10 February 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your email of 19 December 2025, requesting information about how the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) determines eligibility, obligations and sanctions.

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.

I am requesting documents that define how MSD records are used to determine eligibility, obligations, or sanctions, and how those determinations persist over time.

Please provide documents that describe:

- *how eligibility decisions are recorded*

Your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as this document does not exist. However, I can confirm that the Ministry records eligibility decisions for assistance on individual client files within the Client Management System (CMS).

As the Ministry stated in the email sent to you on 26 January 2026, the following three bullet points of your request are quite vague, and it is unclear what information you are requesting. Therefore, the Ministry has interpreted these as laid out below.

- *whether determinations compound across time*

This bullet point has been interpreted to mean what effects sanctions have on Ministry clients and how different obligation failures compound over time. The following links contain information on sanctions and benefit obligations:

1. Working age benefit – Effect on sanctions (pdf).
2. www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/index.html

Link 2 takes you to the Ministry's Map website, where information on a client's obligations in relation to financial payments administered by the Ministry can be found. I have not linked each individual benefit and information on its obligations, but I have provided links for Jobseeker Support as an example. The

following links contain information on Jobseeker Support obligations, what happens when a client fails to comply with their obligations, effects of sanctions on assistance, and how long an obligation failure is counted:

3. www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/obligations.html
4. www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/obligations-failures-01.html
5. www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/effect-of-sanctions-on-assistance-01.html
6. www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/counting-previous-obligations-failures-01.html

- *how corrections are handled once outcomes have flowed*

This bullet point has been interpreted to mean information relating to the correction of a decision the Ministry makes, either from an internal review or a Review of Decision (ROD). The following links contain information on this process:

7. www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/feedback-and-complaints/review-of-decisions.html
8. www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/contact-us/review-of-decision/review-of-decision-flow-chart-long-description.html
9. www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/core-policy/reviews-and-appeals/reviews-and-appeals.html

- *how reliance is shared with other agencies*

This bullet point has been interpreted to mean how the Ministry shares information with other government departments/agencies. The following links contain information on data matching/sharing and Approved Information Sharing Agreements (AISAs):

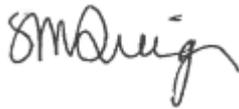10. www.workandincome.govt.nz/about-work-and-income/privacy-notice/sharing-your-information.html
11. www.privacy.org.nz/about-us/information-sharing/information-matching/
12. www.privacy.org.nz/about-us/information-sharing/approved-information-sharing-agreements/

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, 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
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

Working age benefit - Effect of sanctions

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT — TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA — WORK AND INCOME — TE HIRANGA TANGATA

> 🟠 All clients who move into a Red light will have an Orange light during the 5 working days before their sanction is imposed.

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

	Single — Sanctioned client		Sole parent — Sanctioned client		Couple no dependent children Client Fails — Sanctioned client	Non sanctioned partner		Couple No Dependent Children Both Fail — Sanctioned client	Sanctioned partner		Couple Dependent Children Client Fails — Sanctioned client	Non sanctioned partner		Couple Dependent Children Both Fail — Sanctioned client	Sanctioned partner	
Grade 1 sanction	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help
Client has failed obligations for the first time in the last 12 months AND has not recomplied within five working days	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction	Not affected	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction	Not affected	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	🟢 Portion not affected i.e. receives 50%	Not affected	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	Not affected	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	🟢 Portion not affected i.e. receives 50%	Not affected	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	Not affected
Disability allowance	No actions required		No actions required		No actions required			No actions required			No actions required			No actions required		
Winter energy payment	No actions required		No actions required		No actions required			No actions required			No actions required			No actions required		
Grade 2 sanction	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help
Client has failed obligations for the second time in the last 12 months AND has not recomplied within five working days	🔴 Suspended	Suspended	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction	Not affected	🔴 Suspended	🟢 Pay Manually via SBDR in SWIFTT	Pay manually via SBDR in SWIFTT to Non sanctioned partner	🔴 Suspended	🔴 Suspended	Suspended	🔴 0 Rate applied via SWTAR in SWIFTT i.e. 50% to 0%	🟢 Portion not affected i.e. receives 50%	Non sanctioned partner receives their portion	🔴 50 Rate applied via SWTAR in SWIFTT - 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	🔴 50 Rate applied via SWTAR in SWIFTT - 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	Couple receives 50% of total i.e. 25% each
Disability allowance	Pay DA via SBDR in SWIFTT		No actions required		Pay sanctioned client their portion of DA via SBDR in SWIFTT			Pay couple their portions of DA via SBDR in SWIFTT			Pay sanctioned client their portion of DA via SBDR in SWIFTT			Pay couple their portions of DA via SBDR in SWIFTT		
Winter energy payment	No actions required		No actions required		Pay non-sanctioned partner couple's rate of WEP via SBDR in SWIFTT			No actions required			Pay non-sanctioned partner couple's rate of WEP via SBDR in SWIFTT			No actions required		
Grade 3 sanction	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help	Main benefit	Main benefit	Extra help
Client has failed obligations for the third time in the last 12 months OR has not accepted an offer of suitable employment AND has not recomplied within five working days	🔴 Cancelled	Cancelled	🔴 Automatic 50% reduction	Not affected	🔴 Cancelled	🟢 Re-Grant at Half Married Rate	Re-Grant to Non-Sanctioned Partner	🔴 Cancelled	🔴 Cancelled	Cancelled	🔴 0 Rate applied via SWTAR in SWIFTT i.e. 50% to 0%	🟢 Portion not affected i.e. receives 50%	Non sanctioned partner receives their portion	🔴 50 Rate applied via SWTAR in SWIFTT - 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	🔴 50 Rate applied via SWTAR in SWIFTT - 50% reduction of their portion i.e. 50% to 25%	Couple receives 50% of total i.e. 25% each
Disability allowance	Re-Grant DA as stand-alone non-bene		No actions required		Re-Grant DA to sanctioned client (stand-alone non-bene) and/or non-sanctioned partner			Re-Grant DA to couple as stand-alone non-bene			Pay sanctioned client their portion of DA via SBDR in SWIFTT			Pay couple their portions of DA via SBDR in SWIFTT		
Winter energy payment	No actions required		No actions required		Re-Grant WEP to non-sanctioned partner at couple's rate			No actions required			Pay non-sanctioned partner couple's rate of WEP via SBDR in SWIFTT			No actions required		