



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

15 DEC 2016

On 13 September 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982:

"What is the average waiting time for a face to face appointment with a work and income case manager for the following months (2016) • May • June • July • August. Is this information available for the same months for the previous year?"

On 16 September 2016 you further clarified that the average information covers:

"the time period between when a person would first contact Work and Income and the next available appointment, for example, someone phones and the first available appointment is two days after they make the phone call."

I apologise for the delay in providing you with a response.

The Ministry has target service standards in order to ensure that clients are able to meet with Case Managers in a timely manner. These standards ensure that Contact Centre and Service Centre staff provide a consistent level of service to our clients. An overview of the service standards developed for the appointment types 'Emergency', 'Maintenance' and 'New Business' is outlined below:

- **Emergency Appointments** are for clients applying for emergency assistance and appointments are made within 24 hours of contacting Work and Income. Examples of emergency needs include power cut off, food or non-payment of benefit. For emergency appointments, the required standard is met if the appointment is booked, and the client is seen by the end of the following working day (e.g. a booking is made on Monday and the client is seen by Tuesday).
- **Maintenance Appointments** are for clients who have a change of circumstance, require assistance that is not deemed an emergency, or would like a face to face discussion with a Case Manager. This includes clients who want to make an appointment to complete an annual review. For maintenance appointments, the standard is met if the appointment is booked, and the client is seen by the end of five more working days (e.g. a booking is made on a Monday and the client is seen by the end of the following Monday).

- **New Business Appointments** are for clients applying for benefits and are to have an appointment within two working days of contacting Work and Income. This includes applying for a main benefit such as Jobseeker Support and Sole Parent Support. For new business appointments, the standard is met if the appointment is booked, and the client is seen by the end of two more working days (e.g. a booking is made on Monday and the client is seen by Wednesday).

Note that the Ministry has a number of appointment types however, the three types provided make up the vast majority of appointments.

You will find enclosed three tables which show the average days between a request for an appointment and the appointment itself, broken down by 'Emergency' 'Maintenance' and 'New Business' appointments. Please note the Ministry considers:

- Two days and above is out of standard for emergency appointments. The Ministry records the day an appointment is made as day zero with the following day being day one. As such, some data would appear as being longer than 24 hours for an emergency appointment (e.g. 1.4 days). However, this appointment would still be within the 24 hour timeframe (day zero and day one are both acceptable, day two and above are not).
- Six days and above is out of standard for maintenance appointments.
- Three days and above is out of standard for new business appointments.

Please note the data will not show the number of clients who receive a non-booked appointment because they have presented directly to a Service Centre requiring an urgent emergency appointment and so were seen straight away.

You will find that the information provided shows that for New Business appointments, the average number of days people are waiting for an appointment is above the standard set for this appointment type. It's important to note that these are internal standards and were introduced some time ago to ensure clients are able to be seen by the Ministry as soon as practicable. Although the standard may not always be met, this does not detract from ensuring that the client receives their correct entitlement and payment on time. In many cases, clients will receive a minimum of a week stand-down period and benefit payments are paid one week in arrears.

Appointment standards are regularly monitored and real time data is generated each day on appointment availability. If sites fall out of standard, the Ministry's National Commissioner's office will engage with the regional management team to understand the demands that are affecting the appointment standards, and to come to an agreement on the actions that will be taken to improve the situation. This may include Case Managers contacting clients prior to their appointment. If the need is identified as one that is straightforward the transaction will be completed by phone and the appointment time will be reallocated to another client.

The ability for clients to apply for assistance online is also reducing the number of appointments needed for non-work related support. We've introduced new online services like MyMSD to make it easier for people to keep in touch with us without having to come in for an appointment or to drop off information.

Clients are now able to apply for help with one-off costs for food, school stationery and uniforms and emergency dental work through MyMSD. It saves the time of coming to a site.

Clients can now also book, change and cancel many of their appointments online. Since we introduced this service we've had over 80,000 transactions online.

Other things clients can now do online include declaring wages, checking payment details and updating contact details. By reducing these sort of appointments in sites we'll have more capacity to work with clients with more complex needs that can't be resolved online or over the phone.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter available to the wider public after ten working days. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development's website. Your personal details will be deleted and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response regarding appointment times with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Bound
Deputy Chief Executive, Service Delivery

Table One: Average Days between request and appointment – Emergency

	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16
Auckland	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7
Bay of Plenty	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.3
Canterbury	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.7	2.4	3.0	2.8	2.8
Central	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.5
East Coast	1.7	1.8	1.8	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.7
Nelson	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.7	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.0
Northland	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.3
Southern	1.1	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	2.1	2.2	2.0
Taranaki	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.4	1.5	1.1
Waikato	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.7
Wellington	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.5	1.9	1.7	1.9
Total	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.8

Table Two: Average days between request and appointment – Maintenance

	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16
Auckland	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.7
Bay of Plenty	3.6	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.2
Canterbury	5.9	6.3	6.2	5.8	5.0	5.5	5.8	5.5
Central	4.5	4.8	5.1	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.9	4.5
East Coast	4.8	5.5	5.3	5.6	4.8	5.3	5.6	6.0
Nelson	5.2	5.5	5.0	4.8	4.7	5.3	5.2	5.0
Northland	4.7	5.6	5.6	5.7	5.0	5.2	5.4	5.3
Southern	4.2	4.6	4.6	4.9	4.4	4.6	4.8	5.1
Taranaki	4.4	5.0	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.8	4.9	4.9
Waikato	4.1	4.4	4.6	4.6	3.8	3.9	4.0	4.1
Wellington	4.1	5.0	5.1	5.5	4.5	5.2	5.3	5.4
Total	4.3	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.9

Table Three: Average days between request and appointment – New Business

	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Aug-15	May-16	Jun-16	Jul-16	Aug-16
Auckland	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.9	3.7	4.2	4.5
Bay of Plenty	3.4	4.7	5.7	4.5	4.5	4.5	5.2	5.3
Canterbury	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.0	5.2	5.5	5.7	5.7
Central	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.7	4.9	4.0	3.3
East Coast	4.4	5.0	5.0	5.9	4.9	5.0	5.3	5.6
Nelson	4.5	5.1	5.2	4.3	4.7	5.1	5.3	4.8
Northland	4.6	5.9	6.5	6.4	4.6	5.2	5.3	5.8
Southern	3.2	3.9	5.1	4.6	4.3	4.6	5.8	5.5
Taranaki	4.4	5.2	4.9	4.5	4.8	5.4	5.6	5.0
Waikato	3.9	4.5	5.0	4.7	3.8	4.1	4.5	4.0
Wellington	4.0	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.2	5.5
Total	3.9	4.4	4.7	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.8	4.9

Note

- The data provided only covers booked appointments and doesn't include any instance where a client received a non-booked appointment.
- The average waiting time for an appointment is the sum of working days between the date a client requests an appointment and the appointment date attended, divided by the number of appointments attended for the month in question.
- The days are counted in whole numbers for each client. E.g. if the client books an appointment on Wednesday and attends on Friday, the waiting time for the appointment is 2.0 days.