



4 November 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your request, which was partially transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) on 3 September 2025, requesting information about the long-term costs of child abuse.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Data or reports linking childhood abuse histories to:

- a. Unemployment or underemployment.*
- b. Benefit uptake or long-term dependency.*
- c. Access barriers to jobseeker benefits for people with mental health conditions, including the effect of partner income tests that disqualify eligibility even after short relationships.*
- d. Barriers to tertiary education funding and support, including the partner income test for student allowance and how ongoing therapy costs interact with education debt.*

The Ministry does not hold data strictly linking childhood abuse to benefits.

As such your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as this information is not held by the Ministry, and I have no grounds to believe it is held by or closely connected to the functions of another department, Minister of the Crown or organisation.

However, we believe you may find the following information useful. Please see the following links to the Valuation and Social Outcomes Modelling reports that mention Orange Tamariki Care and Protection variables as part of the modelling links:

- 2015 Valuation: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/valuation-reports/valuation-benefit-system-working-age-adults-30-june-2015.pdf

The 2015 Valuation report has a discussion of results relating to Oranga Tamariki Care and Protection variables. This was the first version valuation model to introduce these variables. We note that you may be interested in page 5 for a summary of the report, pages 16-20 for the executive summary covering the

introduction of the Care and Protection variables, and page 60 begins the main report section.

- 2016 Valuation: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/valuation-reports/valuation-benefit-system-working-age-adults-30-june-2016.pdf

This valuation is a follow on from the 2015 report above.

- 2023 Social Outcomes Model: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/benefit-system/social-outcomes-model-benefit-system-insights.pdf

The 2023 Social Outcomes Model benefits insights report has a section on youth in the benefit system. You can see how Care and Protection history is shown as a risk factor in figure 8 and also included in the chart looking at numbers of risk factors in figure 9.

- 2022 Social Outcomes Model reporting:
www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/official-information-responses/2023/december/social-outcomes-modelling-2022-results-report-draft.pdf

Page 46 of this document includes Care and Protection variables in a risk characteristics table. Pages 59 and 60 also detail some information regarding Care and Protection variables relating to projected future time in employment.

Any government held-reports or modelling on:

- a. Regional and targeted support groups for survivors. Whether these exist, how consistent access is, and whether coordination gaps exist nationally.*

While the Ministry work with and maintains contact with survivor groups, we were unable to locate any official reports or modelling on this subject. Our correspondence with survivor groups is generally limited to responding to queries raised by claimants they may be advocating for and to supporting the survivor focused events these groups hold, held by the groups, including such as providing NZSL interpreters or staff for an information booth.

As such, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the Act, as these reports and modelling do not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate them, cannot be found.

Please provide any Cabinet papers, policy reviews, or ministerial briefings from the past five successive governments (approx. 20 years) relating to:

- a. Interagency responsibility for adult survivors of childhood abuse*
- b. Consideration of benefit eligibility (partner income tests), education funding rules, or access to therapy as barriers for survivors and caregiving households.*

I would like to note the Ministry publishes a number of Cabinet papers on our website, here. If you are interested in a specific Cabinet paper, please contact us to make a fresh request: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/cabinet-papers/index.html

Interagency responsibility for adult survivors of childhood abuse

Your request covers a broad 20-year timeframe. Locating and reviewing all potentially relevant documents would require substantial manual collation. As such, this part of your request is refused 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. However, even with these options, the scale of your request would still significantly impact the Ministry's ability to carry out core functions.

We believe you may find the following link helpful, which contains a publicly available copy of the Crown Response plan. If you would like to make a further request regarding any of the information from this, please reach out to us.

- www.abuseinquiryresponse.govt.nz/news/newsletter/crown-response-to-the-royal-commission-of-inquiry

Consideration of benefit eligibility (partner income tests), education funding rules, or access to therapy as barriers for survivors and caregiving households

As above, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Act due to the volume of information and manual collation required. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

To assist, we've provided a high-level summary of the changes to partner income tests for benefit eligibility over the past 20 years. Please contact us if you would like to refine your query further.

Main benefit abatement thresholds were last increased on 1 April 2021. The thresholds were increased to \$160 and \$250 per week from 1 April 2021, which allowed beneficiaries to work up to eight hours on minimum wage before abatement occurs. The Cabinet paper which sought agreement to this can be found here: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/cabinet-papers/2021/cabinet-paper-increasing-main-benefit-abatement-thresholds-on-1-april-2021-and-consequential-adjustment-to-the-minimum-family-tax-credit.pdf

Prior to this, abatement thresholds were adjusted on 1 April 2020 through funding secured through Budget 2019. This funding committed to progressively increase the abatement thresholds for main benefits over four years (until 2023) in line with minimum wage increases. The 2019 Budget fact sheet detailing this can be found on the Ministry's website, here: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/factsheets/budget/factsheet-abatement-2019.pdf

However, prior to this adjustment on 1 April 2020, the last adjustment to main benefit abatement settings occurred in September 2010, when changes were made for recipients of (what was known as) Domestic Purposes Benefit, Invalid's Benefit, Widow's Benefit as well as for Veterans Pension (VP) (under 65 years), and New Zealand Superannuation and VP with non-qualifying partners. For the full-time abatement regime for Jobseeker Support, the threshold had remained at \$80 since it was last adjusted in 1996. MSD's annual report from 2009/2010 with these changes detailed can be found here: www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-

[and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/annual-report/annual-report-2009-2010.pdf](http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/history/social-assistance-chronology-programme-history.html)

For more information, a chronology of social assistance in New Zealand is here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/about-msd/history/social-assistance-chronology-programme-history.html

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us or would like to make a more specific or refined request, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request regarding the long-term costs of child abuse, 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

pp. 

Anna Graham

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