



Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Minute of Decision

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Strengthening Disability Support Services: Initial Policy Direction

Portfolio Disability Issues

On 5 November 2025, the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee:

- 1 **noted** that the Ministry of Social Development's Disability Support Services (DSS) has responded to all recommendations made by the 2024 Independent Review of Disability Support Services [CAB-24-MIN-0301] and has progressed operational capability improvements recommended by other external reviews;
- 2 **noted** that the Minister for Disability Issues intends to progress strengthening DSS to ensure its sustainability, through an integrated and coherent approach to developing advice and implementing changes over time and at different levels, so that it can operate as a joined-up and purpose-led system of funded disability support;
- 3 **agreed** to test and refine the initial foundational policy direction for strengthening DSS:
 - 3.1 its purpose as a system, as specified in Figure 1 in the paper under SOU-25-SUB-0154;
 - 3.2 clarifying that it makes a reasonable contribution of funded disability support as allowed within appropriated funding;
 - 3.3 the outcomes it contributes to achieving in people's lives and for measurement of performance as a system, as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 in the paper under SOU-25-SUB-0154;
 - 3.4 the role that DSS plays within the wider system of disability support, its relationship with other government-funded disability support, § 9(f)(i)(v)
- 4 **agreed** that, in addition, DSS considers opportunities for investing early in support that maintains or enhances a disabled person's independence;
- 5 **agreed** that DSS engage with a small number of representative disability sector stakeholders from late November 2025 to test and refine the initial policy direction for strengthening DSS, subject to paragraphs 3 and 4 above, and any potential further operational improvements which could be progressed in the short to medium term and reinforce the direction of reform;
- 6 **authorised** the Ministerial Disability Leadership Group (and other relevant Ministers) to approve materials to be released by DSS in public consultation intended to be run in April to May 2026;

- 7 **invited** the Minister for Disability Issues to report back to the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee by mid-2026 with further policy advice for strengthening DSS, including how DSS could progress an integrated and coherent approach to reform using all available levers, priorities for change and investment, and how to give effect to them (including the potential for specific legislation);
- 8 **noted** that cross-government collaboration will continue to identify opportunities to align and improve access to funded disability support;
- 9 **noted** that the fiscally neutral change in paragraph 10 below is subject to the confirmation of the 2024/25 DSS in-principle expense transfer being confirmed through the October 2025 Baseline Update;
- 10 **agreed** in principle to the following fiscally neutral changes to the Disability Support Services Multi-Category Appropriation to maintain service capacity within DSS whilst actions to strengthen the sustainability of DSS continue in 2026/27, with no impact on the operating balance and/or net core Crown debt across the forecast period:

	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
Vote Disability Support Services Minister for Disability Issues	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30 & Outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure:					
Disability Support Services MCA					
Non-Departmental Output Expenses:					
Community-based support services	(175.882)	68.478	-	-	-
Connecting and strengthening disability communities	-	4.316	-	-	-
Early intervention support services	-	4.263	-	-	-
Environmental support services	-	16.239	-	-	-
High and Complex Framework services	-	6.386	-	-	-
Residential-based support services	-	76.200	-	-	-
Total Operating	(175.882)	175.882	-	-	-

- 11 **authorised** the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Disability Issues to jointly agree to the above fiscally neutral changes, following confirmation of the 2024/25 DSS in-principle expense transfer being approved through the October 2025 Baseline Update.

Sam Moffett
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Chris Bishop
Hon Erica Stanford
Hon Louise Upston (Chair)
Hon Dr Shane Reti
Hon Mark Mitchell
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Nicole McKee
Hon Casey Costello
Hon Karen Chhour
Hon Penny Simmonds
Hon Scott Simpson

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of the Minister of Education
Office of the Minister for Universities
Office of the Minister for Vocational Education
Officials Committee for SOU