

Financial stress can be overwhelming

It is hard to imagine New Zealand has been in something like the current housing situation before. Sky rocketing rents, which even those on middle incomes struggle to afford. An ever-smaller segment of society able to purchase their own home, and no realistic end in sight to the current housing.

Added into this festering brew, the widespread loss of jobs and income for many, as Covid19 is taking its economic toll too. A result of all this is that many people who 18 months ago, where feeling reasonably financially secure, now face uncertainty and worry. For lots of people who were already struggling to make ends meet 18 months ago, the situation is even more dire.

Every day at Homebuilders Family Centre we meet families where the financial and emotional stress of dealing with these realities is taking a toll. It can feel hard to reach out for support, but it is a clever option. We regularly meet families who are missing out on their correct legal entitlements from Inland Revenue and Work and income. Some of these payments can be significant. We often come across situations where families are missing out of \$50, \$100, \$200 a week. That is a lot of money when the fridge is empty.

If you have previously been told you aren't able to receive assistance from Inland Revenue or Work and Income, it's definitely worth checking if this is still the case. The rules and formulas used to calculate what people are able to receive are in a constant state of change. Someone who wasn't able to get support before, maybe able to get support now. This is particularly the case if your income has reduced, your housing costs have increased, you have another child in your care or you have moved where you live.

Fr example, in the last few months there have been changes to a range of things including how much you can earn before it impacts on a "main" benefit, the Working for Families Tax Credit thresholds have changed and the minimum wage has increased.

Work and Income and Inland Revenue both have "online calculators" you can use to see if you might be missing out. But if you would rather see someone face to face, or if you think your situation is a bit unusual, it is probably a good idea to visit a local community agency for assistance. There are a number of places locally such as Homebuilders Family Services, Rodney Women's Centre the Citizens Advice Bureau and the local Budget service where you can get this sort of confidential support, free of charge.

Financial stress can be overwhelming, if you are having difficulty dealing with the pressure and changes you and your family are facing, reach out for help. Simply call us at Homebuilders Family Services on 09 425 7048 or email homebuildersfs@gmail.com if we can't help, we can probably link you up with someone who can.