

Older People's Home Repairs and Maintenance: Ageing Well in Place in New Zealand

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The case study research

- Interviews with 126 older householders:
 - Blenheim and Picton
 - Kawerau
 - Auckland - Sandringham, Waiheke Island
 - Older Chinese in North Shore, Sandringham, Hamilton
- Interviews with 50 older people living in a retirement village, rest home, or with family

The case study research

- Interviews with providers of services for older people:
 - Odd job / home handyman services
 - Older people's services and advocacy
 - Housing providers
 - Health providers
 - Retrofitters
 - R & M product retailers

Repairs and maintenance practices of householders

- Deferral of repairs and maintenance
- The main reasons for deferral were expense and inconvenience
- They also said it is hard to get the right person to do the work
- Trustworthiness of the provider
- Some did not see repairs and maintenance as a priority at their time of life

- *Maintenance is getting a burden. To do this place up, painting would cost a lot. You would be looking at \$30,000 - \$40,000 and that would knock our bank balance. I don't like a place to run down. The size is a worry too, it's too big for us.*
- *Too old to start doing repairs. Windows outside need painting and any rotten wood replacing, but I won't be doing that.*
- *I can't find anyone to put down second hand carpet. Upgrading the painting and wallpapering inside - it's finance and time ... the chimney was damaged in recent gales and needs fixing. But I won't do that until my grandson comes, I wouldn't go up on the roof by myself now.*

Providers' views

- Physical limitations stop older householders from seeing what needs fixing in their homes
- Lack of equipment required to do the work
- Older people lack the energy to plan & organise for repairs and maintenance to be done
- Many older people do not like to complain or are reluctant to admit their house needs repair

Providers' views cont.

- Misperception about actual costs of repairs
- Lack of understanding of the impacts of not doing repairs & maintenance - on health, safety and dwelling condition

Older people ask providers for help with:

- Small jobs such as dripping taps, sticking door, fitting grab rail, replacing light bulb, and replacing smoke alarm batteries
- Physically challenging work such as maintenance of the outside of the house and section maintenance
- Operating heat pumps

Older people ask providers for advice about:

- Recommendations for providers to get a job done
- Help with understanding quotations that they receive for a job
- Advice on whether a job had been done properly
- How to ask the landlord to do repairs

Older people ask providers for information about

- Financial assistance to get repairs done
- Cheap repairs and maintenance services
- Heating subsidies
- The performance of particular products (e.g. retrofitting double glazing, heat pumps)
- Home modifications

What would prompt older householders to move out of their homes?

- A major illness or disability
- Unable to manage maintenance of home or section
- Unable to care for oneself
- House design, condition or performance (e.g. cold, steps)
- Loneliness
- Lack of transport
- Housing costs
- Unsafe neighbourhood or undesirable changes to the neighbourhood

What are the top housing concerns of older householders?

- Top Two:
 - Home running costs on fixed incomes (rates, upkeep, power)
 - Cold homes - desire to change type of heating for convenience
- Also:
 - Mobility problems and delays in getting home modifications
 - Widows - no handy hubby
 - Few local R&M services (Kawerau)

Why did people move to a more supported environment?

- One's own poor health and needing support
- Poor health of spouse
- Companionship and security
- Difficult to cope with home and section
- Lack of suitable accommodation
- Death of a spouse

Conclusion

- This research contributes to growing evidence that older people in NZ are finding it hard to manage their repairs and maintenance needs
- Key issues are:
 - Older people's lack of understanding of the nature of the repairs problem
 - Older people's difficulty in accurately assessing the condition of their dwelling
 - Unaffordability of R & M

Conclusion

- Key needs are for:
 - A range of affordable handyman services
 - Information and advice services
 - Financial assistance
- The burden of repairs and maintenance does influence some older people to move to more supported living such as a retirement village, a rest home or with relatives