



19 November 2021

Tēnā koe

On 27 October 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Internal documents presently given to case managers that act as directives on how they should conduct themselves with new clients who come forward as having a disability.*

The Ministry provides a range of developmental opportunities for client facing staff to support an empathic and caring service, and to ensure that clients receive an individualised service which addresses their needs. Ongoing learning and development supports our people to place the client and whānau at the centre of our mahi to ensure that the clients' needs and circumstances are well understood by staff which in turn shapes the service the Ministry offers.

The Ministry has weaved the principles of unconscious bias, and understanding a client's individual situation, challenges and needs throughout learning and development opportunities. The Ministry's development for staff has an emphasis on providing coaching and learning 'in the work', helping to support better client conversations, improved understanding of clients' needs, and therefore more effective decision-making.

A wide range of the Ministry's 'formal' learning on exploring clients' needs and ensuring they're receiving their full and correct entitlement to assistance, includes guidance about exercising discretion and making decisions. These skills are covered in training about the Ministry's products, services and processes, including but not limited to the following:

- Induction Fundamentals
- New Business applications
- Hardship Assistance
- Social Obligations Decision Making guidelines
- Unconscious Bias
- Reviews and Appeals
- Online applications

Work and Income Case Managers work with Regional Health and Disability teams (RH&D). RH&D teams support Work and Income regions to improve understanding, remove inequalities, promote inclusion and improve employment outcomes for clients with a health condition or a disability. The team work collaboratively with health and disability providers to ensure clients are linked to the right services and support.

The RH&D teams are made up of three key roles:

- the Regional Health Advisor (RHA)
- Regional Disability Advisor (RDA)
- the Health and Disability Coordinator (HDC).

The team is managed by the Manager Regional Services and supported professionally by the Principal Health Advisor (PHA) and Principal Disability Advisor (PDA). Each RHA and RDA has key strengths and experience, however their roles are interconnected, and staff are encouraged to contact either for advice.

The role of the HDC is to work with health and disability organisations and providers in the community including general practitioners and designated doctors. The purpose of this is to improve their understanding and knowledge of Work and Income operational processes, philosophy and to strengthen our knowledge of the services and support they provide.

Your request for all internal documents presently given to case managers that act as directives on how they should conduct themselves with new clients who come forward as having a disability, is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist.

The Ministry is committed to service excellence. If in a particular instance we are not meeting this standard, please tell us so we can do something about it. Then we'll do our best to make sure it doesn't happen again. More information about our complaint's procedure can be found online at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/complaints/index.html#null.

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 on the Ministry'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 regarding case manager documents regarding dealing with clients who have a disability, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robyn Reilly". The script is cursive and fluid.

Robyn Reilly
General Manager, Service Delivery Capability