

Photography: Lawrence Smith

Annual Report

2025 – 2026

LIFEWISE

A member of the Methodist Alliance

About Lifewise

The Lifewise Trust, known as Lifewise, is a registered Charitable Trust based in New Zealand, with primary operations in Auckland and Rotorua.

Lifewise is a community-focused social development organisation whose whakapapa stretches back more than 150 years through its connection with the Methodist Church of New Zealand. As a member of the Methodist Alliance, Lifewise works towards connected, just and inclusive communities where every person is treated with dignity, their mana is upheld, and they experience a genuine sense of belonging.

Lifewise tackles social challenges by delivering sustainable solutions and nurturing compassionate communities. Its services span housing support, mental health and addiction assistance, family support, and health and disability care.

Lifewise is one of three trusts—alongside Methodist Mission Northern and Airedale Property Trust—that are overseen by a single board and chief executive.

Legal Name: The Lifewise Trust
Trading Name: Lifewise
Entity type & Class of registration: Registered Charitable Trust
Registration Number: CC40248
NZBN Number: 9429043095490



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Chair's Report

It is a privilege to present my first report as Chair of Lifewise



The Board also governs Methodist Mission Northern and Airedale Property Trust, whose stewardship and shared capability support Lifewise within the Three Trusts structure.

During 2025–26, governance of the Three Trusts was brought together under one Board while each retained its legal identity. This created clearer accountability, more cohesive decision-making and stronger alignment across the group.

I acknowledge Pam Elgar ONZM for her steady leadership as Executive Chair through this transition. She led implementation of the Commissioners' recommendations and helped stabilise the Three Trusts. Following a thorough process, the Board unanimously appointed Pam as connexional Chief Executive, completing the separation of governance and management, and I was honoured to succeed her as Chair.

The Board strengthened the foundations for effective and sustainable delivery through updated policies, clearer risk and health and safety oversight, improved transparency and accountability, and progress on the review of the Lifewise Trust Deed.

The Board and executive leadership also considered Lifewise's future within the Three Trusts. Our direction is grounded in the shared vision of connected, just and inclusive communities and in ensuring Lifewise has the strategic clarity, relationships and resources needed to deepen its impact.

The environment in which Lifewise operates remains demanding. Rising need, limited housing supply, changing policy settings and financial pressure are affecting the lives of whānau and increasing demand for support. These conditions require disciplined stewardship, strong partnerships and decisions firmly anchored in Lifewise's mission and values.

On behalf of the Board, I thank Lifewise's kaimahi, volunteers, donors, funders, partners, Methodist Church whānau and community supporters for their resilience, generosity and commitment. Your contribution enables Lifewise to walk alongside whānau, respond to hardship and create pathways towards greater safety, stability and connection. I also thank my fellow Board members and acknowledge the former trustees and leaders whose service laid the foundations on which we continue to build.

Looking ahead, the Board will remain focused on sound governance, financial sustainability and strategic clarity. He waka eke noa reminds us that we are all in this waka together. Through collective effort and shared purpose, I am confident Lifewise can continue creating meaningful change for whānau and communities.

Ruth Bruce
Board Chair
Lifewise | Methodist Mission Northern | Airedale Property Trust

Highlights for the Year 2025-26

1. New Board and CE appointed
2. New Methamphetamine treatment contract awarded in Rotorua
3. Big Sleepout returned
4. 100% Audit success rate
5. Che Fu & Hools performed at World Homeless Day 2025
6. Seven Sharp visited Merge Café
7. New offices 110 Symonds St
8. Achieved outstanding evaluation results for Mana Whānau service









Snapshot 2025-26

Social Services

320
kaimahi serving our Community

357
people housed and supported

52
whānau received intensive in-home parenting support

207
Parenting Through Separation courses delivered

93
tamariki enrolled in early childhood education

82
mānaha supported through mental health and addiction accommodation services

79
rangatahi experiencing homelessness or transitioning from state care housed and supported

Social Enterprises

9,146
meals served through Merge Café to people experiencing homelessness

455
engagements connecting people experiencing homelessness with peer supporters

Health & Disability

213,432
hours of care provided in clients' homes

996
clients were supported to remain in their own homes

Donations & Grants

$693,000
donations and grants received

Chief Executive's Report



My first year as Chief Executive has deepened my appreciation for the people and purpose of Lifewise.

In 2025–26, our priority was to maintain service continuity through significant organisational change. We strengthened leadership accountability, improved coordination and gave kaimahi greater clarity about priorities and decision-making.

I acknowledge Haehaetu Barrett and Shirley Rivers for their leadership and service, and thank Lifewise's kaimahi for maintaining safe, compassionate and reliable support for whānau and communities throughout the transition.

We strengthened financial management by improving oversight of expenditure, budgets and service performance. Better information and clearer accountability now support more timely decisions and help us direct resources to the services and communities where they can make the greatest difference.

Bringing teams together at 110 Symonds Street improved access to shared expertise, communication and operational efficiency. A Housing First reception (hub) at 17 Karangahape Road maintained accessible support for whānau experiencing homelessness, while each Trust retained its distinct purpose and responsibilities.

In Rotorua, Lifewise secured a three-year Methamphetamine Reduction Nga Paerewa Health and Disability contract as Lead Agency with Mana Enhancing STOP providing the Meth programme and Salvation Army professional development and training support. Combining our strengths in a culturally grounded, community-based response. Also achieved this year in Rotorua was a three-year Nga Paerewa Health and Disability Certification and a Level 3 Social Services two-year Accreditation.

Evidence and lived experience from our services informed submissions, engagement with decision-makers and public advocacy. Support from donors, funders, sponsors, volunteers and community partners remained vital, particularly for the Lifewise Big Sleepout, Merge Café and Merge Community.

We continued to nurture relationships with government, iwi, funders, churches and sector partners, recognising that lasting change is built through trust, shared learning and collective responsibility. Quality, safety and accountability remained central. Assurance and audit activity, stronger procedures and better reporting supported consistent practice, continuous improvement and services worthy of the trust placed in us.

Our bid for the Home and Community Support Services for Older People contract was unsuccessful, ending around 30 years of delivering this service in Tāmaki Makaurau by March 2027. Our priority is to maintain safe, reliable support and help clients, whānau and kaimahi through the transition with care, clarity and dignity.

In the year ahead, we will strengthen financial sustainability, clarify service priorities, improve quality and performance information, support kaimahi through change, and pursue aligned partnerships and opportunities.

Every day, our kaimahi demonstrate courage, care and a steadfast commitment to the whānau and communities we serve. Their advocacy brings Lifewise's values to life, and we are deeply grateful for all they contribute.

My sincere thanks to Lifewise's leaders, kaimahi, volunteers and supporters. Your care, professionalism, expertise and generosity help people build safer, more connected and hopeful futures.

Our vision of connected, just and inclusive communities must be reflected in how we design services, allocate resources, support kaimahi and work alongside whānau. With stronger operational foundations, clearer service priorities and committed people and partners, Lifewise is well placed to continue delivering meaningful and sustainable impact.

Pam Elgar ONZM
Chief Executive
Lifewise | Methodist Mission Northern | Airedale Property Trust

Vision. Values. Purpose.

Our vision is to create connected, just, and inclusive communities.

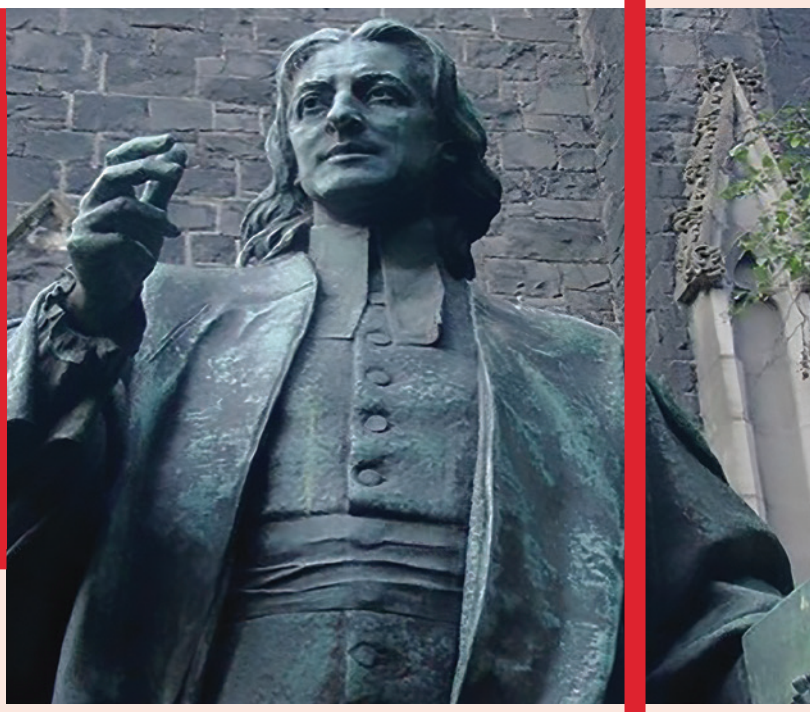
Our core values are:

Arohanui, Compassion
Māia, Courage
Whakaute, Respect
Ngākau Pono, Integrity

Our purpose is to create means and ways for people to thrive.

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."

John Wesley



Our Services

Early Childhood Education Centres

2	3-6	93	1:8
early childhood Centres in West Auckland	3 months to 6 years old	Tamariki in attendance	Kaimahi per Tamariki ratio

The purpose of Lifewise Early Childhood Education centres is to foster the holistic development of tamariki and their whānau, and to empower them to achieve their full potential through a strengths-based, relationship-based and culturally responsive approach.

Our vision remains grounded in the Lifewise commitment to creating communities where everyone thrives. We provide high-quality, affordable early childhood education for tamariki in West Auckland, prioritising whānau who experience social and economic barriers, including Māori and Pacific whānau and tamariki with diverse and complex learning and wellbeing needs.

During 2025–26, Lifewise continued to operate two licensed ECE services, Waimumu Road ECE and Royal Road Preschool, providing stable, centre-based learning and care for tamariki from infancy through to school entry. The year saw growing enrolments and strong occupancy across both centres, with 93 tamariki enrolled in June 2026. A careful enrolment strategy supported attendance consistency, strengthened income sustainability and ensured places remained available for whānau needing accessible local education and care.

Our centres continue to offer more than early learning. They provide practical resources, whānau connection, basic care support and trusted relationships that help parents and caregivers extend learning and wellbeing into the home. Spaces remain available for tamariki and whānau who need urgent or short-term support, and kaiako work alongside social services, support agencies and community partners where whānau are navigating more complex circumstances.



A significant focus this year was strengthening inclusive practice, particularly at Royal Road Preschool through participation in a Ministry of Education-funded pilot programme supporting kaiako professional development and specialist learning-support practice.



> “This centre has helped our whānau feel welcomed, supported and confident about our child’s learning journey”
>
> Parent

This has helped build capability for earlier identification, whānau-centred planning, Education Support Worker referrals, OARS documentation and smoother transitions for tamariki with additional learning needs. Grant proposal work also highlighted the growing need for targeted support for neurodiverse tamariki and their whānau.

Looking ahead, Lifewise ECE will continue to shape its model of practice alongside tamariki and whānau so that each centre remains educationally strong, culturally responsive and grounded in manaakitanga. Key opportunities include strengthening KPI reporting, formalising the neurodiverse learner support model, progressing grant-funded whānau support, and maintaining the balance between high-quality early education, social impact and financial sustainability. Through this mahi, we aim to create places where tamariki are known, their strengths are recognised, and whānau feel welcomed and supported to realise their aspirations.



Our Services

Family Services

52	125	94%	207	34	95%	51%
whānau supported through Mana Whānau	Tamariki remained safely with, or returned safely to, their whānau	of whānau interviewed were still safely caring for their tamariki one to seven years later	Parenting Through Separation courses completed	Avg age of parent supported	female	Māori

Family Services works alongside whānau facing complex and often intergenerational challenges, supporting parents and caregivers to strengthen safety, stability and wellbeing at home.

Our services are whānau-led and relationship-based, recognising that change is possible and every family has strengths, aspirations and the potential to thrive when the right support is wrapped around them. Based in West Auckland, services include **Mana Whānau**, a six-month intensive programme preventing Tamariki entering or remaining in state care; **Tōku Whānau**, a recovery, healing and prevention programme for whānau who have experienced family harm and Parenting **through Separation**, providing information and solutions to separating parents to provide the best possible support for their children through the period transition and beyond.

Developed by Lifewise, Mana Whānau is an intensive, whānau-led, in-home programme that supports families where tamariki are at risk of entering care, or where whānau are working towards reunification. The programme focuses on early, practical and relationship based support — reducing stressors that can place whānau under pressure, strengthening parenting confidence, improving housing stability, and building enduring support networks so tamariki can remain safely connected to their whānau wherever possible.

An independent evaluation of Mana Whānau, released in March 2026, affirmed the effectiveness and enduring impact of the programme's whānau-centred approach. The evaluation found that 87% of parents had retained or regained care of their children by the end of the programme, while 94% of whānau interviewed one to seven years later continued to safely care for their tamariki.

Whānau also reported positive changes across several areas of their lives, including greater housing security, improved school attendance and mental wellbeing, reduced family violence, and increased confidence in their parenting. These findings demonstrate the value of sustained, culturally grounded support that works alongside whānau to address the underlying conditions contributing to risk, rather than responding only once harm has occurred.



"I thought this programme, they were like CYFS, but they were totally different... they wanted me to have my children. They wanted to work with me. From that first interview... she just won me over and made me even more excited to go into the programme."

Parent

Rebuilding confidence and stability

When Sarah first came to Lifewise, she was carrying the long-term impacts of family violence, trauma and depression while parenting two sons with complex and very different needs.

One of her children lives with additional learning and behavioural challenges, and the pressure of managing safety, routines, school concerns, Oranga Tamariki involvement and her own wellbeing had become overwhelming. Sarah wanted to be a strong and loving parent, but she often felt isolated, unheard and unsure how to advocate for what her whānau needed.

Lifewise first supported Sarah through Mana Whānau and then through Community Social Work, providing continuity, advocacy and practical guidance as she worked with multiple agencies. Kaimahi walked alongside her through professional hui, parenting programmes, family harm recovery support, housing advocacy and ongoing goal planning. This helped Sarah rebuild confidence, strengthen her parenting strategies, and ensure agencies remained accountable to the plans and support her whānau needed.

Over time, Sarah has become more confident as the only active parent for her children. She has reconnected with whānau and community supports, continued to care for her own wellbeing, and put clearer routines and boundaries in place at home. With Lifewise advocacy and support from Kāinga Ora, the whānau also moved into a more suitable home, creating more space, stability and connection. Sarah's story shows how sustained, relationship-based support can help a parent rebuild confidence, strengthen whānau wellbeing, and create safer foundations for tamariki.



Our Services

Housing Services

Housing First Te Pou Tuatahi o Tāmaki and Youth Housing Tāmaki Makaurau

72	160	45	70%	54%
New whānau housed	Total whānau in housing	Avg age	male	Māori

A safe, secure home provides the foundation for wellbeing, connection, and opportunity.

Through **Housing First** Te Pou Tuatahi o Tāmaki and **Youth Housing** Tāmaki Makaurau, Lifewise works alongside whānau and rangatahi experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity to access and sustain stable housing, strengthen wellbeing, and build pathways towards greater independence. Delivered in partnership with Airedale Property Trust, our housing services recognise that permanent housing is most effective when combined with ongoing practical, social, and wellbeing support tailored to the aspirations of each person and whānau.

During the year, Lifewise opened the Housing First reception (Hub) at 17 Karangahape Road, creating a visible and accessible place where people experiencing homelessness can connect directly with the Housing First team and seek support. The Hub helps maintain Lifewise's presence in the central city and provides a welcoming pathway into housing, practical assistance and ongoing support.

During 2026, Housing First continued to walk alongside 160 whānau on their housing journey, supporting people to find, secure, and sustain homes of their own. Together, we celebrated 72 whānau moving into housing, our strongest result in the past four years. This reflects the dedication of our kaimahi, the strength and determination of the whānau we support, and the importance of ensuring everyone has a place to belong. We were also pleased to secure a two-year contract extension, providing greater certainty and continuity for the years ahead.

This mahi took place during a time when housing remained difficult to access and more people were experiencing homelessness across Tāmaki Makaurau. Many whānau came to us carrying significant challenges and required ongoing support to achieve stability and wellbeing. Despite these pressures, our teams remained committed to walking alongside people with manaakitanga, building strong relationships, and helping whānau create foundations from which they could thrive.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on supporting whānau to realise their aspirations and strengthen their sense of belonging, connection, and hope. We believe that a safe and secure home provides more than shelter. It creates the foundation for whānau to reconnect, heal, dream, and build the futures they want for themselves and future generations. Through whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and a commitment to the potential that exists within every person, we remain dedicated to seeing whānau flourish in their own way and on their own terms.



Photography: Lawrence Smith

What the rest of us take for granted

For years, Tom lived without something many of us rarely think twice about: a working bank account. Each week, his benefit was managed and distributed through a social service agency. It was a practical solution that helped him get by, but it also placed limits around everyday independence — the kind of independence most people need to manage bills, set up services, and make a home their own.

Opening an account should have been straightforward, but for Tom it became one setback after another. His special conditions driver licence did not meet standard identification requirements, and every attempt to open a bank account ended in disappointment. After so many knock-backs, it was hard for Tom to keep believing that things could change.

Then, after four months in transitional housing, a new opportunity came through. Tom was offered a Kāinga Ora unit in a quiet pensioner-style village — a place where he could begin to settle, feel safe and rebuild stability. But even this long-awaited step forward was nearly lost. Without a bank account, Tom could not set up electricity, and without power, he could not properly move into his new home.

Tom did not have to face that barrier alone. Supported by his Lifewise key worker, he made one more appointment at ASB. This time, someone listened. An empathetic staff member took the time to understand Tom's situation and found a way through. Tom walked out with a new bank account — and with it, the possibility of turning a house into a home.

With his account finally in place, Tom could arrange power and internet, take control of his own payments, and begin building the ordinary routines that bring dignity and independence. "This feels like a big relief," he said, looking back on the long journey it had taken to reach that point.

Now in his early 60s, Tom is settled in a peaceful retirement village. What may seem like a small administrative step to others has opened the door to comfort, stability and independence — things Tom had been waiting a long time to experience again.



Our Services

Youth Housing Services

79	5	73	19	56%	31.6%
Rangatahi between 16-24 years of age housed	Young parents supported	Kms walked by Walking Club Members	avg age	female	Pasifika, 3.6 x NZ population share (8.9%)

Lifewise's Youth Housing programme is a modified version of the Housing First model, providing a mix of transitional, supported and long-term housing for rangatahi aged 16 to 24 who are experiencing homelessness, are at risk of homelessness, or have a serious housing need.

Across Vincent Street, Clayton Avenue, Barney Way and West Coast Road, the service walks alongside rangatahi, couples, young parents and tamariki as they work towards the futures they want for themselves. By combining accommodation with youth-focused wrap-around support, the service helps rangatahi strengthen housing stability and wellbeing, develop tenancy skills, reconnect with whānau and community, and pursue education, employment and long-term independence on their own terms.

Lifewise provides rangatahi-centred support tailored to the diverse needs and priorities of tenants and their whānau. This may include support with education and employment pathways, health care, legal matters, justice, care and protection, counselling, alcohol and other drug use, transition planning and financial management. Staff also connect rangatahi with appropriate internal and external partners.

In the past year, all four sites continued to support rangatahi to move from housing insecurity into safer and more stable accommodation. Lifewise maintained a strong focus on referral pathways, occupancy and tenancy management, while providing practical support that helped rangatahi and young whānau establish routines, reduce isolation, participate in community activities and build confidence in sustaining a tenancy. Positive outcomes included transitions into private rental or longer-term accommodation, ongoing tenancy sustainment, employment and training pathways, driver licensing, life-skills development and stronger social connection through initiatives such as Walkers Club, Breakfast Club, Community Hui, Shop, Cook and Plate, Waka ama, a fortnightly wahine group and Te Kaiārahi reconnection programmes.

Each site contributed to these outcomes in different ways. Vincent Street and Clayton Avenue supported active referrals, onboarding, planned move-ins and successful transitions into private rental or other accommodation.

Barney Way maintained ongoing occupancy and supported rangatahi to strengthen independent living skills, while West Coast Road provided youth housing support within a mixed-tenancy environment.

Across all sites, staff continued to manage risk, respond to safety and maintenance concerns, support rangatahi experiencing family or relationship-related challenges, and maintain a strong focus on tenancy sustainment, whānau wellbeing and long-term housing outcomes.





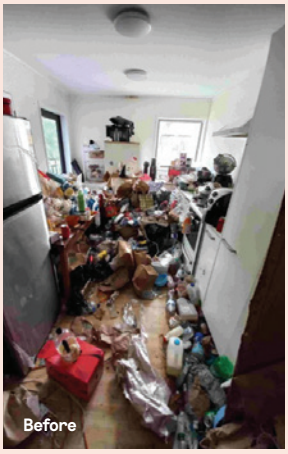
"LifeWise has been the best way for me to transition into adulthood. It's opened so many opportunities for me to achieve my goals and live the life I desire. Living independently, taking care of myself and establishing routines has helped me gain independence."

Rangatahi

Sustaining Tenancies

70	99%	57	63%
clients supported	success rate	avg age	female

Demand for Lifewise's **Sustaining Tenancies** service has increased since 90-day "no-cause" notices for ending periodic tenancies were reinstated in early 2025 under the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2024. The service works alongside tenants whose housing is at risk because of issues such as rent arrears, property upkeep or hoarding. Kaimahi listen to each person's priorities, provide practical and tailored support, and work in partnership with tenants and housing providers to address concerns early and uphold the tenant's mana while helping sustain their home. In the past year, this approach helped sustain 69 of the 70 tenancies supported. Trusted relationships with housing providers and other social service agencies remain central to the service's effectiveness.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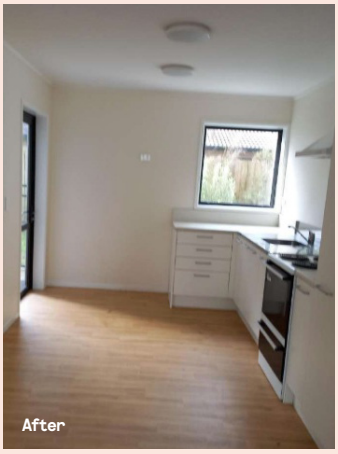

After

Supporting a Solo Māma to Sustain Her Tenancy

A solo māma of five young tamariki was referred to the Sustaining Tenancies service by Kāinga Ora after receiving a seven-day breach notice and facing the risk of eviction. Managing parenting responsibilities alone, with limited support and challenges with her mental wellbeing, had made it difficult to maintain her tenancy.

The team took a whānau-centred approach, working alongside her to develop a realistic decluttering and cleaning plan tailored to her circumstances. Through practical support, encouragement, and wraparound assistance for the wider whānau, she was able to make steady and sustainable progress.

As her confidence grew, she established routines that helped maintain her home and reduce stress. The outcome was a significant improvement in the condition of the property, the removal of the eviction risk, and the successful sustainment of her tenancy.

Today, the whānau remains safely housed in a more stable home environment. This story highlights how early intervention, compassionate support, and a strengths-based approach can create lasting positive change for whānau facing complex challenges.

Our Services

Supported Housing Pathways

36	141	47	65%	80%
people supported	people supported since opening in 2023	avg age	male	Māori

Since its establishment in 2023, Supported Housing Pathways based in Rotorua has assessed the needs of 141 residents. The programme provides intensive support for people who are struggling to maintain a tenancy and require a higher level of assistance than Housing First services can provide within community housing.

The programme offers transitional housing with onsite, wrap-around support for residents experiencing complex challenges related to addiction, mental health and homelessness. Through a holistic approach, a skilled workforce supports residents to strengthen life skills, develop strategies for positive behavioural change and reconnect with culture, creating pathways towards sustainable housing, greater independence, community participation or Housing First services.

At the heart of our service is a commitment to authentic kaupapa Māori practice. This means welcoming residents with manaakitanga, listening to their aspirations, recognising the strengths and mātauranga they bring, and supporting them to exercise choice and build pathways that are meaningful to them.

Residents are supported to become ready for long-term housing, manage their wellbeing, build strong community ties and develop the confidence and skills needed to live more independently. A shared commitment to care, kindness and collective responsibility helps create a supportive environment in which residents can rebuild stability.

In the year ended 30 June 2026, Supported Housing Pathways supported 36 residents, an increase of 12 from the previous year. This growth reflects both the rising complexity of need and the programme's role in helping residents build stability and progress towards sustainable housing.

More than a shelter

Devlin's story is not about one stumble, but a long and courageous climb toward the stability he once thought was out of reach. Addiction, imprisonment and years caught in cycles of relapse had narrowed his view of the future. But while in prison, Devlin began to believe that change was possible — that a different life could begin with one honest choice, made one day at a time. At Te Whare Oranga Ngako Rehabilitation, he started rebuilding that belief through structure, counselling, routine and the hard daily work of staying sober.

When he came to Lifewise Supported Accommodation for Post Treatment, Devlin found more than a place to stay. He found accountability, compassion and people willing to walk alongside him as he learned the rhythms of daily life, prepared for tenancy, kept appointments and took practical steps toward permanent housing. His progress



has not come through one dramatic breakthrough, but through small, steady commitments: showing up, asking for help, honouring agreements and choosing sobriety again and again. For Devlin, permanent housing is more than shelter. It is the foundation for a life rebuilt from the inside out — with sobriety as his anchor and hope as his compass.

Matilda's Milestones

Matilda's journey began in Lifewise Supported Accommodation, a bridge between where she was and where she wanted to be, guiding her through this transition were two steady anchors Hope Maxwell, her Lifewise Peer Support, and Rika Barrett, her dedicated Support Worker. Together they offered a calm, person-centered approach that helped Matilda see herself not as someone needing support, but as someone who could shape her own life and live independently.

From the outset, Hope and Rika emphasised the importance of 'Activities of daily Living' (ADL) as the practical doorway to independence. They worked with Matilda to break each task into small, achievable steps, turning overwhelming routines into manageable rituals. Each milestone became a celebration and a proof point of her growing capability.

In Supported Accommodation, Matilda has found a sustainable rhythm. She practiced ADLs with practical ease, learned to navigate the facility resources, and built new routines that accommodated both her health needs and her growing independence.



Through Lifewise, Matilda connected with peers and programmess in the community that reinforced her sense of belonging and purpose, laying the groundwork for life beyond Supported Accommodation.

Today, Matilda stands with renewed purpose, grateful to Hope and Rika who believed in her capacity to grow. Independence is no distant horizon but a lived reality, built on everyday actions, strong relationships, and a commitment to continued learning. Lifewise Supported Accommodation wish Matilda all the best for her next journey to Residential Care.

Supported Accommodation

82	15	24/7	39	61%	58%
residents supported through the programme	supported accommodation rooms	Staffing	avg age	male	Māori

Our Supported Accommodation service provides recovery-focused, live-in support for residents experiencing mental health and addiction challenges. Based in a calm, home-like environment in Rotorua, the service offers transition and stabilisation placements for adults moving on from acute care or crisis, or requiring short-term intensive support.

Delivered 24 hours a day, seven days a week by registered health professionals, peer support workers and support staff, the programme takes a holistic and culturally grounded approach to wellbeing. Guided by Te Ara Tauwhirotanga and Te Whare Tapa Whā, residents are supported to set personal goals, strengthen daily living and self-management skills, establish routines, access counselling and community services, and build pathways towards greater independence. Whānau and care teams are involved wherever possible, helping residents strengthen connections with the people and communities that are important to them.

In the year ended 30 June 2026, 82 residents moved through the service, compared with 111 in the previous year. The decrease reflected facility upgrades undertaken during the year, which temporarily reduced capacity while improvements were completed. These upgrades will help ensure the service continues to provide a safe, welcoming and therapeutic environment that supports recovery, connection and long-term wellbeing.

Our Services

Health & Disability

213,432	996	26	47	623
hours of care provided in people's homes	disabled people supported through Individualised Funding	avg age of disabled people supported through Individualised Funding	disabled people supported to remain in their own homes	disabled people supported to employ their own staff

Lifewise empowers kaumātua and kuia (older people), and tāngata whaikaha (disabled people) of all ages, to live independently in their own homes with dignity and respect.

Through **Home and Community Support Services** and **Individualised Funding**, we work alongside clients and their whānau to safeguard their health and wellbeing, participate in the communities they choose and remain at home for as long as possible. Support is tailored to each person's needs and goals and may include access to information, resources, advisors and specialist services, as well as help navigating the health and disability system. We also support clients when their needs change and advocate for them when required.

In 2025–26, demand for disability support through Individualised Funding continued to grow, with 996 people supported, compared with 972 in the previous year. **Home and Community Support Services (HCSS)** delivered 213,432 hours of care. While this was slightly lower than in 2024–25, service hours remained broadly stable across the four-year period and above 2022–23 levels.



Lifewise delivers two complementary services: Home and Community Support Services so people continue to live independently in their own homes. This is for older people, funded through a Health New Zealand contract, and for people with disabilities, funded through a Disability Support Services (Ministry of Social Development) contract.

Lifewise delivers HCSS within the Te Toka Tumai Auckland district of Health New Zealand. Services are tailored to each client's assessed needs and preferences. Most clients are older people, generally aged 65 and over, whose support is funded by Health New Zealand. Lifewise also supports a smaller group of younger disabled people, generally aged under 65, through disability support funding.

Each HCSS client receives regular support from a team of Community Support Workers, based on their assessed needs. Support may include showering, dressing, meal preparation, assistance with medication, essential shopping and housework. Most clients receive support every day, while some receive up to three visits a day from one or more support workers. The reported HCSS hours represent the total care delivered by this workforce.

During the first half of 2026, Lifewise participated in the tender process for the Home and Community Support Services for Older People contract. At the time of writing, Lifewise had been advised that its bid was unsuccessful. As a result, Lifewise will conclude approximately 30 years of delivering this service in Tāmaki Makaurau when the current contract ends in March 2027.



"Service has been very good. All been positive. Mum really appreciates their cheerfulness and enthusiasm".

Client whānau

Our Services

Social Enterprises

9,146
meals served to people experiencing homelessness

5,379
subsidised lunches served for $5

1,578
free meals provided to people experiencing homelessness

898
meals redeemed using meal cards

Merge Community and Merge Café work together as an integrated, relationship-based response to homelessness, housing insecurity, and social isolation.

Our purpose is to walk alongside whānau as they reconnect with support, strengthen their wellbeing, and take steps towards a safe, secure place to call home. Through street outreach, peer lived experience support, supported employment, practical assistance, and the welcoming environment of Merge Café, we create low-barrier pathways for people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness to access the support, resources, and opportunities they need to move forward with dignity.



Merge Café is more than a place to access affordable kai. It is often the first point of connection for whānau experiencing homelessness or hardship and a place where manaakitanga is expressed through everyday acts of welcome. A $5 meal, a warm drink, a meal card, sharing kai, or simply being greeted by name can create the trust needed for someone to begin engaging with support. In 2025–2026, the café provided 9,146 subsidised meals, including 5,379 $5 lunches, 1,578 free meals, and 898 meals redeemed through donated meal cards, ensuring whānau could access kai with dignity.

The café creates a welcoming, low-barrier space where whānau can sit, eat, connect, and be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their financial situation, housing status, or personal challenges. These everyday interactions are not separate from our housing work; they are often where the housing journey begins.

For many whānau, a shared meal becomes a conversation, a conversation becomes a relationship, and that relationship becomes the bridge to support. Our peer lived experience team draws on their own knowledge and experience to build trust, walk alongside whānau, and support access to identification, income support, healthcare, housing pathways, and wider wellbeing support. This reflects the central role of Merge Café as a gateway into housing support and a place where people can experience belonging, acceptance, and hope.

Merge Community puts relationship and community at the centre of its response to rough sleeping in Auckland's inner city. The team walks alongside whānau as they navigate complex systems, reconnect with services, access housing support, and identify their own goals and solutions. During the year, 193 whānau engaged with Merge Outreach, with 455 engagement episodes recorded, reflecting the sustained support often required as people move towards stable housing.

The needs of whānau experiencing homelessness are rarely limited to housing alone. This is particularly significant for Māori, who make up around half of the whānau accessing Merge services. The disability and impairment data shows how homelessness can intersect with mental distress, addiction, trauma and physical health challenges, while also reflecting the resilience of whānau navigating several systems at once. Among people with a recorded impairment type, mental health conditions were the most common for both women (55.4%) and men (50.4%). Substance abuse disorders were recorded for 45.9% of women and 27.0% of men, while trauma and

A new beginning through peer support

When Sam first came to Lifewise in January 2026, he was exhausted from surviving. He had been sleeping rough in Auckland's CBD for more than two months after a relationship breakdown left him without a home, income, bank account or valid photo identification. With his benefit suspended, every day was about finding somewhere safe to be and getting through the next night.

At Merge, Sam found more than food and practical help. He found warmth, connection and people who saw the person behind the hardship — someone creative, capable and full of potential. His love of art became a reminder of who he was beyond homelessness.

Sam's peer support worker walked beside him through each barrier: MSD appointments, identification paperwork, banking, and the search for housing. When a home became available, they moved quickly together, completing the documents and supporting Sam to take the next brave step toward stability.

That same day, after months without a safe place to stay, Sam moved into housing. The weight of those months lifted in an instant. He cried as he realised he finally had a door he could close, a place to rest, and somewhere to belong.

With continued support, Sam received his first bank card in years, had his benefit and back pay reinstated, and began buying the simple things that help turn a room into a home. His worker also helped him reconnect with probation and meet his court requirements, reducing the risk of another crisis.

By the end of the support journey, Sam was housed and safe, receiving his income, managing his own money, meeting justice requirements, and reconnecting with art and crafting. His story is a powerful reminder that peer support is not only about solving problems — it is about restoring dignity, hope and the belief that change is possible.

193	455	44	60%	57%	68%
Homeless whānau supported	engagements connecting people experiencing homelessness with peer supporters	avg age	male	Māori	achieved their goal of stable housing

PTSD affected 23.0% of women and 13.9% of men. Physical impairment was also significant, particularly among men (27.0%, compared with 18.9% of women).

These conditions often overlap, and one person may experience several forms of impairment alongside poverty, unsafe housing, family disconnection, and difficulty accessing mainstream services. The percentages therefore represent interconnected needs rather than separate groups. This complexity helps explain why progress is not always linear and why sustained engagement, flexibility, advocacy, and coordinated support are essential.

A distinctive strength of Merge Community is the expertise of peer practitioners, who draw on lived experience of homelessness, mental health challenges, addiction, or other forms of hardship. Their empathy, authenticity, and professional skill help whānau reconnect with support at their own pace, particularly when previous experiences of systems have felt inaccessible or unwelcoming.

The **Outreach Peer Support** team engages with whānau who are sleeping rough or experiencing housing insecurity, helping them connect with services when they are ready and supporting them to build networks of care. Their work is grounded in listening, trust, consistency, and manaakitanga.

The needs of whānau experiencing homelessness remain complex and interconnected. Many first connect with Merge while sleeping rough, couch surfing, or living in temporary accommodation, often after becoming disconnected from mainstream systems. The growth in outreach engagement reflects both the level of housing deprivation being experienced and the importance of maintaining visible, relationship-based support in the community.

421
Paid hours of work

Lifewise Works was established to walk alongside whānau who had experienced homelessness as they rebuilt confidence, strengthened work readiness and took supported steps towards employment. The programme recognised the skills, knowledge and potential each person brought, while creating opportunities to reconnect with purposeful mahi at a pace that reflected their circumstances and aspirations.

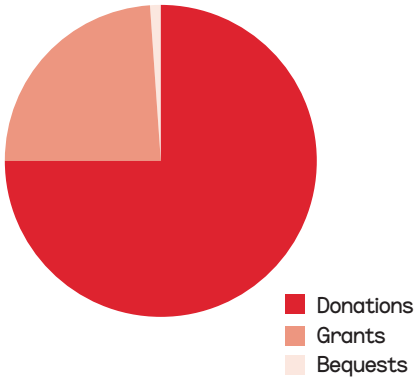
Over time, the programme has highlighted the significant systemic barriers many whānau continue to face when seeking work beyond Lifewise Works, including the ongoing impacts of mental health challenges, justice involvement, stigma, and discrimination. It has also become clear that, despite the commitment behind the programme, Lifewise Works was not achieving the outcomes we had hoped for. As a result, the programme is being carefully wound down, with learnings informing how we continue to support whānau in ways that recognise their strengths, respond to the realities of their lives, and uphold their dignity as they move towards stability and opportunity.

Major Grants, Bequests and Donations

8	4,359	3,299	$102
Grants received	Donations received	Donors	Avg donation

Each year, we are generously supported by organisations, foundations and donors, and we are deeply grateful for their contributions. This year, we received $693,000 in donations, grants and bequests and over $130,000 of in kind gifts and/or services for those we serve.

Some of our services, specifically Merge Café and its community work rely entirely on the generosity of our community. We want to thank each and every one of you for your generous contribution.



See the list of major donors from the past year

NZ Lottery Grant Board	$70,000
Tindall Foundation	$50,000
Auckland Council & Waitematā Local Board	$17,300
Woolworths, Halsey St, Albert St and City (vouchers)	$13,500
PwC and PwC Foundation	$13,122
Alexander Harold Watson Charitable Trust	$13,000
Simplicity Foundation	$10,000
Duncan Shand	$9,389
Te Rourou One Aotearoa Foundation	$6,553
Auckland Methodist Central Parish	$5,417
Murray Olds	$5,210
Bay of Islands Uniting Parish	$5,000
Jill Brooks-Garnett	$5,000
Helen Brown	$5,000
Gertrude Frances Daldy Estate	$5,000
Justin Lopes	$4,344
Allen and Anna Beaumont	$3,500
Crossroads Methodist Church	$3,500

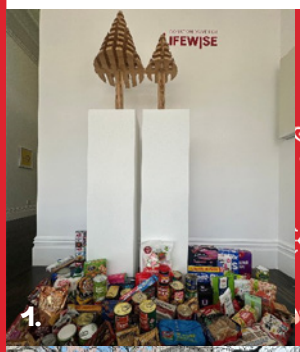
Ralph Dingle Trust	$3,166
Mike James	$3,000
Ingrid Vinkenvleugel	$3,000
Viv Whimster	$3,000
Zelda Roberts Trust	$3,000
BNZ Foundation	$2,500
Robert Creemers, APS Limited	$2,500
Pak n Save (vouchers)	$2,500
St Joans Trust	$2,500
Janette Claridge	$2,200
Mirla Edmundson	$2,200
Grant Webster	$2,100
Aaron Kedzlie	$2,000
Mainfreight Limited	$2,000
Chris Quin, Foodstuffs North Island	$2,000
RUSH Digital	$2,000
Gill Thackeray	$2,000
Tupore Group	$2,000
Te Miringa Trust	$1,500

Thank you

We extend our special thanks to AUT for its ongoing financial support and encouragement of the annual Lifewise Big Sleepout. We are also deeply grateful to The Catalytic Foundation, Staples Rodway, The Kindness Collective and Melanie Roger Gallery for providing Christmas gifts and food for vulnerable members of our community. Their generosity helps ensure whānau feel supported, valued and connected at a time of year that can be especially difficult.

We are also grateful to the organisations that generously donated gifts for our 2025 Christmas Auction. Their support helped make the auction possible and contributed directly to Lifewise's work alongside vulnerable whānau and communities.

● Air New Zealand ● ANZ Bank ● ASB Bank ● Auckland Street Choir ● Bunnings Grey Lynn ● Butterfly Creek ● Coco Republic ● Corporate Traveller ● Federation ● Good Yarns ● Hilton Lake Taupo ● Maxwell Williams ● Melanie Roger Gallery ● MOTAT ● New World Long Bay ● New World Newmarket ● OfficeMax ● One NZ ● Pak'n Save Mt Albert ● Parnell Gallery ● PB Tech ● Redwoods Treewalk ● Ruckus Networks ● SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium ● Silver Ferns ● Snowplanet ● Te Rourou, One Aotearoa Foundation ● Tourism Holdings Limited ● Toyworld Henderson ● Wētā Workshop ● Woolworths.











To every person, business, trust, foundation and community group that stood alongside Lifewise this year: tēnā koutou. Whether you contributed funding, goods, services, time, expertise or encouragement, your generosity strengthened our collective ability to walk alongside whānau, respond to hardship and create opportunities for people to thrive. We are honoured by the trust you place in us and deeply grateful for all that we have achieved together for whānau and communities.

Images above (from left to right): 1. Melanie Roger Gallery Christmas food drive
2. Baker Tilly Staples Rodway Christmas gifts for vulnerable tamariki
3. & 4. Women from St Stephen's Presbyterian Church (the Good Yarns) 5. World Homeless Day 2025

Financials

Our financials are available on the Charities Register website.

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