

Community Representative to the Benefits Review Committee: Role Description

Benefits Review Committee

The Benefits Review Committee (BRC)¹, provides an informal setting for clients to review decisions made by the Ministry of Social Development before appealing to the Social Security Appeals Authority (SSAA). The process is an important part of ensuring that correct decisions are made by the Ministry on a case by case basis. The Benefits Review Committee is an opportunity for the applicant to explain why they disagree with the decision and for the Committee to take a fresh look at the Ministry's decision.

The role of the Community Representative in the BRC process

Community Representatives are Ministerial appointees who provide community input into the decision making process of the Benefits Review Committee. The Benefits Review Committee considers reviews against decisions made by the Ministry in relation to benefit entitlements.

Community Representatives:

- provide a community perspective to the Benefits Review Committee decision making process
- assist in making decisions on applications for review in accordance with relevant legislation.

The Community Representative is part of a three member panel that make up the Benefits Review Committee. When a client of the Ministry of Social Development submits a Review of Decision (ROD) the Community Representative is required to:

- consider the report to the BRC, which has been written by the original decision maker
- attend the hearing arranged for the client and Case Manager to make representations to the BRC. This can either be done on papers or in person
- consider the case and decide if they should instruct the Ministry to uphold, uphold in part or overturn the decision being reviewed.

In addition to this Community Representatives may:

- chair the hearing of the BRC
- write the report from the BRC and submit it to the appropriate unit of the Ministry.

¹ established under section 10A of the Social Security Act 1964:
<http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/legislation/acts/social-security-act-1964/section-10a-review-of-decisions-of-chief-executive.html>

Frequency of Hearings

Hearings are scheduled to be held at least fortnightly, however as there is a pool of Community Representatives in each region, individual Community Representatives may not be required to sit on every hearing. Each sitting of the committee can take up to a day depending on the number of hearings and the complexity of the cases.

Appointment Period

The position of Community Representative to the Benefits Review Committee is a Ministerial appointment made at the discretion of the Minister for Social Development. This means that the Minister decides who can act as a Community Representative, and for what period of time. The Minister can vary the appointment at any stage.

Competencies and Experience

We are seeking people with the following attributes.

Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can relate to all levels of the wider community• Good experience and knowledge of the wider community• Respects the views, beliefs and cultural perspectives of others.
Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proven ability to chair meetings/hearings• Ability to facilitate hearings• Uses a facilitative approach and a variety of questioning methods to gather information.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good written and oral communication skills• Ability to remain neutral in a hearing setting• Ensures that decisions are made in a fair and transparent manner.
Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approaches problems and decision in a logical manner• Ability to reach sound conclusions and justify decisions.
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of the Social Security Act• Ability to interpret and apply statutes, legislation and other documentation to individual cases• Have a good understanding of the principles of natural justice (ie fairness)• Have a clear understanding of the benefits and supplementary allowances administered under the Social Security Act (1964). Note: While it is not an essential skill, this knowledge is desirable and nominations may be assessed on this area when more than one nominee clearly demonstrates the ability to do the job in all other attributes and competencies.
Misc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respects the privacy and confidentiality of individuals• Displays sensitivity, empathy and respect for others and is ethical and honest.