



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

09 SEP 2020

Tēnā koe

On 23 August 2020, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

A copy of the reports sent to the Ministry from the organisations who received funding to support the Deaf community since 25 March 2020.

The organisations who received the COVID-19 Disability Wellbeing Grant funding from the Ministry were required to provide a narrative report of the support they offered to the Deaf community.

Please find enclosed the following two reports:

- The National Foundation for the Deaf report on COVID-19 funding for the period 1 April 2020 – 30 June 2020.
- Deaf Aotearoa Holdings Limited report on COVID-19 funding for the period 1 April 2020 – 30 June 2020.

Please note that some information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act as releasing this information may lead to individuals being identified. The need to protect the privacy of those individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

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

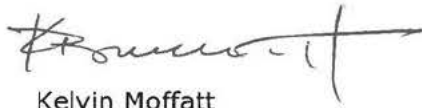
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments 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.

If you are not satisfied with this response about the COVID-19 funding for organisations that support the Deaf community, 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 or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui



Kelvin Moffatt
General Manager
Service and Contracts Management

Appendix One – Provider Return Report
The National Foundation for the Deaf

Report Due Date
Report One: Upon completion of the Project, but no later than 10 July 2020

Signed by: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

Narrative description of use of grant funding

In response to the COVID-19 emergency, the National Foundation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NFDHH) addressed the unique challenges present in the Deaf and hard of hearing community with the extension of our existing services and introduction of new initiatives. People who are Deaf and hard of hearing struggle with isolation every day, but during the lockdown, the experience of isolation is amplified. To combat isolation and support the hearing loss community, we took the following initiatives supported by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) grant funding.

- New Zealand Sign Language Classes Online

One of the major impacts of hearing loss is on the individuals' ability to communicate with others which prevents them from social interaction and participation. To enable individuals to communicate efficiently and become hearing loss aware NFDHH partnered with Merge New Zealand to teach New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) online. The funding from MSD helped us live stream six online classes for interested individuals to learn the basics of NZSL. Over 18,200 people attended the classes online. Being able to communicate can often make all the difference to those who are Deaf or hard of hearing and in self- isolation.

- Distribution of Care packages and Hearing Aid batteries

As part of our effort to support our community's wellbeing, we launched the "ImHearForYou" campaign and created a series of "Care packages" for distribution. These packs include essential health information such as the government's Healthline number, how to register for the TXT111 emergency services and visual cue cards to support communication. We distributed approximately 100 care packages and sent out hearing aid batteries on request. The printing and packaging of these packs were done in-house at the NFDHH office.

- 0800 helpline and e-mail services

During the Covid-19 lockdown period, we received an overwhelming volume of communication from our community members via 0800 helpline service and e-mail. It was much more difficult for those people who do not use the internet such as the elderly and rural New Zealander. We would like to share a success story, our experience of supporting the community during the lockdown period.

We received an e-mail saying, "I have severe hearing loss, so using digital applications, such as Zoom, for group conversation does not work for me. Even with hearing aids, it is challenging to keep up with group conversations online. I gave up, could not cope with voices on top each other, couldn't lip read. I ended up getting too anxious. Do you have any advice for me?"

In response, NFDHH connected her to Ai-Media, which is a company providing live captioning service for accessibility. She can use this service to attend meetings online as real-time transcription/captioning removes communication barriers and allows employees with hearing loss to participate remotely. For people with hearing loss, appropriate and timely interventions can facilitate access to communication and makes them feel included.

Funding support from MSD enabled us to maintain regular contact with those who were struggling with isolation.

- ImHearForYou Campaign and online community group – To help the hearing loss community beat isolation, NFDHH had set up a private page on Facebook for our the people with hearing loss. We encouraged everyone to share interactive content, post their activities with kids and family and communicate their experience of lockdown. We shared video content created by our team and NFDHH's youth ambassador Lily Mcmanus who is hard of hearing asking people struggling with isolation to reach out to us. This online platform helped the community to stay connected.
- Greater inclusion for the hearing loss community

The hundreds of thousands of people with hearing loss were discriminated and their needs overlooked in the recent government guidelines to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing teamed up with Deaf Aotearoa to urgently lobby government, ministers and the Ministry of Health to ensure inclusion of the Deaf and hard of hearing communities in its approach to combat COVID-19 community transmission. The government recommended New Zealanders wear masks or cover their faces when out in public.

While we acknowledge the government's recommended use of face masks is imperative to combat the spread of the virus, we believe it presents a major communication barrier for the 880,000 people who are Deaf or hard of hearing – many of whom rely on lip-reading to assist them in understanding conversations fully. Added to this, news bulletins outside primetime news programmes are not required to have closed captions, so they fail to meet the needs of all New Zealanders.

As a result, the two advocacy groups sent an open letter to Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Minister for Disability Issues, Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Broadcasting, Hon Kris Faafoi and Director-General of Health, Dr Ashley Bloomfield calling for greater inclusion for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Following our Media Release about the impact of face masks on the ability of Deaf and hard of hearing New Zealanders lip-read live broadcasts, TVNZ announced that they would be removing masks during these live-crosses (where no captions are provided).

We are hopeful this will be the first of many steps, to make our community's inclusion a priority. We believe that our National COVID-19 Response needs to take into account these very real barriers our community are facing. NFDHH is working hard to advocate for access to communication to ensure our community is adequately informed during these challenging times.

Important note: If you are submitting your Provider Return Report by e-mail please send it to **Participation_Inclusion_Services@workandincome.govt.nz**

Appendix One – Provider Return Report

Deaf Aotearoa Holdings Limited

Report Due Date

Report One: Upon completion of the Project, but no later than 10 July 2020

Narrative description of use of grant funding

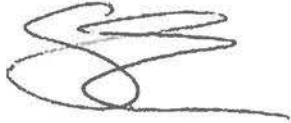
From the 1st April – 30th June 2020 we received 1358 requests for assistance, information or advice. Requests included: clarification of information; can I drive to the supermarket; what does this text from my employer mean; how to do online shopping; how to top up phone I can't go to the shop; how to I pay my power bill I post office is closed; Family harm situation I need help. Our staff made 506 wellbeing checks by either skype video, text, email or home visit if Skype wasn't available (observing health and safety guidelines, stayed outside and NZSL through closed window), over the course of this time to check in, enquire about their wellbeing and see if they needed any assistance. We provided \$2,225.00 worth of phone top ups to 81 community members who needed assistance to ensure they had data and credit so they could keep in touch with family and friends, do their food shopping and pay their bills online and access news and information. Deaf Aotearoa created 11 regional Facebook groups, which were managed by our local staff, which collectively have 434 members, as a local online space where members could keep in touch, chat, reduce isolation and also local information could be posted. Deaf Aotearoa produced over 18 videos translating information about Covid19, the lockdown, keeping safe and the rules around the different levels into NZSL which were published on our website and on our social media pages.

Some examples of assistance given:

- Ongoing contact with a Deaf couple living in a retirement village to maintain link with hearing daughter § 9(2)(a).
- Deaf elderly man § 9(2)(a) – arranged with staff to provide access to Laptop so Facilitator can have 2 x 30 minutes Skype chat every week.
- Guidance on setting up video chat apps on mobile phones and booking weekly chat sessions in NZSL to support mental wellbeing.
- Tapping in to natural resources and utilising family, friends and neighbours as a support system for isolated Deaf people.
- Contact with family and mental wellbeing service -Pathways supporting a Deaf man to ensure they provide access to all info in NZSL daily Covid updates with interpreter to make sure he understands what is happening and why in lockdown.
- Contact with Deaf people, who are essential workers, to ensure they are safe and understand how to follow all safety practice.
- Gave information and reassurance about supermarket shopping as S/U fearful of going out.
- Working alongside other providers in supporting a Deaf man who is struggling with pressure of lockdown, made worse by being off work and not able to get out of the house, to reduce the likelihood of Family Harm reoccurring .
- Support with setting up online banking account and how to download app on phone so seniors did not need to physically go to atm. Can now use phone to check balance and make bill payments from home.
- Assisted family who had little money to access food bank, which resulted in much needed groceries being delivered to their home.

We sincerely thank MSD for this wonderful support. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need additional information.

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Suzi Evans', written in a cursive style.

Date: 16/07/2020 Name: Suzi Evans Position: National Fundraiser

Important note: If you are submitting your Provider Return Report by email please send it to
Participation_Inclusion_Services@workandincome.govt.nz

Letter of Grant from Ministry of Social Development to Deaf Aotearoa Holdings Limited
From 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020 Page 5 of 5

RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT