

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for Seniors

Chair, Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Update on Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 and Release of First Action Plan

Proposal

1. In September 2019 Cabinet agreed to the release of Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 (the Strategy) [CAB-19-MIN-0487]. It mandated two-yearly updates to Cabinet and development of an Action Plan to implement its objectives.
2. This paper provides an update to Cabinet on the implementation of the Strategy.
3. I am also seeking Cabinet approval to release a first Action Plan to implement the Strategy for the period 2021 to 2024.

Executive Summary

4. Since its introduction in 2019, implementation of Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 (the Strategy) has focused on the 20 central government initial actions it included. While many of these have been progressed, more recently COVID-19 has caused agencies to reprioritise resources to focus on the pandemic response and recovery.
5. New Zealand's strong public health response has meant that most older people have come through the pandemic period comparatively well. However, for a minority, periods spent in lockdown and subsequent economic disruption have exacerbated or highlighted existing disadvantages.
6. I have developed a new Action Plan to implement the Strategy. It focuses on the impacts of COVID-19 on older people and presents a range of actions to respond to three priority areas within the wider objectives of the Strategy in 2021 to 2024:
 - employment
 - digital inclusion, and
 - housing.
7. The new Action Plan sets out central government actions that both respond to these priorities and continue the work begun with the initial actions included in the Strategy.
8. Implementation of the Action Plan will be overseen within the existing governance structure for the Strategy with six monthly reporting to the Better Later Life Ministerial Steering Group. I will next report to the Social Wellbeing Committee in 2023 on progress implementing both the Action Plan and the wider Strategy.

The 2019 Better Later Life strategy aims to ensure older New Zealanders lead valued, connected and fulfilling lives

9. In September 2019 Cabinet agreed to the release of Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 (the Strategy); a new Strategy for New Zealand’s ageing population [CAB-19-MIN-0487]. The release of the Strategy followed a full public engagement process, with two phases of stakeholder engagement over the period June 2018 to February 2019 [SWC-18-MIN-0062].
10. The strategy sets out five areas for action:
 - Achieving financial security and economic participation
 - Improving access to health and social services
 - Creating diverse housing choices and options
 - Enhancing opportunities for participation and social connection
 - Making environments accessible
11. It contemplates actions in response by central government, as well as local government, iwi, NGOs, and the wider community.

A set of initial actions was developed to maintain momentum across government

12. The initial actions are a mixture of activities that were already underway and some that have received Budget 2019 funding or are being funded through baseline. They align with each of the five key areas for action as listed above.

The Strategy mandates development of a full Action Plan

13. The Strategy mandated that an Action Plan be developed by 2021, detailing which agency is responsible for each action. The Action Plan will cover the period 2021 – 2024.

Implementation of the Strategy is proceeding, but was impacted by COVID-19

14. Implementation of the Strategy initially focused on 20 central government initial actions. A table setting out a summary of the progress of the 20 initial actions is attached to this paper in Appendix 1.
15. Of the initial actions, 15 are on track or completed, three are showing risks and two off-track. Those showing risks or off-track are primarily as a result of competing departmental priorities responding to COVID-19.
16. Initial actions yet to be completed have been adopted unchanged or modified in light of developments in their implementation or to fit the new priority areas, for inclusion in the Action Plan.
17. A set of indicators was developed to monitor implementation of the Strategy and published in draft. Following the advent of COVID-19, development of these was suspended in favour of more closely monitoring the impact of the pandemic on older people through more frequent publication of a smaller set of indicators. The Office for Seniors published a set of COVID-19 specific indicators in July 2020, followed by quarterly updates in August 2020, November 2020, February 2021 and July 2021.

18. A short summary of the impacts of COVID-19 on older people that has been collated from this monitoring is attached as Appendix 2 below.
19. Agency resources have been reprioritised to focus on responding to immediate COVID-19 needs and tracking the impact of COVID-19 on older people. As a result, development of this Action Plan has been delayed. It had initially been intended to be completed by the end of June 2021.

A new Action Plan will implement the Better Later Life Strategy in the period 2021 to 2024

20. In line with Cabinet's mandate I have developed an Action Plan to implement the Strategy for the period 2021 to 2024, attached as Appendix 3 below. The Action Plan will focus on the impact of COVID-19 on older people and contribute to the recovery by focusing on three priority areas:
 - Employment

A small but significant number of additional older workers (aged 50+) have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19, and the impacts of this employment displacement may be more significant and enduring for them as compared to workers in other age groups. The impacts of labour market disadvantage compound for some older Māori, Pacific people, disabled people and women.
 - Digital Inclusion

Estimates based on internet connection numbers and survey data suggest that digitally excluded older people number in the hundreds of thousands. Lockdown periods presented an acute need to use digital tools but were also characteristic of the growing importance of digital engagement in society. Digital exclusion can present particular difficulties for some older people, including those living in rural areas or otherwise physically isolated.
 - Housing

For a small but growing number of older people, accessing secure, safe and affordable long-term housing can present a challenge. Growing numbers are on the public housing register or receiving the accommodation supplement. A longer-term trend of falling home ownership rates among older people suggests these issues will continue to grow.
21. The Action Plan sets out a total of 35 actions. In addition to 25 actions addressing the three priorities, a further 10 actions have been carried over from the Strategy's initial actions and relate to the Strategy's wider objectives.
22. The 35 actions contained in the Action Plan will all be undertaken by central government agencies. This is in contrast to the Strategy, which is explicitly aimed at providing a vehicle for action on the ageing population by a wide range of actors, including central and local government, iwi, NGOs and local communities.
23. Focusing in this way on central government allows for a degree of specificity and proactivity in responding to the challenges of COVID-19, without diminishing or restricting the role of the wider community in implementing the Strategy's broader goals.

24. The Action Plan consists of a public-facing document that describes the three priority areas and summarises the 35 actions, with a more detailed description of the actions available on the Office for Seniors website (attached as Appendix 4 below).

Funding and resourcing

25. Budget 2021 allocated an additional \$1.965 million over four years to the Office for Seniors to support implementation of the Strategy. This will support the Office's role in coordinating delivery of the Action Plan.
26. The actions included within the Action Plan will be initially funded from within departmental baselines. As the actions develop or are expanded over time, they may give rise to further requirements for funding – particularly if implemented at scale. Where additional funding requirements arise for these actions, they will be progressed through departmental prioritisation or Budget processes.

Monitoring and evaluation

27. With the conclusion of detailed COVID-19 monitoring, work will resume on developing indicators for implementation of the Strategy. The Office will elaborate on these existing indicators to specifically track progress implementing the three priority areas within the Action Plan.
28. The indicators will align where possible with Stats NZ's Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand, the Treasury's Living Standards Framework, and related sets of indicators such as those developed by the Ministry of Health for the Healthy Ageing Strategy 2016.
29. Two-yearly reporting of these indicators will form the basis for assessing the success of the Strategy in the long term, and this Action Plan in the more immediate 2021 to 2024 period.

Governance and accountability

30. Implementation of the Strategy is overseen by the Ministerial Steering Group that I chair, established in line with the Cabinet decision to release the Strategy [CAB-19-MIN-0487].
31. This arrangement will continue to form the key governance mechanism for the Strategy, and implementation of the new Action Plan. The Ministerial Steering Group has met twice so far this year as part of the process of preparing the Action Plan. I anticipate the Group will continue to meet regularly to monitor implementation.
32. In addition, Cabinet mandated that the Strategy be backed by two-yearly reviews on progress to Cabinet. This paper represents the first such review. I will next update Cabinet in 2023, with a focus on reporting progress addressing the three Action Plan priorities.

Consultation

33. Consultation has been undertaken with the Ministries of Social Development, Business, Innovation and Employment, Health and Housing and Urban Development and the Ministries for the Environment and Pacific Peoples and the Departments of Internal Affairs and Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Public Service Commission,

Accident Compensation Corporation, Te Puni Kōkiri, Kāinga Ora and the Office for Disability Issues.

Financial Implications

34. The Action Plan has no immediate financial implications as actions are expected to be able to be funded within existing baselines or will be subject to the normal budget processes.

Legislative Implications

35. There are no legislative implications arising from this paper.

Impact Analysis

36. A regulatory impact assessment is not required.

Population Implications

Commitment to Māori

37. The Office for Seniors engaged with Māori through the development of the Strategy and this will continue through the implementation process.
38. We recognise the importance of paying particular attention to the interests of Māori and being guided by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of our country. We will work with iwi, hapū, whānau and kaumātua to ensure that these principles guide the implementation of the Action Plan, and the needs and aspirations of kaumātua are reflected.

Older Pacific Peoples

39. Older Pacific Peoples face particular challenges, including lower health and life expectancy and increased risks around housing adequacy and digital exclusion as compared to other ethnicities. The Action Plan references the Office for Seniors' digital literacy training initiative, which has in part been delivered at Pacific churches and in Pacific languages. In implementing the Action Plan, we will continue to seek opportunities to address the needs of older Pacific People within the priorities it sets out.

Gender Implications

40. People can have different experiences of ageing based on their gender. Women make up a larger proportion of the population aged 65+, and are at higher risk of poverty in later life for a number of reasons, including:
- greater participation in unpaid work (such as parenting, caring and volunteering) than paid work throughout their lives
 - the gender pay gap
 - the need to make savings last longer due to longer life expectancy

41. **s 9(2)(h)** [REDACTED] Women are an increasingly diverse group, and these differences include changing family structures, greater ethnic diversity, and greater time in the paid workforce. The Action Plan has

taken gender in to account in its development, and there will be a need to consider gender on an ongoing basis in the implementation of actions.

Disability Perspective

42. As age increases so does the likelihood of living with a long-term health condition or disability requiring ongoing support. The Action Plan complements the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 and Disability Action Plan. The Office for Seniors will continue to work with the Office for Disability Issues to ensure that this alignment continues. In particular, the focus on age-friendly housing options within the Action Plan aligns well with the accessibility work programme [CAB-18-MIN-0591].

Human Rights

43. s 9(2)(h)

Publicity

44. The Action Plan will be made publicly available on the Office for Seniors website.
45. The Office for Seniors will use its communications channels including social media, its website and the SuperSeniors newsletter to raise awareness of the new Action Plan. The Office for Seniors will manage stakeholder and media enquiries in co-ordination with my office.

Proactive Release

46. I intend to proactively release this paper following the release of the new action plan. At this stage, the planned date for release of the Action Plan is 30 September, which falls outside the 30-day period for proactive release.

Recommendations

The Minister for Seniors recommends that the Committee:

1. **note** that Cabinet approved the release of the Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 – 2034 Strategy (the Strategy) in 2019
2. **note** that at the time the Strategy was released, Cabinet also mandated the establishment of a Ministerial Steering Group to monitor its implementation, two-yearly reports to Cabinet on progress and the development of an Action Plan
3. **note** that funding allocated to the Office for Seniors in Budget 2021 will enable it to co-ordinate the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan, and continue to develop indicators
4. **agree** to the release of the attached Action Plan, Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua – Action Plan to Implement the Strategy 2021 to 2024, in September 2021
5. **authorise** the Minister for Seniors to make minor editorial, design and formatting changes to the Action Plan as required prior to its public release

6. **note** that further funding may need to be sought by the Office or other agencies through the usual budget processes to support implementation of specific elements of the Action Plan
7. **note** that the Minister for Seniors will provide two-yearly reports on progress on the implementation of the Strategy, the next to be provided in 2023

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall

Minister for Seniors

Attachments

Appendix 1 - Update on Better Later Life Initial Actions

Appendix 2 – Impacts of COVID-19 on Older New Zealanders

Appendix 3 – Draft Action Plan to Implement the Better Later Life Strategy

Appendix 4 - Action Details – 2021 to 2024