

Quick guide to talking about decent homes

Having consistent ways to talk about decent homes works to deepen people's understanding and build support for the changes we know can make a big difference in people's lives.

This quick guide gives you all the elements you need to make your communications more effective. You can also learn more about the research and thinking behind this guidance, and find case studies of what it looks like in practice at www.talkdecenthomes.nz



Use these messages in your communications

A decent home is warm, dry, accessible, and offers security of tenure. Decent homes allow people to contribute to and participate in our communities. They allow people to get work and get to work and to keep kids in school. Decent homes keep people healthy.



Why does this work?

This is a public good narrative. It surfaces values to do with social justice, self-direction, responsibility and care.



Our homes need to look after us at every stage and circumstance of life: from newborn babies to grandparents/kaumatua; when we are well and when we are sick. Homes can be the safe haven everyone deserves.

Why does this work?

This is a public good/equity narrative, that surfaces values to do with care and responsibility.

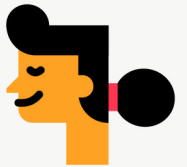
We have the knowledge and capabilities to ensure every New Zealander can feel at home in their home.



Why does this work?

This is a strengths-based/equity narrative which surfaces values to do with self-direction and wisdom.

Imagine if... everyone in New Zealand had a place to come home to where they could be comfortable and warm and breathe easy.



Why does this work?

This is an equity narrative. It could be paired with a better together or a systems narrative, which would sound like: 'the way to this is through collective action' or 'the way to this is through systems change.' It surfaces values to do with social justice, and equality, and it encourages feelings of hope.



When our homes are healthy, dry and comfortable, we can live full lives and give back to our communities.

Why does this work?

This is another public good/systems narrative, that surfaces values to do with responsibility, care, and equality.

As New Zealanders we value fairness and the opportunity for everyone to live in a decent home. The current state of our housing means many — usually the most vulnerable — are locked out of those choices.



Why does this work?

This is an equity/systems narrative, which surfaces values to do with equality, self-direction, and social justice.

Focus on people who are open to understanding and persuasion

Your audience can be broken into three groups:

Supporters — People who already support your work and your vision for decent homes.

- Make sure your supporters like and share your communications.
- They play an important role in reaching people who are open to understanding and persuasion.

Persuadables — People who haven't thought much about or don't hold a strong view on decent homes.

- This is the majority of people .
- Focus your communications on this group as they are most likely to shift their thinking based on how we talk about decent homes .

Opposition — People who hold strong views that oppose your work or your solutions.

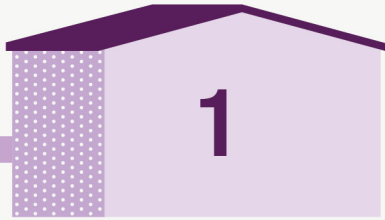
- Small but loud group that are not likely to respond to your communications.
- Unlikely to shift their thinking regardless of your message, so not worth using your communications resources on responding to them.



Structure your stories to make them easy to understand

The order we present information matters.
This story structure works with fast-thinking brains,
making it easy to understand and engage with.





Start with a vision and values

The vision is a concrete description of the better world we experience once changes have been made.

Imagine if everyone in New Zealand had a decent home that is comfortable and welcoming, a home that is warm, dry, accessible, and offers stability.

Values are our deep motivations. Reminding people why decent homes are important helps them connect with the story.

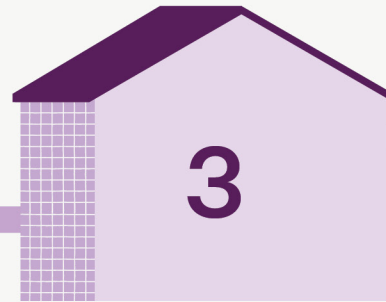
Decent homes allow people to contribute to and participate in our communities, allowing people to work and to keep kids in school. Decent homes keep us all healthy and well.



State the problem or barrier

Clearly state what is getting in the way of all people having access to decent homes.

Our current rules and standards do not require people that provide rental homes to do everything that is needed to make them warm, dry, and healthy to live in.



Explain how this happened, the impact on people and who can make changes

Your explanation needs to step people through the issue so people understand. You can use metaphors and select facts in your explanation. Name the people and organisations who can make change.

The healthy homes standard was designed by people in government to make sure homes that are rented do their job of looking after the people that live there. Currently the standard does not include providing curtains. This is a problem because even in a well insulated home, without effective window coverings, up to 45% of the heat is flying directly out the window. Every year, tens of thousands of Kiwis are hospitalised with conditions made worse by cold, damp housing. Illnesses range from the common cold, through to potentially fatal illnesses such as influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and rheumatic fever.



Provide a concrete solution

Your solution should match your barrier in size and scale and follow logically from your explanation. Be as specific as possible.

The standard can be updated by people in government to include effective curtains in every home that is rented.



Remind people why this matters

End with reminding people why we care about this by using values.

Updating the standard would mean that every rented home does its job of caring for the people that live there.

Embrace words that surface helpful thinking

The words we choose act as pre-packaged explanations about how the world works. They can bring to the surface particular ways of thinking about an issue. Embrace words and frames that lead to helpful thinking.

Avoid: Housing as a market.

Embrace: Decent homes as infrastructure for care, connection and contribution.

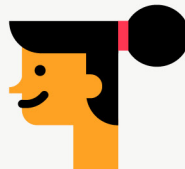


Avoid: Housing as an asset.

Embrace: Homes have a job to do — keep us all warm or cool, dry, safe, healthy — enable us all to care, connect and contribute.

Avoid: Decent homes as a trade-off or preference for some.

Embrace: Decent homes lead to downstream improvements in health, education, employment, community engagement.



Avoid: High-performance homes.

Embrace: Homes that meet our real needs.

Avoid these traps that undermine your communications

Some common habits can work to undermine the effectiveness of your communications. These are common traps to avoid:

- Myth busting, negating or repeating unhelpful narratives— instead focus on telling your own story.
- Talking to just your supporters — instead focus on the bigger group of those open to understanding.
- Leading with a series of facts — instead use select facts as part of a broader explanation.
- Leading with the problem — instead lead with vision and values which help people connect to your communications and feel hopeful.
- Using jargon and technical language — instead use everyday words that most people understand, consider using metaphors to simplify things that are especially complex.
- Using passive language — instead name the people who can act and what they need to do.

Talking About Decent Homes

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