

MSD's Accessibility Fund – Final report summary

Improving access to family and sexual violence services



Purpose

The report highlights key findings and outcomes from the Accessibility Fund work programme. It offers evidence-based suggestions for future opportunities to increase accessibility and improve services for disabled people.

Context

Disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori experience higher rates of family and sexual violence (FVSV) than non-disabled people. Yet most mainstream FVSV services are inaccessible due to environmental, institutional, and attitudinal barriers. This exacerbates the risk of disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori experiencing violence as they are less likely to seek help if services are inaccessible.

While there is minimal data to fully understand FVSV service gaps, we know there is a shortage of accessible safe houses. The FVSV workforce also lacks the capability and knowledge to meet disabled people's needs.

The Accessibility Fund supports Te Aorerekura National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence *Shift 5: Towards Safe, Accessible and Integrated Responses*.

Overview – MSD's Accessibility Fund

In 2023 MSD received \$3.419 million to improve the accessibility of mainstream FVSV services and strengthen data collection. MSD launched the Accessibility Fund, a time-limited work programme comprising four main initiatives:

Initiative 1: Designing an **accessibility self-assessment** to assist providers identify their level of accessibility. We also used it as a tool to collect data on the current state of accessibility to FVSV services.

Initiative 2: Awarding **Accessibility Enhancement Grants** to FVSV providers to improve access to premises, digital information and communications.

Initiative 3: Making **safe houses** physically accessible for disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori.

Initiative 4: Increasing FVSV workforce knowledge and capability through disability awareness and response **training** tailored to the FVSV workforce.

Key findings and outcomes

We've obtained key insights into FVSV services and the benefits of investing in accessibility by building a robust evidence base.

Baseline data from the accessibility self-assessments shows that before the Accessibility Fund:

- > **88%** of properties did not have an accessible toilet.
- > **86%** of properties with steps to the front entrance did not have fully accessible ramps.
- > **75%** of providers did not use alternate formats.
- > **66%** of websites were inaccessible.
- > **30%** of providers did not take steps to create an accessible sensory environment.
- > **76%** of providers did not have a disability policy/action plan.
- > **84%** of providers did not offer accessibility training.

Accessibility Fund Outcomes

44 FVSV providers received Enhancement Grants and improved their accessibility, including:

- > **14** providers installed accessible toilets.
- > **11** providers installed accessible ramps.
- > **10** providers translated documents into alternate formats.
- > **24** providers developed accessible websites.
- > **9** providers purchased sensory items e.g., fidget tools, tactile objects, interoception cards, and dimmable lamps.

143 FVSV staff members received disability training, improving their awareness and capability.

After the training...

- > **93%** of participants felt they understood how violence impacts disabled people, **up from 62%**.
- > **92%** could recognise environmental barriers, **up from 48%**.
- > **89%** could recognise attitudinal barriers, **up from 50%**.
- > **88%** could recognise institutional barriers, **up from 44%**.
- > **91%** of participants said the disability training enabled them to more effectively support disabled people.

3 safe houses are now physically accessible for disabled people.

Insights

Key insight



Data shows improving accessibility creates more inclusive and accessible services

Opportunities to increase accessibility



Embed universal accessibility as standard practice



Make all safe houses physically accessible



Implement disability awareness training



Continue building an evidence base

Feedback from grant recipients shows investing in accessibility has a positive impact:

"By removing key physical, digital, and communication barriers, we were able to improve not only the reach of our services but also the quality, responsiveness, and cultural appropriateness of our care."

"The accessibility modifications have had a meaningful impact on our service delivery. They have contributed to a more inclusive and responsive therapeutic environment where clients feel seen, supported, and respected."

(Grant recipients)