



28 June 2022

Tēnā koe

On 31 May 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information regarding Ministry clients with psychological and psychiatric conditions:

- *1/ At March 2022, regarding Jobseeker HCD clients with a primary incapacity of psychological and psychiatric conditions, please provide a breakdown of the types of conditions.*
- *2/ At March 2022, regarding Supported Living Payment clients with a primary incapacity of psychological and psychiatric conditions, please provide a breakdown of the types of conditions.*
- *3/ Please provide the same data at March 2017 and 2013.*
- *4/ What referral protocols are in place for people receiving either of these benefits for psychological and psychiatric conditions?*
- *5/ Is it compulsory for people receiving a benefit due to substance/alcohol abuse or addiction to attend and complete rehabilitation services?*
- *6/ How many clients did Work and Income refer to Mental Health and Addiction Services in 2021, 2017 and 2013?*
- *7/ Do reports exist that monitor the benefit outcomes of referrals to these services?*
- *8/ In respect to people receiving a benefit due to substance/alcohol abuse or addiction, are there any discussion documents/ cabinet papers regarding changes to conditionality of receipt or introduction of income management?*
- *9/ How many main beneficiaries were also 'opioid substitution treatment' clients at 2021, 2017 and 2013?*

In an email received from you on 17 June 2022, in response to a request to refine your other OIA request for:

1. *At March 2022, regarding Jobseeker HCD clients with a primary incapacity of psychological and psychiatric conditions, how many had children attached to their main benefit?*
2. *At March 2022, regarding Supported Living Payment clients with a primary incapacity of psychological and psychiatric conditions, how many had children attached to their main benefit?*
3. *Please provide the same data at March 2017 and 2013.*

You agreed to refine the dates for the information requested to March 2018 and March 2014. The Ministry's response to this request has been refined accordingly.

Your questions seek information about the Ministry's Jobseeker Support (JS) and Supported Living Payment (SLP). You may be aware that from 15 July 2013, New Zealand's welfare system changed to better help people prepare for employment. The focus is on what people can do to achieve a better future for themselves and their family. Three benefits replaced most of the previous benefit types, including the types you requested information for. These are:

- ***Jobseeker Support (JS)***– Replaced the Unemployment Benefit, Sickness Benefit, Domestic Purposes Benefit (Women Alone, Sole Parent if youngest child is aged 14 and over) and the Widow's Benefit (without children, or if youngest child is aged 14 and over). Jobseeker Support is available to people who can usually work full-time. It also includes people who can only work part-time or can't look for work at the moment, for example because they have a health condition, injury or disability. More information about JS can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/jobseeker-support.html
- ***Sole Parent Support (SPS)***– Replaced the Domestic Purposes Benefit (Sole Parent if youngest child is aged under 14) and the Widow's Benefit (if youngest child is aged under 14). Sole Parent Support is available to sole parents caring for children under the age of 14 who are available for or are ready to prepare for part-time work. More information about Sole Parent Support can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/sole-parent-support.html

- **Supported Living Payment (SLP)**– Replaced the Invalid’s Benefit and Domestic Purposes Benefit (Caring for Sick or Infirm). The Supported Living Payments is available to people who are severely restricted or unable to work on a long-term basis because of a health condition or disability, and for people who are caring for someone who needs significant care. More information about SLP can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/supported-living-payment.html

For the sake of clarity, your questions have been grouped together where appropriate.

1 & 3. At March 2014, 2018 and 2022, regarding Jobseeker HCD clients with a primary incapacity of psychological and psychiatric conditions, please provide a breakdown of the types of conditions.

Please see **Table One** in Appendix A for the number of working age JS clients (Health condition, Injury and Disability) with the primary incapacity group of ‘psychological and psychiatric conditions’ broken down by incapacity type as at the end of March 2014, 2018 and 2022.

2 & 3. At March 2014, 2018 and 2022, regarding Supported Living Payment clients with a primary incapacity of psychological and psychiatric conditions, please provide a breakdown of the types of conditions.

Please see **Table Two** in Appendix A for the number of SLP clients with the primary incapacity group ‘psychological and psychiatric conditions’ broken down by incapacity type as at the end of March 2014, 2018 and 2022.

4. What referral protocols are in place for people receiving either of these benefits for psychological and psychiatric conditions?

5. Is it compulsory for people receiving a benefit due to substance/alcohol abuse or addiction to attend and complete rehabilitation services?

7. Do reports exist that monitor the benefit outcomes of referrals to these services?

The Ministry provides benefits to people in need but does not refer people to mental health or addiction services. Client support rehabilitation and client support for their health conditions are led by the Health Practitioner. When a client is in the care of their Health Practitioner, they may be offered external, or contracted services that clients can utilise whilst being in receipt of a benefit, if appropriate.

While JS clients usually have job search obligations, under section 146 of the Social Security Act 2018, clients cannot be required to complete medical treatment as an activity as part of their obligations: www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2018/0032/latest/DLM6783387.html

If a client advises they have a drug issue and wants support to deal with it, the Ministry will refer them, or advise them about the Alcohol Drug Helpline to access themselves, whichever is their preference: www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz

Clients are not obliged to attend any of these services and attendance is optional.

6. How many clients did Work and Income refer to Mental Health and Addiction Services in 2021, 2017 and 2013?

Please see our response to questions 4/6/7. Your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

8. In respect to people receiving a benefit due to substance/alcohol abuse or addiction, are there any discussion documents/ cabinet papers regarding changes to conditionality of receipt or introduction of income management?

Your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

9. How many main beneficiaries were also 'opioid substitution treatment' clients at 2021, 2017 and 2013?

I am unable to provide you with this information as the Ministry does not hold any data on this question. If the Ministry did have any information, it may be held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information, Ministry staff would have to manually review a substantial number of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

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. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry'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.

Ngā mihi nui

Bridget Saunders

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