



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

**Community Connection Service  
Service Guidelines**

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# 1. About these Guidelines

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## Introduction

These Guidelines are for providers who hold a Ministry of Social Development (the Purchasing Agency) Outcome Agreement to host the Community Connection Service.

Outcome Agreements with providers of this service require that they are delivered in accordance with these Guidelines.

## Purpose

These Guidelines have been developed to assist stakeholders by:

- a) providing detailed information about the service in a more easy-to-read format than is possible to include in an Outcome Agreement
- b) being a resource tool to help providers deliver services consistently and in line with the original intent
- c) being a way for the Purchasing Agency to improve its responsiveness to feedback regarding changes to the service delivery component of the Outcome Agreement.

## Using these Guidelines

These Guidelines should be seen as setting the minimum standard from which the provider can develop a service that reflects their organisation's philosophical base, incorporating local need and the culture within which the provider works.

The provider should use these Guidelines to assist them to competently deliver the service.

## Review of Guidelines

This is a living document. As the service is implemented, the Guidelines will be updated to ensure:

- a) they reflect the most current decisions of the Government that affect the service and the activities being funded
- b) reporting measures are up-to-date, relevant and collecting the most useful information on the service and its effectiveness.

## **2. Relationships**

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### **Relationship principles**

Both parties shall collaborate to ensure the services are effective and accessible. In so doing they recognise that the service is a joint endeavour, in which both parties have a shared goal to achieve positive benefits for the target group.

The following principles guide all our dealings under the Outcome Agreement. Both parties agree to:

- a) act honestly and in good faith
- b) communicate openly and in a timely manner
- c) work in a collaborative and constructive manner
- d) recognise each other's responsibilities
- e) encourage quality and innovation to achieve positive outcomes.

Both parties shall appoint contract managers who will be responsible for effectively managing the contractual relationship between us, by providing assistance and support as required. Details of the contract managers nominated by both parties are set out in the Outcome Agreement.

### **Cultural responsiveness**

Both parties recognise the needs of all people, including Māori, Pacific, ethnic and culturally and linguistically diverse communities and all other communities, to have services provided in a way that is consistent with their social, economic, political, cultural and spiritual values.

### **Good practice approach**

Both parties support the development of good practice in the delivery of this service. This includes:

- a) basing the service on current good practice approaches and considering community context and the knowledge and skills relevant to the purpose and focus of this service
- b) being people and whanau focused – including recognising the importance of cultural responsiveness in service delivery and designing services and physical facilities in a way that supports accessibility to services.
- c) using a collaborative approach across services and agencies where possible
- d) undertaking regular review, reflection and monitoring of the effectiveness of the service, including people and whānau, staff and external feedback, and changing and modifying practice in response
- e) ensuring that formal feedback processes are used for reporting purposes and that people and whanau participating in them are aware of how the information they provide will be used
- f) undertaking any relevant professional development and (where appropriate) supervision.

### **3. Community Connectors**

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As part of the psycho-social response and recovery plan for COVID-19 the Ministry invested in Community Connector positions (Full Time Equivalents referred to as FTEs from hereon in) to provide connections and direct support to people so they can access information and services in the community.

Community Connectors supported the increase in the demand and support for services – both immediately and longer-term psycho and social needs. As part of getting back into employment or other life activities, some people may need to interact with multiple government agencies and providers but may not have the knowledge or confidence to do so. As a result, they could miss out on entitled support and services and subsequently their health, wellbeing and future could be negatively impacted as a result.

The role of a Community Connector is determined by the needs of the people and whānau they are helping and expected to comprise of some (or all) of the following activities:

- Supporting people and whānau
- Supporting communities
- Supporting other providers and stakeholders.

Outcomes for this service are related to employment, education, crime and family violence prevention, civic engagement and broader family and community wellbeing.

This service will enhance and complement other 'connector/navigator' type services by:

- Increasing the:
  - workforce available to support people and whānau
  - number of people and whānau who are able to access a holistic service model
- Expanding the availability of connection services (geographically)
- Strengthening integration between community and government organisations.

### **4. Service cohort**

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The Provider will provide the services primarily for:

- 1) People with COVID-19 who have been directed to self-isolate at home / in the community and require a welfare response.
- 2) Referrals to this service may come from a MSD Triage Team who will be working with the Ministry of Health for those who have tested positive to COVID-19 and assessed as requiring welfare support.
- 3) When the Ministry of Health is notified of a positive COVID-19 case or directs someone to self-isolate because they are a close contact, an initial assessment will be made to identify whether the person or their whānau needs welfare support. This information is then shared with MSD. Please note that there will also be instances of people and whānau who self-refer to providers.
- 4) People impacted by Covid-19.

MSD Regional Commissioners are working locally with community partners to lead the coordination of the welfare response in their region. This involves partnering with other agencies, iwi, local government, community providers and leaders. They will link people and whānau with trusted local providers and the community supports that best suit their needs.

- Individuals and whānau can call for assistance for free on the COVID welfare line 0800 512 337. They can also go to [Help while you're self-isolating - Work and Income](#)
- We acknowledge that many people will want to be supported by those they know and trust to help them get through their self-isolation period. There is no change to the type of support available to people self-isolating who need it, People can still use the online form available on the Work and Income website at any time.

## **Supporting people and whānau in self isolation at home/in the community due to COVID-19 who require a welfare response.**

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On 18 October 2021, Cabinet agreed that the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF) will replace the Alert Level Framework. Under the CPF people with COVID-19 will be supported to self-isolate at home / in the community.

From 3 December 2021, the Community Connection Service was expanded to flexibly respond to on-going demands under the CPF and to ensure the diverse needs of individuals and whānau that are self-isolating, can be met by making sure they have access to the services they need.

At 11.59pm on 12 September 2022 the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF) was removed – the role of the Community Connection Service remains unchanged.

### **Supporting whānau and community**

The Community Connector support the welfare needs of individuals and whānau to keep safe while isolating at home / in the community. This also includes supporting individuals and whānau post-self-isolation. Community Connectors navigate and connect individuals and whānau to various services available during and in transition from self-isolation.

This funding is focused on:

- Assisting families, through advocacy and information, with accessing their longer-term income entitlements and other wider services (ie housing, education and employment)
- Addressing immediate hardship, especially where someone may not be entitled to receive MSD support and support them to access wider services and resources that support their well being
- Accessing food and essential items during self-isolation
- Access to health and safety programmes, including mental health, addiction services, anger management or family violence services
- Accessing supports to improve their ability to self-isolate at home.

## **Supporting people and whānau who have been impacted by COVID-19 and require a welfare response.**

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The expansion of the Community Connection Service complements the wider welfare approach and will continue to be a 'go to' service for various bespoke arrangements needed to respond to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding COVID-19. In particular, 'Community Connectors' positioned to deliver the Community Connection Service are now needed to help support households that might not have COVID-19 currently but have been impacted by COVID-19. Examples of this could be whānau that:

- have been in isolation previously, including those whānau your organisation supported to isolate safely,
- have experienced reduced or loss of income (which may include having taken on debt),
- have disengaged from employment or education,
- have on-going health concerns that impacts their ability to work etc.

### **Service Agreements**

We ask that providers respond to referrals within 12 hours to confirm whether you will accept the referral which will be sent from the MSD system. This is so that we can confirm support will be provided to a person or whānau that are self-isolating and in need. Referrals will be sent to providers from the hours between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

When contacting the client, please try three attempts over 12-hour period to reach the client. After the third attempt, please contact your Regional Lead who may escalate it if it is necessary.

## **Discretionary Funding**

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This fund is made available to each Community Connector and can be accessed when all other options of financial support, including Work and Income support services, have been exhausted and existing policies, initiatives, services, or funding does not provide the necessary support needed; or where there is a time critical imperative that prevents other options being fully explored.

This funding is for immediate hardship, especially where someone may not be entitled to receive support from the Ministry of Social Development. The fund is to be accessed where it is reasonably evident that the person or whānau has inadequate income to meet essential needs.

### **Assessment Criteria:**

- The person or whānau does not qualify for assistance through Work and Income i.e. an assessment has been done using the [Check what you might get \(msd.govt.nz\)](https://www.msd.govt.nz/tools-and-services/check-what-you-might-get) tool and a discussion has been had with an MSD case manager to confirm eligibility.
- You are not required to apply the assessment criteria above if there is a time-critical imperative that means other options cannot be fully considered and explored to provide immediate support.

Discretionary funding can be used, but not limited to, for the following hardship needs:

- Rent arrears
- Medical needs i.e. doctors' bills and prescriptions
- Utilities i.e. phone bill, internet or phone data expenses and power bills
- General household items i.e. clothing, blankets and bedding
- Transportation costs i.e. Medical appointments and arranging delivery or collection of items
- Education needs i.e. activity packs.

Discretionary funding cannot be used for:

- Food
- Purchasing a vehicle
- Cigarettes or Alcohol.

Should an individual or whānau require food assistance we recommend the Community Connector support the whānau by contacting a local Work and Income office or a nearby Community Food Provider to support with this need.

### Reporting measures

Service	Reporting Required	Date Due
Community Connection Service	Entering referral and interactive data into the SORT reporting tool.	Information should be recorded on the same day of the interaction. Where a large number of referrals are being received you may wish to leave for the end of the day to enter all referral information.  If your organisation is using the import function, please ensure that your data for the previous week (Monday to Sunday) is imported by Monday. If Monday is a public holiday, or if you can't complete the import on Monday, then you can complete the import on Tuesday.

### Reporting Frequency

An online tool (SORT) has been developed to provide a streamlined and effective approach for providers to submit information for this service. Access to the tool including login and user guide information is provided as part of contract engagements.

It is important that reporting for the previous weeks activities is completed no later than Monday, because MSD reports on the previous week's activities using the information that has been reported as 5pm Monday.

### Provider reporting

Reporting is necessary to ensure accountability to Government for the funding provided in terms of the Community Connection Isolation Service outcomes. The Ministry has agreed on the quantity and nature of the services that government funding supports, and we are required to report to Government that this has been achieved.

During the term of the Outcomes Agreement, providers are required to provide responses to the above Reporting Measures to the Ministry’s contract manager. From time-to-time requests for additional information to support these Reporting Measures may be made.

Annual audited financial reports may also be requested

**Protecting reporting information**

While we consider the data that we’re asking you to report to us is de-identified, it’s important to note that when the line-level data is combined, it could be used to re-identify individuals. For that reason and to ensure that the information is handled appropriately and that whānau are adequately informed about what is happening to their information, we have made changes to the terms of your Outcome Agreement. These terms can be found in the letter of amendment that was sent to you recently and is explained further here.

To ensure the data you report to us on is the minimum data necessary, is sufficiently de-identified and is transferred to us in a secure manner, we have introduced the SORT reporting tool. You must use only the SORT reporting tool to complete your reporting activities. You must also ensure that any information you put into any free-text data fields in SORT does not contain any identifiable features (e.g., name, DOB, address, etc).

To ensure whānau are adequately informed about your reporting requirements, we’re asking you to please update your privacy notices with this information. Please also assure whānau in your notices that MSD will not use the reporting information in a way in which they can be identified.

**Overview of welfare approaches**

Please see the below table for an overview of the welfare approach co-ordinated by MSD and those services led by Health. To access services in the table, or if you have any questions about the scope of a specific referral, please contact the MSD regional contact.

<b>Table 1</b>	
Welfare services offered through the Care in the Community Model	
<b>Co-ordinated by MSD and delivered by a range of agencies and partners</b>	<b>Led by Health</b>
Delivered by MSD (directly or through community partners): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit payments</li> <li>• Employment assistance</li> <li>• Food</li> <li>• Income related accommodation costs to sustain current home</li> <li>• Power, gas, heating or water bills</li> <li>• Senior services</li> <li>• Other urgent costs</li> <li>• Community support services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability Support</li> <li>• Medication</li> <li>• Medical devices</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Addiction</li> </ul>

Delivered by MSD and other agencies  
(directly or through community partners):

- Early Learning Education Packs  
(Ministry of Education (MoE) and  
MSD)
- Educational Devices (MoE)
- At risk children/Children in care  
(Oranga Tamariki)
- Family violence (MSD and Police)
- Whānau Ora (Te Puni Kōkiri)
- Animal welfare (Ministry for Primary  
Industries)

### **Protecting referral information**

Please note that personal information sent to you by MSD is authorised under the Privacy Act 2020 (the Act). MSD is required to obtain consent from whānau before referring them to you for support. Once you receive this information, it is your responsibility to use and protect it appropriately and in accordance with the Act.

### **Social sector accreditation standards**

Providers delivering the Community Connection Service are required to meet Level Three, Ministry of Social Development specific accreditation standards. Providers are required to maintain their accreditation level according to the Ministry's relevant Social Sector Accreditation Standards.

### **Family services directory**

Throughout the term of the Outcome Agreement with the Ministry, providers must ensure that their organisation is listed on the Ministry's Family Services Directory (<https://www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory/>) and that necessary information is updated when required.