



11 SEP 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

On 27 June 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many individuals have made complaints of sexual abuse by staff employed by Youthlink?*
- *How many individuals have made complaints of physical abuse by staff employed by Youthlink?*
- *How many of these claims have been accepted by MSD?*
- *What is the total amount Youthlink complainants have received in ex gratia/compensation payments from MSD?*
- *What time periods did these abuse complaints relate to?*
- *Did Youthlink employ an individual that had been dismissed/resigned from MSD employment for allegations of sexual or physical abuse, despite MSD first advising Youthlink of the allegations made against this individual?*
- *Can I also please be provided with any documents relating to former Social Welfare Minister Ann Hercus decision to provide Youthlink with funding in the 1980s and what influence (if any) this ministerial decision had on the Department's investigation of complaints made about Youthlink.*

On 6 July 2018, the Ministry advised you that the first five questions of your request were transferred in part to Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, as they are the agency responsible for managing claims after the year 2007. Additionally, the sixth question of your request was transferred in part to Oranga Tamariki in relation to staff members whose roles transferred from the Ministry of Social Development on 1 April 2017. The last question of your request was transferred in full to Oranga Tamariki as this information is not held by the Ministry but is believed to be held by Oranga Tamariki.

Youthlink Trust was a service provider contracted by the former Child, Youth and Family to house vulnerable and troubled youth. It was established in 1989 and at the end of 2016 all its programmes were transferred to Reconnect Family Services. Further information regarding Reconnect Family Services is available at [www.reconnect.org.nz/about-us/](http://www.reconnect.org.nz/about-us/). The data in this response also includes Youthlink's precursors The Youthline Trust, The Glade, Rowan House and Felix Donnelly College.

Please note that the data used to calculate the figures provided has been manually collated and therefore is predisposed to a level of human error. Some of the data used to calculate these figures is not ordinarily used for reporting purposes and therefore are not subject to any quality assurance processes to validate the quality of the data.

For the sake of clarity, I will address each of your questions in turn.

- *How many individuals have made complaints of sexual abuse by staff employed by Youthlink?*
- *How many individuals have made complaints of physical abuse by staff employed by Youthlink?*

As at 31 July 2018, the Ministry has received claims from 40 claimants alleging physical and/or sexual abuse by a staff member employed at Youthlink. Of these, 18 alleged both physical and sexual abuse, 14 physical abuse only, and 8 sexual abuse only.

- *How many of these claims have been accepted by MSD?*

The Ministry accepts allegations of abuse when an allegation is reasonable to accept, for the purpose of resolving claims. In some cases, for example under the Fast Track offers made in 2015 and 2016, the Ministry has accepted allegations with very little testing of whether or not the alleged abuse occurred. Of the claims alleging physical and/or sexual abuse by staff, 20 have not yet been assessed, five have been accepted resulting in payments being made, fast track payments have been made for eight claims, six were not accepted and one was referred to Youthlink as the claimant was not in MSD care at the time of the placement.

- *What is the total amount Youthlink complainants have received in ex gratia/compensation payments from MSD?*

The Ministry is unable to provide you with the amount paid specifically related to allegations about Youthlink, as claims often include multiple allegations about various providers, carers and/or services. Payments for claims cannot be broken down into specific elements. However, the Ministry can advise that as at 31 July 2018 a total of \$479,000 has been paid to 21 claimants whose claims included an allegation about Youthlink. These claims included allegations about the care provided by Youthlink that were wider than just physical or sexual abuse.

- *What time periods did these abuse complaints relate to?*

The allegations received by the Ministry relate to placements made at Youthlink and its predecessors The Youthline Trust, The Glade, Rowan House and Felix Donnelly College, between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 2007.

- *Did Youthlink employ an individual that had been dismissed/resigned from MSD employment for allegations of sexual or physical abuse, despite MSD first advising Youthlink of the allegations made against this individual?*

When a staff member leaves the Ministry, the Ministry does not actively request information about who their future employer may be. To review whether information about any former staff who went on to be employed by Youthlink, Ministry staff would need to manually review thousands of employment files to ascertain if we hold this information.

As such, I am unable to provide you with this information, and your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

It is standard recruitment practice for reference checks to be sought from previous employers. Feedback about a former staff member's performance with the Ministry is likely to be given to potential employers during reference checks and I expect that any concerns about their performance during their tenure with the Ministry would have been previously recorded in their Ministry employment file and raised during the reference check.

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

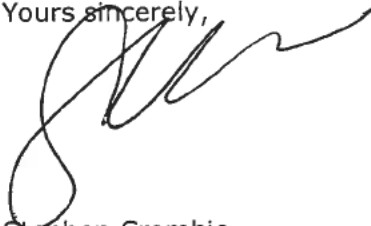
- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public shortly. 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 with us, please feel free to contact [OIA\\_Requests@msd.govt.nz](mailto:OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz).

If you are not satisfied with this response, 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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Crombie  
**Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate Solutions**