



7 NOV 2018



Dear 

On 20 August 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

1. *What are the current guidelines or method used by Work in Income case workers to decide the amount received by beneficiaries for food grants.*
2. *Specific research or studies used to create the guidelines and methods by which Work and Income decides how much a beneficiary receives for food grants.*
3. *Number of food grants granted in the last quarter of 2018 and a breakdown by Work and Income offices.*

When someone asks Work and Income for assistance to purchase food, the Case Manager will work with the individual to understand their immediate need and what circumstances have led to their request. The Case Manager and the individual will work together to determine how much assistance is required to buy food until the individual's next income payment is due.

When determining the amount granted for a Special Needs Grant (SNG) for food, the following factors are taken into consideration:

- is it reasonable and fair?
- is the decision justified and lawful?
- when is their next benefit payment?
- what is the usual amount spent on food?
- is the food amount reasonable based on their family size?

When entering a hardship assistance application the Case Manager is prompted with the following questions:

- Has the client taken reasonable steps to improve their financial circumstances?
- Has Temporary Additional Support been assessed for this client?
- What is the partner's gross weekly income?
- What cash assets does the partner have?
- What is the client's gross weekly income?
- What cash assets does the client have?

- How many dependent children does the client have?
- Is the client unable to buy food because they have spent money on an essential expense that had to be met?
- Can the need be met in another way?
- Is there an immediate essential need?
- Has the client's need been established?
- How much was the essential expense that the client used money for?

You can find more information on Special Needs Grants on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/maximum-payment-for-food-01.html and here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/special-needs-grant/exceptional-circumstances-01.html.

Your request for information on specific research or studies used to create the guidelines and methods by which Work and Income decides how much a client receives for food grants is refused under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act (the Act) as this information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found. However, the Food Cost Survey provides the Ministry with useful information about the weekly food costs of households and provides guidance to make informed decisions when determining the amount granted for a SNG for food.

Information in the Food Cost Survey has previously been used to inform policy changes which provide additional financial assistance to low-to-middle income households, such as the 2016 Child Material Hardship package.

More information on the Food Cost Survey and a link to download a free copy can be found on the University of Otago's website here: www.otago.ac.nz/humannutrition/research/food-cost-survey/otago057919.html.

Please find enclosed a table with the number of hardship payments for SNGs for food during the quarter ending 30 June 2018.

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 with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response regarding Special Needs Grants for food, 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.

Yours sincerely

Kay Read


Group General Manager Client Service Delivery

The number of hardship payments for Special Needs Grants (SNGs) for food and the amount granted during the quarter ending 30 June 2018

Region	Office	SNG	
		Number	Amount
Northland	Dargaville	111	\$10,819.43
	Kaikohe	438	\$45,864.37
	Kaitaia	799	\$83,218.05
	Kamo	268	\$28,501.26
	Kawakawa	323	\$36,627.69
	Kerikeri	322	\$36,048.48
	Whangarei Central	1,584	\$164,896.37
	Subtotal	3,845	\$405,975.65
Auckland Metro	Albany	213	\$18,650.37
	Avondale	510	\$51,630.71
	Birkenhead District	364	\$37,740.85
	Browns Bay	88	\$9,025.00
	Clendon	2,541	\$351,496.94
	Glenfield	312	\$29,026.05
	Glenmall	1,393	\$150,969.79
	Grey Lynn	525	\$47,797.06
	Helensville	165	\$15,947.00
	Highland Park	456	\$49,249.43
	Hunters Corner District	830	\$95,114.24
	Mangere	2,892	\$381,598.84
	Manukau District	715	\$84,455.93
	Manurewa	5,101	\$637,936.63
	Mt Albert	296	\$30,056.22
	Mt Eden	326	\$22,890.69
	New Lynn	721	\$72,082.09
	Onehunga	759	\$92,027.04
	Orewa	634	\$66,082.23
	Otahuhu	950	\$102,900.48
	Otara	1,057	\$119,942.34
	Papakura	3,005	\$303,976.74
	Papatoetoe	548	\$56,922.18
	Pukekohe	1,205	\$132,629.39
	Queen Street	682	\$46,532.80
	Takapuna	372	\$35,783.96
	Tamaki	1,421	\$139,351.52
	Three Kings	1,005	\$107,516.30
	Waiheke	141	\$13,853.60
	Waitakere	1,728	\$189,654.60
	Waiuku	356	\$40,203.24
Warkworth	286	\$29,159.02	

	Westgate	953	\$100,627.73
	Subtotal	32,550	\$3,662,831.01
Waikato	Cambridge	126	\$13,348.23
	Dinsdale	1,122	\$118,843.98
	Five Cross Roads	1,510	\$153,659.14
	Glenview	424	\$44,183.39
	Hamilton	657	\$54,979.43
	Hamilton East	415	\$41,760.30
	Huntly	320	\$32,759.48
	Matamata	96	\$9,633.10
	Morrinsville	111	\$10,511.97
	Ngaruawahia	346	\$34,250.83
	Paeroa	68	\$6,566.17
	Te Awamutu	258	\$27,385.47
	Thames	132	\$12,717.93
	Waihi	172	\$16,282.85
	Subtotal	5,757	\$576,882.27
Taranaki	Hawera	204	\$21,463.77
	Marton	102	\$10,789.98
	New Plymouth	672	\$65,191.10
	Stratford	151	\$15,246.42
	Taihape	78	\$7,369.17
	Taumarunui	93	\$9,032.00
	Te Kuiti	218	\$25,007.69
	Waitara	158	\$15,724.21
	Whanganui	785	\$73,796.57
	Subtotal	2,461	\$243,620.91
Bay of Plenty	Greerton	598	\$61,345.81
	Kawerau	274	\$27,953.70
	Mount Maunganui	412	\$43,028.10
	Opotiki	124	\$14,197.06
	Rotorua	2,229	\$231,257.52
	Taupo	262	\$28,183.45
	Tauranga	141	\$13,284.42
	Te Puke	242	\$26,358.58
	Tokoroa	432	\$39,458.03
	Whakatane	506	\$49,323.48
	Subtotal	5,220	\$534,390.15
East Coast	Flaxmere	193	\$25,154.30
	Gisborne	1,254	\$142,268.43
	Hastings Community Link	722	\$73,725.36
	Kaiti	11	\$1,210.00
	Napier	1,281	\$137,094.06
	Ruatoria	70	\$7,780.00

	Taradale	349	\$39,845.24
	Waipukurau	151	\$16,563.36
	Wairoa	158	\$18,496.25
	Subtotal	4,189	\$462,137.00
Central	Dannevirke	295	\$36,882.67
	Feilding	222	\$23,102.95
	Foxton	128	\$14,903.11
	Horowhenua	528	\$59,484.45
	Kapiti	812	\$82,020.49
	Otaki	305	\$34,468.96
	Palmerston North	941	\$92,887.16
	Wairarapa	831	\$89,389.18
	Subtotal	4,062	\$433,138.97
Wellington	Johnsonville	412	\$39,528.52
	Lower Hutt	470	\$50,661.77
	Naenae	1,229	\$138,320.86
	Newtown	860	\$90,595.73
	Porirua	1,333	\$142,887.44
	Upper Hutt	571	\$62,112.59
	Wainuiomata	396	\$47,051.93
	Wellington	741	\$63,196.21
	Subtotal	6,012	\$634,355.05
Nelson	Blenheim	511	\$58,757.38
	Greymouth	165	\$14,852.25
	Motueka	371	\$39,080.07
	Nelson	582	\$59,845.13
	Richmond	484	\$55,756.45
	Westport	134	\$13,610.00
	Subtotal	2,247	\$241,901.28
Canterbury	Ashburton	119	\$13,471.69
	Canterbury Youth Service	53	\$3,203.00
	Hornby	392	\$39,134.07
	Linwood	593	\$52,224.10
	New Brighton	453	\$45,509.72
	Papanui	320	\$30,738.73
	Rangiora	368	\$44,199.70
	Riccarton	273	\$20,962.13
	Shirley	344	\$33,056.95
	Sydenham	524	\$47,460.52
	Subtotal	3,439	\$329,960.61
Southern	Alexandra	91	\$11,356.00
	Balclutha	88	\$9,313.36
	Dunedin Central	999	\$91,825.39
	Gore	291	\$33,473.50

	Invercargill	1,210	\$133,832.07
	Mosgiel	183	\$17,813.00
	Oamaru	237	\$27,169.00
	Queenstown	41	\$6,405.00
	South Dunedin	577	\$51,049.33
	Timaru	637	\$65,622.29
	Subtotal	4,354	\$447,858.94
Other	Subtotal	63,288	\$6,177,158.98
Grand total		137,424	\$14,150,210.82

Notes:

- SNG is Special Needs Grants
- This represents a count of grants not individuals as the same client may have been granted a hardship payment more than once.
- This represents payments to all benefits and pensions, not just working age clients on main benefits.
- This represents the amount granted, which may not always equal the amount paid out.
- 'S' represents a suppressed cell. These numbers are withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.
- 'Other' includes the:
 - Central Processing Unit
 - Centralised Collection Unit
 - Centralised Unit Housing
 - Christchurch Contact Centre
 - Due Paid Assessment Team
 - Ellerslie Contact Centre
 - Hamilton Contact Centre
 - National Office
 - Remote Client Unit
 - Seniors Support Centre
 - Specialised Processing Srv WLG
 - Specialised Processing Srv WRE
 - Staff Assistance Unit
 - StudyLink Processing Centre
 - Waitakere Contact Centre
 - Wellington Contact Centre
 - Youth Service Support Unit