



29 May 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 4 May 2026 requesting information about the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) provider agreement, contract, or contract schedule for publicly funded Disability Support Services (DSS) placements delivered for under 65-year-olds in aged-care facilities. In a separate email also dated 4 May you requested a copy of the 'MSD DSS Operational Policy: Close in Interest'.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision below.

The DSS Tier Two Service Specification for Community Residential Support Services within Aged Care Facilities for Younger People with Lifelong Disabilities is available on the DSS website: www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/assets/Community-Residential-Support-Services-within-Aged-Care-Facilities-for-Younger-People-with-Lifelong-Disabilities1-v2.pdf.

I have attached a copy of the DSS Operational Policy – Close in Interest. This version of the operational policy was inherited from the Ministry of Health and remains current. DSS will be undertaking a review of this operational policy in the future. Please note that staff names have been marked and withheld as 'out of scope'.

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



Disability Support Services

Operational Policy

Close in Interest

Author:	Out of scope , Contract Relationship Manager, Service Access Team, Disability Support Services
Policy Sponsor:	Out of scope , Manager Service Access Team
Date effective:	
Date of expiry:	
Version:	2
Authorised by:	

Title: Close in Interest		Version: 2	Authorised By: Out of scope , DSS Group Manager	
Effective date: 20/3/17	Expiry date: 19/3/20	Filepath: DSS Admin\Policy\Operational Policies	2 of 5	

Authorisation:

Date:

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OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

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Purpose

The purpose of this operational policy is to define people with disabilities who may be considered close in interest to a person aged over 65 years and affected by the ageing process for the purposes of determining disability support services eligibility.

This policy is for the use of Ministry of Health (Ministry) staff.

Scope

This is a national policy.

Background

There is a group of people under the age of 65 years who have acquired conditions more commonly associated with ageing earlier than the general population, and whose needs are best met by district health boards' (DHBs') integrated health and disability services for older people, rather than by the Ministry of Health's Disability Support Services (DSS).

In 2003, when responsibility for funding disability support services for older people was devolved to DHBs, Cabinet made the decision that:

*'people between 50 and 65 who have been clinically assessed by a district health board and/or needs assessor as "close in interest" to persons aged 65 and over, and who require access to disability support services will be funded by a district health board'*¹

This allowed that group of people access to the more appropriate DHB services.

Service eligibility

The client group assessed against the 'Close in Interest' criteria includes people who:

- present to a Needs Assessment and Service Coordination organisation (NASC) (funded either by the Ministry or a DHB) for the first time between the ages 50 and 65, and
- are assessed as meeting the Government's definition of a 'person with a disability' for the purpose of accessing disability support services [CAB (94) M 3/5 (1a)]²
- and are assessed as needing community based disability support services.

1. 'Close in Interest' Criteria

¹ Cabinet Min (03)5/5

² Since this decision the responsibility for psychiatric and age-related disability has devolved to DHBs.

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People who meet the following criteria are allocated to the DHB Older People's funding stream:

- the person has a disability, which is likely to continue for a minimum of six months and result in the reduction of independent function to the extent that ongoing support is required and:
- either has three or more advanced chronic conditions with multiple co-morbidities
- or has a vulnerable state of health arising from a complex interaction of medical and social problems (is 'frail'); and
- requires integrated health and disability support services and close health management to ensure health is maintained at an optimal level.

The criteria were developed to assist NASCs and DHB clinicians in deciding whether responsibility for funding supports for the person would be allocated to a DHB Older People's or Ministry DSS funding stream.

The DHB determines which funding stream the person is allocated. The decision is usually made by the DHB needs assessor with appropriate clinical input. (Each DHB determines who provides this input).

The assessment process involves the disabled person's, and where appropriate their family/whānau/aiga/welfare guardian's, perspectives on their needs, goals and where these may best be met.

Further information

1. Which NASC makes the assessment when a person first presents between ages 50 and 65?

The Ministry NASC or the DHB NASC may be the first to receive a referral.

The NASC receiving the initial referral screens the referral. Where the information provided is sufficient to clearly indicate the funding stream, the referral is either accepted and an assessment arranged by the organisation receiving the referral or directed to the relevant NASC for that client group.

Where the information provided does not clearly indicate which funding stream the person should be allocated to, the NASC which receives the referral undertakes the initial needs assessment.

Where the outcome of the assessment is that the person appears to fit the 'Close in Interest' criteria and the Ministry NASC carried out the initial assessment, the assessment is forwarded to the DHB NASC. The service coordinator will then review the information provided and seek clinical input to confirm whether this person's support needs should be funded by a DHB.

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If the DHB declines the referral the person may be considered for the Disability Support Services Long-Term Support – Chronic Health Conditions funding stream.

2. *Links to supporting documents and operational policy*

- [Guide to Eligibility for Publicly Funded Services](#)
- [DSS Eligibility Operational Policy](#)

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