



10 March 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request for information on children's spectacle subsidies including total number of claims and overall funding level. Your request was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) by Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand on 11 December 2025.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

1. *What is the overall level of funding allocated towards the children's eyecare and spectacle subsidy by Te Whatu Ora now? What is the total number of spectacle subsidy claims in the latest quarter of reporting? What are the total number of spectacle subsidy claims by age and ethnicity in the latest quarter?*

The total budget for the 2025/2026 financial year for children's spectacle subsidies is \$6,749,000.00 (excluding GST). The total number of applications as at the latest quarter (July-September 2025) was 6911.

Please refer to Tables One and Two in the attached **Appendix** for data on Children's Spectacle Subsidy for the latest quarter (July to September 2025).

In order to protect client privacy, some values are suppressed and are represented by 'S'. The Ministry is unable to provide you with the exact number as releasing this information is likely to risk identifying the individuals concerned. As such, this information is withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs and public interest in the information.

2. *What is the average cost of the Higher-Level subsidy in the latest quarter of reporting?*
3. *What are the total number of claims in the latest quarter where the average cost have been incurred over and above the available spectacle subsidy in the following bands, in the latest quarter of reporting:*
 - a. *greater than \$50*
 - b. *greater than \$100*
 - c. *greater than \$200*
 - d. *greater than \$300*

- e. *greater than \$400*
- f. *greater than \$500*
- g. *greater than \$600*

This information is refused under section 18(f) of the Act, as substantial manual collation would be required to collate this information. If held, this information would only be contained within individual client files, which would each require manual review to respond to your request. 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.

4. What is the date that the Enable subsidy for children's spectacles and eyecare (even if under a different name, such as the children's spectacle subsidy as it was once known) was established?

5. At this date, what level of funding was allocated per request? It currently sits at about \$280 with an additional \$50 for adult frames. Please provide details on how much funding was allocated in total, what was allocated towards frames, and what additional funding could be provided for adult frames.

6. At this date of establishment, what was the overall level of funding allocated towards the children's spectacle subsidy in the relevant department (this may be the Ministry of Disabled Peoples) yearly? What was the total number of spectacle subsidy claims?

This program was initially introduced in 1999/2000 for children under 6 years, at a level of \$200 per child, per year. The age limit and amount increased in November 2002, to children that were less than 8 years old, and the amount of funding was increased to \$250. In 2007/08 access criteria changed again, with children aged under 16 years being eligible, and the maximum subsidy per child rising to \$287.50 (including GST) per year, with a further \$51.11 (including GST) for children who require an adult sized frame.

However, your request for the total funding allocated at establishment of the program and the number of claims at this time is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

7. What was the level of funding allocated per request (in total, towards frames, and additional towards adult frames) in 2012? What was the total number of spectacle subsidy claims in 2012? What was the total level of funding allocated in 2012?

Expenditure on the Children's Spectacle Subsidy was doubled between 2007/08 and 2011/2012, with applications increasing by 22% (on average) for each of those four years. The budget allocation was increased from \$2.6 million (2010/11) to \$4.7 million (2011/12) in response to increased service demand.

Your request for the number of spectacle subsidy claims and total level of funding for the program in 2012 is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this information, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

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

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request for information on the Children's Spectacle Subsidy, 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

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Graham', written in a cursive style.

Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services