

Things you need to know before setting up a home-based business

We suggest you do some research before setting up a home-based business as you may need advice from several different Dunedin City Council departments.

The Building Services team can help with information about what is required from a building point of view, but it's also a good idea to talk to staff from these areas where other rules may apply:

- City Planning – to assess if the proposed use of your property is permitted under the District Plan. Certain owner-operator businesses can be run from home.
- Transport – to check whether your home-based business would have any effect on traffic flow, footpaths and parking etc.
- Environment Health – to see if there are hygiene or food handling requirements to be met.
- 3Waters – to check whether a water meter, boundary backflow preventer, trade waste consent, or grease trap is required.

Building Services is specifically responsible for making sure people comply with the Building Act 2004, the Building Code and relevant building regulations.

The Building (Specified Systems, Change of Use, and Earthquake-prone Buildings) Regulations 2005 provide a definition of the various uses of buildings and outline when a change of use has taken place. Typically, using part of your home for a business such as hairdressing salon or commercial kitchen constitutes a change of use for that part of the building.

By law, property owners must tell their local council if they propose to change the use of a building. This notification can be made in two ways:

- If building work that requires a building consent is needed to set up the new business, then the change of use can be notified via the consent application.
- If a building consent is not required i.e. you don't need to make any changes to your house, or the work needed is classed as exempt building work under schedule 1 of the Building Act, then you can tell us through a Notification of Change of Use form.

An owner cannot change the use of a building unless we are satisfied the building, in its new use, will comply as nearly as is reasonably practicable with:

- Means of escape from fire, protection of other property, sanitary facilities, structural performance and fire-rating performance
- Access and facilities for people with disabilities.

Compliance documents – typically C/AS1, C/AS2 and NZS 4121:2001 – give guidance on what's required. These documents can be complex so we recommend you talk to a fire engineer or designer for advice.

Some of the things you might have to do include putting in fire-rated walls and doors to separate your business space from the rest of your house. Some buildings must provide safe and easy access for people with disabilities. Steep paths or non-compliant steps may mean your property is not suitable for public access.

This guidance must be read in conjunction with the legislation outlined above. Copies of building consent applications and other forms are available at www.dunedin.govt.nz/building-services-forms

If you would like to discuss your plans for a new business, or need further information, please call 03 477 4000 or visit the ground floor of the Civic Centre and talk to our staff.