



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

30 NOV 2017



Dear 

On 20 October 2017, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *A breakdown showing the average wait times for face-to-face appointments with Work and Income case managers in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin over the past three years.*
- *Please outline the number and types of appointments MSD provides (e.g. emergency, maintenance and new business appointments), an explanation of each and what target timeframes are in place for each.*
- *Please also outline what MSD does if an appointment can't be made for a person within a week of a request being made and what financial support is made available to those people while they wait.*
- *Additionally, I am asking for breakdown showing the number and overall value of food grants paid by MSD for each city over the past three years.*

On 1 November 2017, you specified that your request is for information relating to the following Work and Income Service Centres:

- |                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| • Queen street | • Wellington   | • Wainuiomata  |
| • Waitakere    | • Johnsonville | • Riccarton    |
| • Manukau      | • Lower Hutt   | • Dunedin      |
| • Onehunga     | • Naenae       | • Invercargill |
| • Albany       | • Newtown      | • Queenstown   |
| • Hamilton     | • Porirua      |                |
| • Central      | • Upper Hutt   |                |

The Ministry has agreed service standards in order to ensure that people are able to meet with Case Managers in a timely manner. These standards ensure that Contact Centre and Work and Income staff provide a consistent level of service to people. The appointment types 'Emergency', 'Maintenance' and 'New Business' make up the vast majority of all appointments, therefore the information in this response is mainly based around these appointment types. An overview of these three appointment types and the service standards developed for these appointments is outlined below:

- **Emergency Appointments** are for people applying for emergency assistance and appointments are made within 24 hours of contacting Work and Income. Examples of emergency needs include power cut off, food or non-payment of benefit. For emergency appointments, the required standard is met if the appointment is booked, and the person is seen by the end of the following working day (e.g. a booking is made on Monday and the person is seen by Tuesday).

- **Maintenance Appointments** are for people who have a change of circumstance, require assistance that is not deemed an emergency, or would like a face to face discussion with a Case Manager. For maintenance appointments, the standard is met if the appointment is booked, and the person is seen by the end of five more working days (e.g. a booking is made on a Monday and the person is seen by the end of the following Monday).
- **New Business Appointments** are for people applying for benefits and are to have an appointment within two working days of contacting Work and Income. This includes applying for a main benefit such as Jobseeker Support and Sole Parent Support. For new business appointments, the standard is met if the appointment is booked, and the person is seen by the end of two more working days (e.g. a booking is made on Monday and the person is seen by Wednesday).

The additional appointment types that are available are outlined in the table below. Please note that as a general rule, client driven appointments have a service standard whereas Ministry driven appointments don't.

Appointment type	Service standard	Description
Work for You (WRK4U)	2 days	A seminar for applicants who will be subject to work obligations. Applicants must attend before a benefit can be granted.
52 Week Reapplication	5 days	For clients who need to complete their annual benefit reapplication. This may occur face-to-face or over the phone.
Proactive Work Focus	5 days	For discussions that focus on work and preparing for work.
Recompliance	24 hours	For clients to meet with a case manager to discuss how to resolve an obligations failure.
Specialist	5 days	For one-on-one meetings with a specialist work broker or employment co-ordinator.
Emergency Housing Follow Up	5 days	A follow up appointment for clients who are granted assistance with emergency housing and are likely to need further assistance.
Social Housing Assessment	5 days	For social housing eligibility assessment. This may occur face-to-face or over the phone.
Apply Online	N/A	A seminar to assist clients who need support completing an online application. Note: this is only available in the Southern region.
Work Support Phone	N/A	A phone-based appointment to support and encourage clients with their job search.
Social Housing Tenancy Review	N/A	For reviewing a social housing tenant's continued eligibility and housing needs.
Recruitment Seminar	N/A	A seminar that allows individual regions with seasonal industries to run tailored seasonal recruitment seminars.
Regional Initiative Seminar	N/A	A seminar that allows individual regions to tailor seminars unique to their area. These are often employment related.
Youth Regional Initiative Seminar	N/A	A seminar that provides opportunities for younger people to connect with local employers or take up education that will lead to a job.
Work Search Assessment Seminar	N/A	This seminar is designed to assess a client's job search needs and establish which Work Development Workshops they should attend.

Please refer to tables one to three enclosed that show the average days between a request for an appointment and the appointment itself, for 'Emergency', 'Maintenance' and 'New Business' appointments, respectively, for the years ending June 2015 to June 2017.

Please note the data will not show the number of clients who receive a non-booked appointment because they have presented directly to a Service Centre requiring an urgent emergency appointment and so were seen that day.

Internal service standards are intended to help us track how we are doing in terms of getting people the support they need when they need it, wherever possible.

Wait times vary for a number of reasons, ranging from staff sickness to localised and temporary peaks in client numbers outside of our control. However, the vast majority of service centres are meeting emergency and maintenance internal standards and where they are being exceeded they are for relatively short periods.

New Business appointments are made to suit the needs of clients and some clients prefer to have an appointment outside of the 2 working day standard.

You will find that the information provided shows that for New Business appointments, the average number of days people are waiting for an appointment is above the standard set for this appointment type. Although the standard may not always be met, this does not detract from ensuring that the client receives their correct entitlement and payment on time. In many cases, clients will receive a minimum of a week stand-down period and benefit payments are paid one week in arrears.

Appointment standards are regularly monitored and real time data is generated each day on appointment availability. If sites fall out of standard, the Ministry's Client Service Delivery team will engage with the regional management team to understand the demands that are affecting the appointment standards, and to come to an agreement on the actions that will be taken to improve the situation. This may include Case Managers contacting clients prior to their appointment. If the need is identified as one that is straightforward the transaction will be completed by phone and the appointment time will be reallocated to another client. This approach, for example, is being more widely trialled in two regions, Southern and Northland, where many clients seeking an emergency or maintenance appointment can be contacted by Case Managers and assisted over the phone when no appointments are available. Clients in these cases do not need to travel or wait in sites and many needs are met over the phone without needing face to face follow up.

The ability for clients to apply for assistance online is also reducing the number of appointments needed for non-work related support. We've introduced new online services like MyMSD to make it easier for people to keep in touch with us without having to come in for an appointment or to drop off information.

When a person calls the contact centre to book an appointment but no appointments are available within the specified standard, the Ministry's Appointment Booking Tool (ABT) enables staff to notify the individual's local Service Centre via an email to a group of dedicated site coordinators. These coordinators will look at whether there is an opportunity to create appointment availability by prioritising over other activities. ABT also enables staff to extend search parameters beyond the specified standard at the individual's request.

Where a person has been assessed as having an emergency need and there are no bookable appointments available within the specified standard, the client should be referred into their local service centre as a walk-in. A walk-in is not a booked appointment and clients will usually need to wait to be seen.

The contact centre operate a Service Support Team whose staff support 36 service centres across the country by completing a wide range of transactions and hardship payments over the phone where an appointment is unable to be booked for a client. This may include financial assistance to support the client until they are able to attend an appointment. Please note that this only applies to clients assigned to one of the 36 Service Support sites, which includes the Queen Street, Waitakere, Onehunga, Manukau, Lower Hutt and Riccarton Service Centres from those you specified.

Hardship assistance is available to help people pay for essential items or services they need urgently. Hardship assistance includes Special Needs Grants which provide non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable financial assistance to people to meet immediate needs, such as a food grant.

More information about food grants is available on Work and Income's website at: [www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/food.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/urgent-costs/food.html)

Please refer to table four enclosed that shows the number and amount of food related Special Needs Grants for selected Work and Income Sites for the years ending June 2015 to June 2017.

Further information regarding hardship payments is available on the Ministry's website. The Benefit Fact Sheets provide a high-level view of trends in hardship information over the past five years. The Fact Sheets present numbers and characteristics of clients who have received hardship assistance at the end of the current quarter and for the equivalent quarter one year ago and five years ago. The Benefit Fact Sheets are available at: [www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/)

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 shortly. 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 concerning appointments with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto: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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



 Ruth Bound  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery**

**Table 1: Average working days between a request and an emergency appointment for selected Work and Income Sites for the years ending June 2015 to June 2017**

<b>Work and Income Sites</b>	<b>Year ending June 2015</b>	<b>Year ending June 2016</b>	<b>Year ending June 2017</b>
Queen Street	0.8	1.0	1.4
Waitakere	1.4	1.6	1.7
Onehunga	1.5	1.5	1.7
Manukau	1.5	1.7	1.8
Albany	0.8	1.0	1.3
Hamilton Central	1.4	1.5	2.0
Johnsonville	1.4	1.8	2.2
Lower Hutt	1.4	1.5	1.8
Naenae	1.8	2.2	1.4
Newtown	1.5	2.6	2.1
Porirua	1.4	1.9	1.9
Upper Hutt	1.4	1.5	2.0
Wainuiomata	1.3	1.2	1.3
Wellington	1.4	1.3	1.7
Riccarton	0.8	1.8	2.4
Dunedin Central	1.2	2.0	1.1
Queenstown	1.1	0.9	0.6
Invercargill	1.6	1.7	1.3

**Notes for tables 1 to 3:**

- The data provided only covers booked appointments and does not include any instance where a client received a non-booked appointment.
- These lists are of selected Service Centres throughout New Zealand, and as such cannot be used as representative of either the whole of New Zealand, nor the regions which those Service Centres reside.
- The Ministry records the day an appointment is made as day zero with the following day being day one.
- Three days and above is out of standard for new business appointments.
- Two days and above is out of standard for emergency appointments.
- Six days and above is out of standard for maintenance appointments.

**Table 2: Average working days between a request and a maintenance appointment for selected Work and Income Sites for the years ending June 2015 to June 2017**

<b>Work and Income Sites</b>	<b>Year ending June 2015</b>	<b>Year ending June 2016</b>	<b>Year ending June 2017</b>
Queen Street	3.3	4.2	4.3
Waitakere	4.7	4.7	4.4
Onehunga	4.6	5.3	4.9
Manukau	4.5	5.0	4.9
Albany	3.3	4.0	3.7
Hamilton Central	4.3	4.0	2.6
Johnsonville	4.3	6.2	6.8
Lower Hutt	3.7	3.5	4.9
Naenae	5.1	5.8	4.6
Newtown	4.3	5.8	5.9
Porirua	4.5	5.3	5.5
Upper Hutt	4.3	5.0	5.0
Wainuiomata	4.5	4.1	4.5
Wellington	4.8	5.1	6.1
Riccarton	2.9	5.0	5.4
Dunedin Central	4.9	4.8	2.9
Queenstown	3.1	3.7	1.9
Invercargill	4.4	5.1	3.3

**Notes:**

- As noted above, the Ministry records the day an appointment is made as day zero with the following day being day one.

**Table 3: Average working days between a request and a new business appointment for selected Work and Income Sites for the years ending June 2015 to June 2017**

<b>Work and Income Sites</b>	<b>Year ending June 2015</b>	<b>Year ending June 2016</b>	<b>Year ending June 2017</b>
Queen Street	3.1	3.9	3.3
Waitakere	4.8	4.4	4.1
Onehunga	3.6	3.3	3.6
Manukau	4.2	3.5	3.9
Albany	2.8	3.9	4.2
Hamilton Central	4.3	4.0	3.9
Johnsonville	2.8	4.8	5.7
Lower Hutt	4.0	5.0	5.7
Naenae	3.5	5.2	4.8
Newtown	4.0	6.9	5.9
Porirua	4.8	5.8	6.0
Upper Hutt	3.1	4.2	5.7
Wainuiomata	3.4	2.8	3.6
Wellington	4.5	6.0	4.9
Riccarton	3.7	5.5	4.3
Dunedin Central	5.1	4.7	4.7
Queenstown	3.6	3.8	2.2
Invercargill	3.7	4.9	5.1

**Notes:**

- As noted above, the Ministry records the day an appointment is made as day zero with the following day being day one.

**Table 4: The number and amount of food related Special Needs Grants for selected Work and Income Sites for the years ending June 2015 to June 2017**

Work and Income Sites	Year ending June 2015		Year ending June 2016		Year ending June 2017	
	Number of grants	Amount granted	Number of grants	Amount granted	Number of grants	Amount granted
Queen Street	5,452	\$506,446.35	3,043	\$225,214.56	3,950	\$396,328.63
Waitakere	10,981	\$1,173,019.48	10,144	\$1,138,675.31	8,616	\$916,295.12
Onehunga	3,076	\$339,863.69	2,850	\$325,592.95	2,881	\$314,578.11
Manukau	3,693	\$398,345.89	2,854	\$316,966.02	3,245	\$367,293.99
Albany	821	\$88,745.12	849	\$92,034.61	836	\$84,541.72
Hamilton Central	2,264	\$204,852.65	2,735	\$258,984.92	2,839	\$258,028.63
Johnsonville	2,054	\$234,339.77	2,045	\$238,341.82	1,900	\$206,885.64
Lower Hutt	2,176	\$226,285.04	2,244	\$224,881.11	1,977	\$199,784.69
Naenae	3,958	\$428,774.56	4,270	\$488,404.75	4,992	\$566,968.13
Newtown	2,240	\$228,515.47	2,031	\$209,766.34	2,978	\$319,782.63
Porirua	6,053	\$686,242.39	6,635	\$776,230.37	6,709	\$765,187.17
Upper Hutt	2,500	\$271,946.33	2,606	\$281,422.34	2,611	\$290,827.56
Wainuiomata	1,708	\$205,729.69	1,822	\$220,675.63	1,792	\$213,582.84
Wellington	2,551	\$213,811.66	2,862	\$249,191.66	2,812	\$239,701.36
Riccarton	1,620	\$154,378.43	1,061	\$100,454.08	904	\$80,302.61
Dunedin Central	4,032	\$362,619.95	3,991	\$365,138.66	4,459	\$424,364.19
Queenstown	170	\$22,210.05	200	\$28,126.53	175	\$23,632.93
Invercargill	7,164	\$833,816.17	7,238	\$858,189.23	6,957	\$798,675.34

**Notes:**

- This is a count of grants. A client may have more than one grant in the time period.
- Food assistance payments are granted as Special Needs Grants (SNG).
- This is the amount granted. The amount granted may not be the same as the amount spent.