



8 September 2022

Tēnā koe

On 5 July 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *Any policies or procedures MSD has in place for ensuring its operations take steps to reasonably accommodate people of all disabilities.*

On 5 August 2022, the Ministry emailed you to advise you that more time was required for necessary consultations to make a decision on the request. As such, the due date of the request was extended to 8 September 2022 in accordance with section 15(1) and 15A of the Act.

The Ministry expects our services to be accessible to all New Zealanders, and we are working hard to make sure this is the case for all of our clients. Many of our clients have complex needs and when clients have specific needs about how we contact them, we want to make sure we get that right.

The Ministry is delivering a programme of work to ensure the public sector is accessible for everyone and inclusive of people with disabilities, you can find more information at the following link: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/index.html.

There will be times when a client may need some help accessing the support they need, in those cases we recommend they appoint an agent who can act and advocate on their behalf. More information about appointing an agent can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/on-a-benefit/your-rights-and-responsibilities/having-someone-act-on-your-behalf.html.

You can also find further examples of where appointing an agent may be relevant, at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/agents/examples-of-where-agency-may-be-relevant-01.html.

The Ministry also has a centralised team available to respond to people who are deaf, hard of hearing or who have speech impairments. Every month, this team supports an average of 472 people to access the services they need from us via fax, text, or email.

For anyone who needs it, the Ministry offer access to iSign and Connect sign language interpreting services as well as access to the New Zealand Relay service for remote interpreting services.

You can find information regarding support offered in relation to hearing and speech impairments, at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/contact-us/deaf-hard-of-hearing-or-have-a-speech-impairment.html.

Furthermore, during COVID-19 Alert Level 3 and 4, Youth Service has been using a wide range of communication channels to engage with young people. This includes texting, Facetime and Zoom, in addition to phone and email contact.

In regard to designing the interior layouts of our sites the Ministry ensures that the accessibility requirements for the Building Act are met, we provide space at our client interview desks to allow individuals to have a support person present, we provide space at our client interview desks to support wheelchair users, we provide client chairs with arms to support those with mobility issues, and provide spaces (such as interview rooms) for larger settings to allow whanau and support persons to be present.

You can find the Ministry's *Accessibility Guide*, disability etiquette, and *Make Your Communications More Accessible Guide*, at the following links:

- www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/accessibility-guide/index.html
- www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/accessibility/quick-reference-guides/disability-etiquette.html, and
- www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/planning-strategy/accessibility-guide/accessible-communications.pdf.

Please see enclosed the following documents from the Ministry internal intranet – Doogoo:

- Best Practice for Working with Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Clients
- Guideline – Booking a New Zealand Sign Language Interpreter
- Guidelines – Mobility Scooters in Service Centres, and
- Making your Communications Accessible.

In the spirit of being helpful, I have included in this response some information regarding the decision to trespass someone from a Work and Income site.

The decision to trespass someone from a Work and Income site is never taken lightly. Before issuing a trespass notice, Work and Income Service Centre Managers will first consider:

- the seriousness of the incident or offence committed
- whether it is the first incident or offence
- whether it is likely to happen again, and
- the person's attitude after the incident and whether they are likely to heed a warning letter and change their behaviour.

If a manager believes the behaviour is likely to be repeated in the future, and that it will not be prevented by issuing a verbal or written warning, that person will be issued with a trespass notice.

The Ministry is committed to ensuring people subject to trespass notices continue to receive their correct entitlements. Once a trespass notice has been served, clients will be notified in writing and informed that they are no longer able to deal face to face with Work and Income staff.

People are advised that in order to prevent a breach of the trespass notice, they should appoint an agent to act on their behalf when dealing with the Ministry. Where no agent is willing to act on the person's behalf, or the person is not willing to have an agent, contact may be by telephone or email and Work and Income will work with the person to put in place alternative arrangements.

Clients who have been trespassed and those that pose a high risk to the safety of Ministry staff may be referred to the Remote Services. Remote Services provides specialist case management via phone, fax, email or mail. Where the person has no access to a telephone, contact may be made by letter instead.

You can find more information regarding trespass notices, at the following link: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/agents/clients-served-with-trespass-notices-01.html.

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 and attached documents 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 in relation to policies or procedures the Ministry has in place for ensuring its operations take steps to reasonably accommodate people of all disabilities, 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

Bridget Saunders

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**Manager Issues Resolution
Service Delivery**