

Aide-mémoire



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Meeting

Date: 31 August 2021 **Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE
For: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development
File Reference: REP/21/08/926

Meeting with representatives of the National Beneficiaries Advocacy Consultative Group (NBACG)

Meeting/visit details 11.35am to 12.00pm, Wednesday 1 September 2021, ZOOM invite

Expected attendees

Kay Brereton from Beneficiaries & Unwaged Workers Trust (located in Nelson) Co Convenor of the NBACG - 9(2)(a)

Shelly Hannah- Kingi from Tairāwhiti Beneficiary Advocacy Trust (located in Gisborne) - 9(2)(a)

Teresa Homan from Hutt Valley Benefit Education Service Trust (Located in Wellington) 9(2)(a)

Stephan Bray from Tumuaki (located in Feilding) 9(2)(a)

Diane Anderson, Manager Client Advocacy and Reviews – MSD
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Purpose of meeting/visit You have asked to meet with representatives of the National Beneficiaries Advocacy Consultative Group (the Advocates).

Background This Aide Memoire provides you with information on the engagement to date with the Advocates about the Ministry's response and planning for the different COVID 19 Alert Levels.

Advocates have indicated that would like to discuss:

- if the temporary removal of initial income stand-downs is being reconsidered for people applying for a benefit since 18 August 2021
 - Access to food
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- Emergency Housing and support for rough sleepers
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Key items

There is daily contact between MSD and representatives from the NBACG including:

- Daily updates on the Ministry's overall response for COVID 19 changing Alert Levels and what this looks like for clients.
- Escalation process for any concerns that haven't been able to be resolved at local level or where clarification of guidelines could be improved.
- Conference calls between NBACG representatives (Co convenors and Kay Brereton and Neville Corkery, Shelley Hannah Kingi who administers Face book pages) and Ministry representatives, to discuss any emerging concerns.
- Copies of MSD Facebook posts about the COVID-19 response are provided to Kay and Shelley so they can link from their Facebook pages publicly.

COVID-19 stand-down waiver

Advocates have asked if the temporary removal of initial income stand-downs that was put in place March 2020 is being reconsidered for people applying for a benefit since 18 August 2021.

Temporary removal of initial income stand-downs in 2020

- In 2020, Cabinet agreed to temporarily remove initial income stand-downs for a period of 8 months, from 23 March 2020 to 23 November 2020
- This was in response to the high degree of uncertainty on the economic impacts created by COVID-19 and ensured those affected were able to access the income support system as quickly as possible
- This temporary removal was further extended by 8 months from 24 November 2020 to 24 July 2021 to mitigate operational pressures for MSD if stand-downs were to return
- Initial income stand-downs were reinstated on 25 July 2021, meaning people applying for a main benefit may have a stand-down imposed for a period of one to two weeks before their benefit commences.

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Access to Food

The Advocates are concerned that the reliance on regional responses assumes that there is community resilience and cohesive response.

Current state of demand

- We're continuing to see increased demand on foodbanks and CDEM resources. This demand is concentrated in Auckland around those church and school communities with high numbers of cases and families self-isolating who would have under normal circumstances supported each other.
- MSD's role is to:
 - ensure community providers are clear about when they should be operating and how to do so safely
 - support funded food providers to respond to the surge demand while we are at higher Alert Levels
 - work alongside National emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and local Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Groups
- While there is no declared national state of emergency, we understand that local CDEM groups have been activated across many parts of the country. As part of their welfare function, CDEM's role is to assess those with urgent need that cannot be met through any other channel.
- MSD is working on the ground as part of the local CDEM welfare response in Auckland and Wellington.
- We are working with the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre (NRHCC) to ensure there are good

processes in place for those accessing food from foodbanks on behalf of isolating whānau and to make sure consistent assessment and connection to other MSD and community support is there should they needed it.

- We are working with targeted providers to ensure that additional wellbeing packs are available should whānau need them for additional essential items like baby formula and nappies for families with young children.

Emergency Housing

The Advocates have asked what actions have been taken to house rough sleepers.

- MSD is chairing the All of Government Accommodation Committee sub-function. This forum has enabled Government agencies to work collaboratively to support rough sleepers.
- MSD can support rough sleepers into EH.
- MSD is working closely with HUD to identify if additional support services with the expertise to work with rough sleepers is needed.

Next steps

Updates will continue to be provided to the NBACG as they become available.

The next NBACG quarterly meeting with MSD scheduled for the 7th – 8th of September 2021, this has now been cancelled.

We will continue discussions on what items can be progressed through conference calls, ZOOM meetings etc.

Author: Diane Anderson, Manager Client Advocacy and Reviews Team