



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

18 JUN 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

On 20 May 2020, you emailed the Minister for Social Development, Hon Carmel Sepuloni, requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- *How many additional case managers does Work and Income plan to employ and when?*
- *How many additional call centre staff are employed relative to 6 months ago?*
- *Description of the training call centre staff receives.*

On the same day, your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) for reply, as the matters raised more closely align with the functions of the Ministry.

All aspects of your request will be addressed in the above order.

To support the forecasted increase in New Zealanders requiring financial assistance due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry is investing \$250 million in an additional 807 Full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. The majority of these will be frontline staff, of which the Ministry expects 194 to be case managers.

The rest of the frontline positions will be made up of 256 Centralised Processing Officers, 161 Customer Service Representatives, and 55 Managers and Trainers.

The remaining 124 of the 807 FTE staff the Ministry plans to employ will be work-focused staff across the regions to support employers and employees. These positions will be made up of 68 staff within the Rapid Response teams, 19 Contract Administrators, 37 Business Development Managers in employment teams, and a further 17 will be based in the National Office to support the work across the regions.

These staff will play an integral role in supporting New Zealanders who apply for Jobseeker Support, many for the first time, or other financial assistance such as the Wage Subsidy. The Ministry aims to have these staff hired by the end of July 2020.

Regarding your second question, as at 31 May 2020, the Ministry employed a total of 1,157 FTE staff in the call centre. Customer Service Representatives make up 800 of these positions. Comparatively, as at 30 November 2019, the Ministry employed 1,074 FTE in the call centre, of which 703 were Customer Service Representatives.

As the Ministry plans to increase the number of Customer Service Representatives by 161 FTE staff, the figure quoted above is expected to increase.

The call centre's training programme is divided into 'modules' and consists of a mix of classroom-based learning and side-by-side observation and practice with an experienced coach.

Initially, new call centre staff are taught conversational skills such as how to listen and obtain information, summarise and paraphrase information received and advice given to ensure effective communication. Staff are also trained in operational policy and legislation, such as the eligibility criteria for different forms of assistance, and finally practical business processes such as how to process specific actions such as granting hardship, and accurately update and maintain client information. After some time in the role, new staff may return to the classroom for supplementary training or learning additional Ministry products and services available to expand the range of calls they're able to answer.

As part of the Government's response to COVID-19, new and existing Ministry call centre staff received training on the eligibility criteria and business processes for employers enquiring around the new Wage Subsidy Scheme, supplemented by internal communications as well as information available on the Ministry's public facing website.

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 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, 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



Bridget Saunders
Manager, Issue Resolution, Service Delivery