



28 OCT 2020

Dear

On 14 September 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *The number of benefit recipients registered as Deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing impaired. Please provide this information for the years 2015 to 2020 broken down by each year.*
- *Any documents, briefings or emails detailing how benefit recipients who are deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing impaired can access assistance from Work and Income during COVID-19 Alert Levels 2, 3 and 4.*

On 9 October 2020, the Ministry emailed you advising of the need to extend the timeframe in which a response would be provided to you.

The Ministry is only able to provide the number of clients who have a primary condition related to hearing-impairment recorded on their file for the purposes of receiving a health and disability related benefit. There are clients who have hearing-impairments but who are not receiving a benefit due to this. Therefore, details of their hearing-impairment will not be captured in the data provided as they are not required to provide this information to the Ministry.

As such, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry nor any other department or Minister of the Crown.

However, in an effort to assist, please find the table below which outlines the number of working age hearing-impaired clients who are receiving a benefit where the primary medical condition is recorded as hearing related, as at the end of June 2015 to 2020, broken down by years.

**Number of working age hearing-impaired clients who are receiving a benefit as at end of June 2015 to 2020, broken down by years**

June 2015	June 2016	June 2017	June 2018	June 2019	June 2020
903	845	813	749	772	745

**Notes:**

- Hearing impaired clients are those with a primary incapacity related to hearing/ears
- This includes clients on Job Seeker Health Condition & Disability and Supported Living Payment benefits
- Working age clients are those aged 18 to 64 years old

Regarding the second part of your request, throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, the Ministry continued to offer accessible services for deaf and hearing-impaired clients. As with every area of the Ministry, clients were advised that due to the increased demand on services as a result of the unprecedented situation, there was likely to be a delay in response.

During the COVID-19 lockdown periods, while Service Centres were closed for face to face appointments deaf and hearing-impaired clients could still continue to contact the Ministry as per usual through the deaf-line or via the Ministry's online portal. Please see the following link for more information on how deaf and hearing-impaired people are able to interact with the Ministry and its services here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/contact-us/deaf-hearing-impaired-and-speech-impaired-clients.html>.

Further to this, information about the COVID-19 alert levels, Work and Income services, and information about physical and mental health support, was updated for NZSL users on the Deaf Aotearoa website here: <https://www.deaf.org.nz/category/covid-19/ministry-of-social-development/>.

As the Ministry already had existing systems in place to enable deaf and hearing-impaired clients to access services during the COVID-19 alert levels, there are no documents, emails or briefings in scope of your request. As such, the second part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information requested does not exist.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



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