lead - to develop the way we work with te ao Māori, the key community we work with. Haere mai ki a Ken.

Another piece of great news is Lifewise's opening of our new Supported Accommodation units for youth housing. Our timely intervention there will enable us to prevent young people falling into a lifelong cycle of homelessness and disconnection. While this work has been generously funded by

government, we still need donations to cover costs such as staff and key parts of our social work and Youth Transition programme.

Our youth team work in partnership with rangatahi, involving them in the decision making process about their futures. Each person is given a level of trust to establish a homely personalised space. This shows them that they have value as a person. We see that putting our trust in them is a way that we can help restore their mana.

Thank you once again for your generosity in helping us respond effectively to our communities' needs. Let's hope we will remember this coronavirus period as a time when our collective values of loyalty, courage and kindness really shine through.



*Jo Denvir, Chief Executive*

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### The Lifewise response to COVID-19

While the Coronavirus pandemic has caused unprecedented suffering across the world, for people experiencing homelessness, it created a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to turn around their lives. Lifewise has been at the forefront of leading life-changing action during the pandemic. Lifewise's Practice and Development Manager Zoe Truell described the current crisis as the best chance the country has ever had to combat homelessness.

"We just knew we had to get everybody inside," Zoe told Newshub in March. "People were coming to us saying 'we're really freaked out', they were scared and they couldn't socially isolate, because they didn't have a home."

Eighty-nine motels across the country came on board, partnering with agencies like Lifewise and the government to keep rough sleepers housed and supported through the lockdown and beyond.

Lyle Waitai-Tipene, 39, was one of the hundreds of homeless people whose lives have been permanently changed. She swapped a sleeping bag in Auckland's CBD for the home comforts in a motel unit. Lyle told Newshub: "I was grateful,

overly grateful. It's the Ritz to me, this place. I just try and make the most of what I have. I call it a house."

In August with Auckland currently locked down at Level 3, Lifewise is working hard to ensure the homeless community stays safe and well. We are drawing on the successful lessons we learnt during the earlier lockdown in March-May when many of our services ran remotely, adapting to constant change, ensuring the health and safety of our teams and clients remained of paramount importance.



For our **Housing First** Communities, our team are on call and available for support. All tenants have been contacted and informed of the new measures and will receive weekly food packages. At **Lifewise Rotorua**, which has been in Level 2, both our **Supported Accommodation** for mental health and addiction support as well as Housing First Rotorua services continue to be delivered.

**Lifewise Family Services** in New Lynn continue to provide essential services, with staff working from home and our on-call social worker remains reachable for urgent foster care queries after hours.

Parenting Courses are being delivered via Zoom, as we recognise the fact that families are under unprecedented stress.

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Although our iconic Merge Café on Karangahape Road has to remain closed, plans are underway to offer takeaway bags filled with nutritious, filling food.

The Merge Community and Street Outreach teams provided immediate access to support and a place to stay. With the collaboration of the **Ministry of Social Development** and the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Development**, the teams secured temporary accommodation for over 50 people in March. With the help of **Auckland Transport**, the teams also helped arrange transportation for a number of whānau.

All of Lifewise's **Early Childhood Education** centres have been closed during lockdown and no fees are charged. However, some teachers are going above and beyond to support children. To stay connected with tamariki despite the lockdown, a Facebook group was set up where teachers read bedtime stories and parents shared photos and videos of their children's activities.



**Lifewise Homecare Workers**, classed as essential workers, are looking after some of our most vulnerable grandparents in the community, whose own families often cannot visit. Lifewise's generous funders like Foundation North, The Tindall Foundation and Auckland Foundation have donated \$14,000 for masks and protective personal equipment (PPE) to keep our frontline staff and clients safe.

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### Youth Housing blessing

Lifewise already has supported living units for 16- to 24-year-olds, but due to heavy demand we've had to turn away 200 people in the last year. The new facility will enable us to meet the needs of vulnerable rangatahi quickly before their situation escalates.



*A blessing ceremony was held in July to open a new Supported Accommodation facility in Auckland's Waterview suburb for young people experiencing homelessness.*

### Welcome to our new Pou Manukura, Ken Kerehoma

Nau mai, haere mai ki a Ken Kerehoma, te Pou Manukura o Lifewise. A warm welcome to Ken who takes up this milestone role in Lifewise's journey towards a bi-cultural future. Ken's role involves working together with Haehaetu Barrett, Manager Māori Strategy, in all aspects relating to tikanga Māori, including engagement with te ao Māori and the development of Māori Strategy for 2020-2025.

