
From: Jasmine Lindsay Out of scope
Sent: Thursday, 20 January 2022 12:36 PM
To: Out of scope @msd.govt.nz>; Out of scope
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Cc: Brian Coffey Out of scope Ken Bowater
Out of scope ODI (MSD) <Office_for_Disability_Issues@msd.govt.nz>;
Shaun McMaster Out of scope Keitha Cathro-Mills
Out of scope
Subject: ODI Input - Care in the Community welfare approach

Kia ora Out of scope and Out of scope,

Thank you for inviting the Office for Disability Issues to meet with you regarding the welfare response.

In the current COVID-19 outbreak, disabled people have been disproportionately affected, and are more clinically vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 due to underlying health inequities.

Data collection

We are supportive of any measures that improve data collection on disabled people's experiences and outcomes as part of the Care in Community model. The disability community will want assurances that government is monitoring their needs, and is responding to and resolving any issues raised. There needs to be a commitment to implement robust and ongoing monitoring to provide systematic insights on the issues for disabled people and their whānau, and how these will be addressed. If there is a commitment to disability data collection, it will be important that the community is engaged on the collection.

Continuity of supports

Disabled people fear losing their supports if they need to self-isolate. Disabled people need to be able to access appropriate support services for their needs eg personal care and food preparation while being protected from COVID-19. We continue to hear anecdotal reports of disabled people and their family/whānau struggling to access carers and other supports. This issue was [highlighted in the media](#) earlier this month. Border closures (as migrant workers contribute significantly to this workforce) and increases in case numbers may further impact these shortages.

Communications

Ensuring accessibility of communications and support will be critical to supporting disabled people to self-isolate, including the translation of information into accessible formats, and ensuring that the information available is targeted at disabled people (rather than being a direct translation of the general information provided).

Additional financial support

Disabled people are significantly more likely to earn lower incomes than non-disabled people. Disabled people and carers make up approximately 50% of the total number of benefit recipients. The Household Labourforce Survey, June 2021 noted the average median income across all sources was \$411 per week for disabled people, compared to \$809 for non-disabled people.

As disabled people are clinically vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 due to underlying health inequities and more likely to earn lower incomes, it will be important that cost is not a barrier for disabled people who need to access PPE, RATs and appropriate face coverings. It is also known that the impact of COVID-19 is greater, with the death rate being significantly higher. Additional financial supports may be required to enable greater access and improve outcomes.

Disabled young people have reported to ODI that additional methods of communication and entertainment eg free internet and devices would assist with managing self-isolation more effectively. *Measuring inequality for disabled New Zealanders: 2018* reports that across all ages, disabled people are consistently less likely than non-disabled people to have access to the internet or a cell phone. The largest gaps in telecommunications access between disabled and non-disabled people were seen in internet access for those aged from their forties to their sixties. *Digital inclusion and wellbeing in New Zealand (2019)* reports 2018 NZCVS data, which showed 17% of disabled people indicate having no internet access, compared to the full sample where just 5% have no internet access.

\$3 million in one-off seed funding was provided by MSD in late 2020/early 2021 to help disabled people around New Zealand stay connected and access support in their communities. 16 organisations received funding for initiatives that help disabled people to access support, be independent and keep in touch with their friends and whānau in innovative and sustainable ways. There may be further opportunities for MSD to target funding to support disabled people who are required to isolate to access digital devices and/or internet connections.

Improved connectivity will also enable better engagement with health services in regards to COVID-19 symptom management, mental health support and general isolation.

Access to food

Ensuring supports continue to be available for both financial access to food, and delivery options (for people who are required to isolate but don't have friends or family who can assist with dropping off groceries) will be important to support disabled people to self-isolate. During lockdowns, supermarkets made priority access slots available, however these were in high demand and anecdotally could not keep up with the demand from disabled people and others who required them.

Housing

It will be critical that disabled people with access needs who are unable to isolate in their homes, can access accessible housing options, and that there will be accessible options available. The location and design of these will need to reflect any additional personal care needs/support staff requirements.

Please let us know if you require any further information.

Ngā mihi
ODI team

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