



22 APR 2021

Tēnā koe

On 2 February 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. The percentage of recipients of Accommodation Supplement, Temporary Additional Support, Disability Allowance, and Child Disability Allowance who do not also receive a main benefit.*
- 2. All materials used initially inform staff that together Scoble and section 298 of the Social Security Act impose a duty on them to treat an application for one entitlement, circumstance, or need as an application for all related entitlements and investigate it.*
- 3. Any checklists or other documents (such as a table of related entitlements for each particular benefit) to assist staff to apply the principle in Scoble and comply with their s 298 duty.*
- 4. Any checklists or other documents used by staff managing, training, or checking the work of frontline staff to ensure those staff comply with the principle in Scoble and the s 298 duty.*
- 5. Details of what checks MSD undertakes to ensure staff comply with the principle in Scoble and the s 298 duty. Specific information is required please – for example: audit of a percentage of Child Disability Allowance grants to check staff also assessed entitlement to Disability Allowance and Supported Living Payment-Caring, or a mandatory system step requiring staff to assess entitlement for Temporary Additional Support when somebody applies for a Food SNG that is audited weekly.*
- 6. All materials used to train staff about each (not included pages in the publicly available Work and Income Manuals and Procedures).*
- 7. A list of the questions staff must answer and readable screenshots of each system step staff must take when processing an application for each.*
- 8. All materials used to train staff about how to exercise discretion.*
- 9. Details of what checks MSD undertakes to ensure staff are exercising discretion in a legally sound way. Specific information is required please such as the percentage of decisions or in what circumstances. If this is requiring "manager approval," any checklists or other specific documents to assist managers to ensure the decision is legally sound.*

10. *Any advice to Government by the Department of Social Welfare regarding the proposed Universal Benefit (1990) or by the Ministry regarding the proposed Single Core Benefit (2005).*

On 4 February, 9 February and 10 February 2021, the Ministry contacted you in order to clarify and refine your response. Your request for information was refined to the following:

1. *The total number of recipients of Accommodation Supplement, Temporary Additional Support, Disability Allowance, and Child Disability Allowance, and the number of those who do not also receive a main benefit.*
2. *All materials used initially inform staff that together Scoble and section 298 of the Social Security Act impose a duty on them to treat an application for one entitlement, circumstance, or need as an application for all related entitlements and investigate it.*
3. *Any checklists or other documents (such as a table of related entitlements for each particular benefit) to assist staff to apply the principle in Scoble and comply with their s 298 duty.*
4. *Any checklists or other documents used by staff managing, training, or checking the work of frontline staff to ensure those staff comply with the principle in Scoble and the s 298 duty.*
5. *Details of what checks the Ministry of Social Development undertakes to ensure staff comply with the principle in Scoble and the s 298 duty. Specific information is required please – for example: audit of a percentage of Child Disability Allowance grants to check staff also assessed entitlement to Disability Allowance and Supported Living Payment-Caring, or a mandatory system step requiring staff to assess entitlement for Temporary Additional Support when somebody applies for a Food SNG that is audited weekly.*
6. *Any written advice to Cabinet or the Minister of Social Welfare/Social Development and Employment either as a Regulatory Impact Statement, departmental disclosure or other documents by the Department of Social Welfare regarding the proposed Universal Benefit (1990) or by the Ministry regarding the proposed Single Core Benefit (2005).*

For clarity, each of your questions are addressed in turn below.

1. *The total number of recipients of Accommodation Supplement, Temporary Additional Support, Disability Allowance, and Child Disability Allowance, and the number of those who do not also receive a main benefit.*

The Accommodation Supplement (AS) is a non-taxable benefit that provides assistance towards accommodation costs. It is available for people who rent, board or own their own home and a person does not have to be receiving a benefit to qualify. It is calculated using a formula that takes into account the geographical location, family size, accommodation costs, income and tenure type (renting, boarding or home ownership). More information around the AS can be found at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/accommodation-supplement.html.

The Temporary Additional Support (TAS) is a non-taxable supplementary payment that can be paid for a maximum of 13 weeks. It is paid as a last resort to help clients with their regular essential living costs that cannot be met from their chargeable income and other resources. Further information about TAS is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/temporary-additional-support.html.

The Disability Allowance (DA) provides non-taxable assistance to people who have on-going, additional costs because of a disability, such as visits to the doctor or hospital, medicines, extra clothing or travel. Further information about DA is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/disability-allowance.html.

The Child Disability Allowance (CDA) is a non-taxable allowance that is available to the principal caregiver of a dependent child who has a serious disability. It is paid in recognition of the extra care and attention needed for that child. Further information about CDA is available on the Work and Income website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/child-disability-allowance.html.

Please see the table below showing the number of AS, DA, TAS, and CDA recipients, as at the end of December 2020, broken down by whether they are in receipt of a main benefit or not.

Table One: The total number of AS, DA, TAS, and CDA recipients as at the end of December 2020, broken down by whether they are in receipt of a main benefit or not.

Benefit	TAS	AS	DA	CDA
Non-benefit	3,157	68,431	5,647	24,475
NZS/VP	9,174	46,728	131,138	477
OB/UCB	0	0	79	897
Main Benefit	81,688	262,972	95,754	12,193
Total Clients	94,019	378,131	232,618	38,042

Notes for Table One:

- NZS is New Zealand Superannuation.
- VP is Veteran’s Pension.
- OB is Orphan’s Benefit.
- UCB is Unsupported Child’s Benefit.
- A client may receive one or more CDA for multiple children.
- DA can be paid for a client, partner or child(ren).
- A client may receive all of AS/DA/TAS/CDA. However, in this table, the Ministry have counted a client (if appropriate), once for each assistance type.
- ‘Main Benefit’ excludes NZ, VP, OB and UCB, as these have been distinctly presented on the table.
- Where a client is in receipt of both OB/UCB, plus a Main Benefit or a NZS/VP, then they are reported under the Main Benefit, in order to avoid double counting.

2. *All materials used initially inform staff that together Scoble and section 298 of the Social Security Act impose a duty on them to treat an application for one entitlement, circumstance, or need as an application for all related entitlements and investigate it.*
3. *Any checklists or other documents (such as a table of related entitlements for each particular benefit) to assist staff to apply the principle in Scoble and comply with their s 298 duty.*

Ministry staff are trained to refer to MAP, which provides policy guidelines based on the legislation administered by the Ministry. MAP is written to enable staff to make accurate and sound decisions, ensuring clients receive their full and correct entitlement. MAP is available internally and externally on the Work and Income website, allowing clients and members of the public access to all MAP information. The guidelines which are used by Ministry staff to decide whether an application has been made can be found at the following MAP link:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/requests-for-financial-assistance/re-assessing-previous-applications/guidelines-for-deciding-if-an-application-has-been.html.

The Ministry has conducted a search of both current and archival systems and have found that the materials which would have initially been used to inform staff of Scoble and their responsibilities under section 298 of the Social Security Act 2018 are no longer held by the Ministry as staff were initially informed of Scoble in 2002. Therefore, I am refusing your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

There are no checklists specifically used by staff to apply the principle in Scoble and comply with section 298. Therefore, your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

4. *Any checklists or other documents used by staff managing, training, or checking the work of frontline staff to ensure those staff comply with the principle in Scoble and the s 298 duty.*
5. *Details of what checks the Ministry of Social Development undertakes to ensure staff comply with the principle in Scoble and the s 298 duty. Specific information is required please – for example: audit of a percentage of Child Disability Allowance grants to check staff also assessed entitlement to Disability Allowance and Supported Living Payment-Caring, or a mandatory system step requiring staff to assess entitlement for Temporary Additional Support when somebody applies for a Food SNG that is audited weekly.*

The Ministry's National Quality team is responsible for undertaking a random and independent check of fortnightly sample of actions processed by Ministry staff, to ensure that an accurate and timely service is provided to New Zealanders.

Each case is checked to ensure that the application or review has been processed in accordance with relevant legislation, the Ministry's Minimum Processing Standards, and that acceptable evidence is held in the system to confirm that the entitlement outcome is correct.

Benefit entitlement is deemed accurate when the assessment is financially correct, which means that the right person is receiving the correct benefit, at the correct rate and from the correct date.

Checking whether or not the principle of Scoble has been correctly applied is not something that is sampled specifically by the National Quality Team, however, from time to time, these cases may appear in the samples checked. In such cases, the team checks that the staff member has correctly applied the principle of Scoble and recorded their decision in the system. The case would be deemed an error if it had not been applied correctly.

The Ministry does not report on the accuracy of specific decisions where Scoble has been applied. Consequently, to do so would require significant manual investigation of every case checked over a 12-month period.

There are no checklists or other documents specifically used by staff who are managing, training or checking the work of frontline staff to ensure that staff comply with the Scoble principle or the section 298 duty. Therefore, your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

6. *Any written advice to Cabinet or the Minister of Social Welfare/Social Development and Employment either as a Regulatory Impact Statement, departmental disclosure or other documents by the Department of Social Welfare regarding the proposed Universal Benefit (1990) or by the Ministry regarding the proposed Single Core Benefit (2005).*

The Ministry has conducted a search of both current and archival systems, and has identified one document to be within the scope of your request:

- Cabinet Paper - *Paper two: Working New Zealand: Work-Focused Support – Framework of the Core Benefit*, undated.

You will note information has been removed as 'outside of scope' as only the Annex of this paper has been identified as relevant to your request, which is enclosed.

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, 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



Robyn Reilly
General Manager
Service Delivery Capability

APPENDIX

Regulatory Impact and Compliance Cost Statement

Statement of the nature and magnitude of the problem and the need for government action

The reform of our social assistance system is necessary for the following reasons:

- the social and economic wellbeing of New Zealand – we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the OECD, but one in eight households has no-one in work
- a number of individuals and their families do not currently have the same opportunities to participate in the labour market and society as others, and their living standards are compromised by long-term benefit dependency
- the current design and delivery of the social assistance system itself lack a consistent work focus and can act as barriers to labour market participation for many people.

Statement of the public policy objectives

The proposed reforms aim to increase labour market participation through changing the behaviour of people in receipt of, or considering applying for, income assistance. The objectives of the Working for New Zealand: Work-Focused Support package are to:

- increase opportunities for people to participate in the labour market, where work is an appropriate outcome
- continue to provide social and financial support for people with temporary or long-term barriers to work.

The primary objective of the reforms is to increase the labour market participation of people on benefit for whom work is an appropriate outcome. In some cases part-time work is a valid outcome, particularly if it is a stepping stone into full-time work. For some people with caring responsibilities or long-term ill health or disabilities part-time work is a more realistic option, and Work and Income will work with this group to achieve this goal where appropriate.

Statement of feasible options (regulatory and/or non-regulatory) that may constitute viable means for achieving the desired objectives

An active work-focused social support system will:

- remove presumptions that whole groups of people cannot work, whilst maintaining financial support for those who need it
- provide active case management to support working-age people into employment where possible
- be supported by flexible, targeted employment and training programmes to help people build the skills they need to find work, remain in work, and progress in work
- balance new opportunities with reasonable expectations that people will seek work to the extent their circumstances allow
- ensure that work pays by improving work incentives and reducing welfare traps
- remove financial incentives for people to distance themselves from the labour market.

The set of laws pertaining to the social assistance system are contained in the Social Security Act 1964. Changes to this system require amendments to the Act.

Statement of the net benefit of the proposal, including the total regulatory costs (administrative, compliance and economic costs) and benefits (including non-quantifiable benefits) of the proposal, and other feasible options

Paper One: Working New Zealand: Work-Focused Support - Overview sets out the estimated costs of the total Working New Zealand: Work Focused Support package, separating out the costs that we can be reasonably certain of and the costs that cannot be finalised until policy work between July and November 2006 is completed.

Statement of consultation undertaken

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office for Disability Issues, Ministry of Health, Department of Labour, the Treasury, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Te Puni Kokiri, and Accident Compensation Corporation have been consulted in the development of these policies. Within the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Youth Development and Department of Child Youth and Family have also been consulted.

This paper has also been distributed to the following agencies for comment: Inland Revenue Department, Ministry of Education, Department of Internal Affairs, State Services Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Families Commission, Tertiary Education Commission, Housing New Zealand Corporation, Department of Corrections, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Statistics New Zealand and the Department of Building and Housing. Where comments have been provided, these have been incorporated into this paper.

Business compliance cost statement

There are no compliance costs for businesses associated with this proposal.