

Aide-mémoire



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Meeting

Date: 17 November 2021 Security Level: IN CONFIDENCE

For: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and
Employment

File Reference: A13747439

Report number: REP/21/11/1258

Economic supports under the new COVID Protection Framework

Meeting details 7pm-7:30pm, Thursday 18 November

Expected attendees
Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Finance
Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and
Employment
Hon Michael Wood, Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety
Hon David Parker, Minister of Revenue

Meeting Purpose
The purpose of this meeting is to agree several changes to economic support payments through the transition from the Alert Level Framework (ALF) to the COVID Protection Framework (CPF), and to discuss the COVID-19 work programme.

Background
Cabinet has agreed to replace the ALF with the CPF. Under the CPF, the testing and self-isolation approach will be more targeted with less testing requirements and shorter self-isolation periods.
The Minister of Finance has indicated the Wage Subsidy will not be available for businesses in the COVID Protection Framework.
s9(2)(f)(iv)

Key issues
Treasury and MSD propose a single weekly payment for people required to self-isolate for four or more days
If approved, LSS would be changed from a fortnightly to a weekly payment to businesses with employees who are required to self-isolate for four or more days and cannot work from home during this time. The adapted LSS scheme will be known as COVID-19

Leave Support (CLS). s6(c)

s9(2)(f)(iv)

s9(2)(f)(iv)

(the CLS) is expected to

reduce confusion for employers. Through the lifetime of the wage subsidy, LSS and STAP, some applicants have confused the support payments. Clear communications will remain an important part of effective implementation for the CLS.

Demand for CLS is expected to be high and s9(2)(f)(iv)

s9(2)(f)(iv)

, payments and applications will be made weekly rather than fortnightly. Modelling suggests that COVID will spread throughout Aotearoa under the new CPF, so we expect demand for CLS to be much higher than it is for LSS or STAP.

The application processing solution for CLS must be developed in a short period of time so it is operational for the transition to CPF. We are aiming to have the system operational for 10 December, with Wage Subsidy Payment #8 ending on 9 December. Any changes to the proposed settings, beyond what is outlined in the paper, may affect the implementation timeframe. MSD is unable to make further substantive changes to its system from mid-December to mid-January due to reduced staffing levels over the Christmas period.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

s6(c)

s6(c)

Further information

s9(2)(f)(iv)

Next steps

If the proposed changes are approved, MSD will work to operationalise the new CLS system so applications can be processed from 10 December, subject to further decisions on

s9(2)(f)(i)

MSD and Treasury will work through the implications of the in-principle s9(2)(f)(iv) and its effects on the transition to the new CLS payment.

MSD will continue to work with the Ministry of Health and Office of the Privacy Commissioner to determine if it is possible to s9(2)(f)(iv)

Further advice on the CLS system, including its integrity, will be provided in March 2022.

Author: (Out of scope), Policy Analyst, Employment Policy)

Responsible manager: (Edward May, Manager, Employment Policy)



Report

Date: 30 November 2021 **Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE

To: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and
Employment

Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response

OSCAR Programmes under the COVID-19 Protection Framework

Purpose of the report

- 1 This report advises you on the impact and risks of the current vaccination requirements for Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) workers and seeks your agreement to progress amending the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021.

Recommended actions

For both Ministers Hipkins and Sepuloni, it is recommended that you:

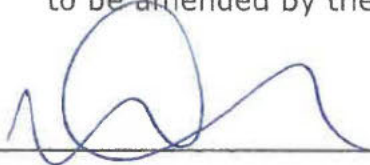
- 1 **note** without amendments to the Vaccinations Order, OSCAR providers operating outside school grounds with unvaccinated staff will be able to operate under the COVID-19 Protection Framework
- 2 **note** there are significant safety risks in allowing OSCAR providers with unvaccinated staff to operate, particularly as children and other attendees are not required to be vaccinated to attend these services
- 3 **agree** to progress amending the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 to fully align OSCAR programmes with the Education public health measures by requiring all staff to be vaccinated

agree / disagree

Hon Chris Hipkins

agree / disagree
Hon Carmel Sepuloni

4 **note** the Ministry of Health has indicated the Vaccinations Order is unlikely to be amended by the end of 2021



Melissa Cathro
Policy Manager
Social Development, Child and Youth

30 / 11 / 21

Date

Hon Chis Hipkins
Minister for COVID-19 Response

Date



Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Social Development and
Employment

7 / 12 / 21

Date

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Cabinet agreed to the vaccination of the education workforce to help increase the protections for children and young people who cannot be vaccinated

- 2 On 18 October 2021, Cabinet agreed to reopen OSCAR programmes provided on school premises (on-site providers), subject to the same vaccination, testing requirements, and public health controls that apply to schools and early learning services [CAB 21-MIN-0422 refers]. The decision to treat OSCAR programmes and educational services in the same way was to prioritise the safety of children and young people and to enable parents to return to work.
- 3 There is a strong public health rationale for making it mandatory for the education workforce to be vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines protect an individual from more serious illness if they contract COVID-19, help prevent people from becoming infected, and/or reduce COVID-19 transmission.
- 4 A Vaccinations Order was necessary for the Education sector, in part, as the use of COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates (CVCs) is prohibited because children under the age of 12 are not eligible to be vaccinated. They would be prevented from attending school if CVCs were required. Young people between the ages of 12 and 18 were amongst the last group of New Zealanders to become eligible for the vaccination at the beginning of September 2021 and are less likely to be vaccinated than adults. By making it mandatory for the education workforce to be vaccinated, we will be increasing the protections for children and young people that cannot be vaccinated.

The current Vaccinations Order only mandates vaccinations for staff of on-site OSCAR providers

- 5 Only OSCAR providers on school premises (on-site providers) were covered by the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 amendments for the Education sector.
- 6 On-site providers were included in the mandate to maintain consistency in safety requirements in schools and support childcare responsibilities as parents return to work in the easing of Alert Level Restrictions.
- 7 Staff in off-site providers are not obliged to be vaccinated and will be able to open under the COVID-19 Protection Framework if the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 is not amended before 3 December 2021.

We propose that the Vaccinations Order should be amended to include all OSCAR providers

- 8 The Ministry of Education's (MOE) guidance, which assumes all teaching and education staff are vaccinated, may not be appropriate for off-site OSCAR providers with unvaccinated staff. Based on public health advice from the

Ministry of Health (MOH), the safest way for OSCAR programmes to operate under the CPF is for the providers to comply with *all* elements of the Education sector's settings, including vaccinations.

- 9 A 29 November 2021 public health assessment indicated that OSCAR providers who do not follow Education settings (ie with unvaccinated staff) will need to align with the settings in the CPF.

Under the new vaccination framework, OSCAR providers can complete a risk assessment to determine whether it is reasonable to expect their staff to be vaccinated

- 10 Relying on providers to undertake their own risk assessments may not lead to the conclusion they need to be vaccinated. There is little guidance on how to do the risk assessments. Some providers may consider themselves within the scope of the vaccination framework (e.g. as a "close-proximity service") but equally, providers may choose not to get vaccinated if they do not identify with the close-proximity service definition.
- 11 Overall, inconsistencies or certainty on the vaccination status of staff using the vaccine framework will likely impact public confidence in the safety of OSCAR operations and place children at greater risk of infection.

Without amending the Vaccinations Order, we cannot guarantee that OSCAR providers with unvaccinated staff will be able to operate safely

- 12 The Vaccinations Order is the best way to ensure adults in the OSCAR sector are operating safely for a vulnerable population that cannot be vaccinated. However, MSD does not have a legislative mandate to prevent OSCAR providers from opening if their staff are not vaccinated. Until we have a legislative framework that mandates vaccinations for all providers, MSD will need to allow all OSCAR providers to self-assess whether they can reopen from 3 December 2021.

We have developed interim settings to support certainty for OSCAR providers, but these settings carry public health risks for children and young people who cannot be vaccinated

- 13 At a minimum, OSCAR providers must follow all guidance for the Education sector, with a few differences to facilitate easy identification and contact tracing [CAB 21-MIN-0422 refers]. Appendix One includes an A3 document with key information that MOE has distributed to the Education sector.
- 14 OSCAR providers have continued to seek certainty from MSD on if, and how they will operate under the CPF.
- 15 Officials have prepared guidance to support OSCAR providers to align with Education settings in all other public health aspects.

16 The proposed settings are:

Green	Business as usual – aligned with MOE settings
Orange	Business as usual – aligned with MOE settings
Red	OSCAR providers must operate in 'groupings' of attendees that align with the minimum staff:child ratio ¹

17 We have discussed these settings with the OSCAR Network and its Board has indicated they are comfortable with the approach.

18 MSD has started communicating these settings to providers ahead of the shift to the CPF on 3 December 2022.

Next steps

19 Minimising the public safety risk unvaccinated staff pose to children will require amendments to the Vaccinations Order as soon as possible.

20 We recommend you agree that we progress amending the Vaccinations Order, noting that MOH has indicated this may not be feasible until early 2022.

File ref: REP/21/11/1308

Author: Out of scope, Graduate Policy Analyst, Child & Youth Policy and Out of scope, Policy Analyst, Child & Youth Policy

Responsible manager: Melissa Cathro, Policy Manager, Child & Youth Policy

¹ This means on-site providers must operate with a 10:1 student supervisor ratio, and off-site providers must operate with an 8:1 student supervisor ratio. At least one other supervising adult must also be present in all situations to effectively supervise children.

Public Health Measures are applied across all CPF settings



Basic hygiene

Basic hygiene measures include good hand hygiene, cough, and sneeze etiquette, avoid touching your face, and regularly clean and disinfect surfaces.



Contact tracing

Schools are required to display QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App. They must also have other contact tracing systems in place, including an attendance register and visitor register.



Vaccination

Getting vaccinated is a key step to gain more protection against the virus. From 2 January 2022, only fully vaccinated staff and support people can have contact with children and students.



If you are sick - stay home and get tested

If you have cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms, stay home. Call your doctor or Healthline on **0800 358 5453** for advice about getting tested. Staff are to observe children on arrival, checking for symptoms. Those presenting as unwell will be asked to go home or arrange for parents or caregivers to come and pick up.



Ventilation

Indoor spaces should be well ventilated, for example by opening windows, doors, and any vents. If mechanical ventilation is used, make sure the ventilation system is regularly maintained.

Case management across all CPF settings



Cases of COVID-19 in a school will continue to be managed across the framework. Schools will work with the Ministry of Education, following public health guidance, to identify who else may need to self-isolate and get tested. Contact tracing systems will support this process. Letter templates and other supports will be provided, to assist with communications to the community.



Closing schools on site is an unlikely option at all colours of the framework. However, it may be considered where there is a high volume of cases in a school.



Cases in school hostels will be managed directly by public health, as there is a greater risk of spread in a hostel, than there is in a school setting.

Additional mitigations at each CPF setting

GREEN

Schools and kura are **OPEN** for on site learning for all students.



Face coverings are encouraged but not required.



Children with complex medical needs are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. Parents, caregivers and students will need to work with the school to develop a plan to support attendance on site.

ORANGE

Schools and kura are **OPEN** for on site learning for all students.



Face coverings are required on school transport for ākonga aged 12 and up.

Face coverings are encouraged but not required indoors at school.



Children with complex medical needs are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. Parents, caregivers and students will need to work with the school to develop a plan to support attendance on site.



Staff are able to work across more than one group/class of students within the school.

Staff such as **itinerant music teachers and relief teachers** will be able to work across different schools.



Curriculum related activities - Large activities with students, if they are to go ahead, should take place in well-ventilated areas or outdoors.



Non-curriculum related events may only go ahead if a vaccination certificate is required. If bringing others on site, including parents and caregivers, any general rules for events applicable at the time will apply.

RED

Schools and kura are **OPEN** for on site learning for all students.



Face coverings are required:

- for all ākonga Years 4 and up when indoors or in close contact with others
- for staff working to provide or support the provisions of education for Years 4 and up
- on school transport for all ākonga aged 12 and up.



Curriculum related activities - Large activities with students should not go ahead unless held outdoors.



Non-curriculum related events should be limited and may only go ahead if a vaccination certificate is required.



No external students on site for non-curriculum related inter-school activities.



Essential support services and agencies such as **learning support service may be on site**. Minimise attendance on site for non-essential services as much as possible.



No non-essential visitors on site.



Children with complex medical needs, can seek advice from their health professional about whether it is appropriate to come to school. Parents, caregivers and students will need to work with the school to develop a plan to support attendance on site.



Support for off site learning will be provided for those who are advised to remain at home.

Report



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Date: 3 December 2021

**Security
Level:**

IN CONFIDENCE

To: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and
Employment

COVID-19 Protection Framework welfare response - proposed reporting approach

Purpose of the report

- 1 To provide an update on our proposed reporting approach to monitor the delivery of welfare support to people in self-isolation. This report supports a discussion at the MSD Officials meeting on Monday 6 December.

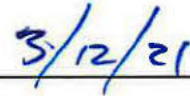
Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

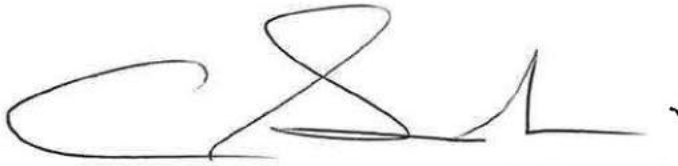
- 1 **note** we are developing a reporting approach to monitor the delivery of welfare support under the COVID-19 Protection Framework and will provide the first iteration of reporting to your office on Wednesday 15 December and you may want to forward this on to relevant Ministers
- 2 **note** weekly reporting will also be provided the Ministry of Health, The Treasury, and the Caring for Communities Chief Executive's group
- 3 **note** we are engaging with the Ministry of Health to determine and deliver combined reporting requirements for the Care in the Community Model
- 4 **note** this reporting approach will inform Cabinet and joint Minister report back requirements on the implementation of, and oversight arrangements for, the COVID-19 Protection Framework welfare response.



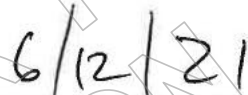
Rob Hodgson
Group General Manager
Insights MSD



Date



Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Social Development and
Employment



Date

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Background

- 2 With the transition into the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF), people with COVID-19 may be able to self-isolate at home. MSD is coordinating welfare services to people with wellbeing needs in self-isolation, to ensure they are safe and supported.
- 3 MSD are developing a reporting approach to monitor the delivery of this welfare support, which includes high-level metrics. This reporting complements other metrics developed by the Ministry of Health (MoH), which focus on the health aspects of the Care in the Community Model.
- 4 This reporting is intended to enable oversight of how the welfare support approach is being delivered, by providing timely information on implementation, what support is provided to people with wellbeing needs, and the level of funding spent.
- 5 More detailed operational reporting is also being developed to support and monitor the delivery of services at the national, regional, and local level.

We are developing a summary dashboard, to provide a high-level view of the CPF welfare response

- 6 We are developing a summary dashboard, which is designed to provide a high-level view of who is accessing welfare support, their needs, and the types of supports and services provided.
- 7 A detailed list of measures that will be reported in this dashboard is attached as Appendix One. These measures are still in draft at this stage, as we are currently confirming data availability and timeframes. Where possible, a number of these measures will be disaggregated by location and ethnicity.
- 8 We are taking a pragmatic approach to developing this reporting, initially focusing on data that is already available. Our intention is to further refine this reporting over time, as the service model evolves, we better understand data needs, and more information becomes available.
- 9 From early next year, we will be able to include more detailed information on support delivered by Community Connectors, including the type of support provided, the number of people supported, and workload per Connector. The tool to collect this information is currently being designed. In the interim, reporting on Community Connectors will include information reporting weekly on the number of households engaged with and the total amount spent per provider.
- 10 There are some important limitations to note around what information can be reported:
 - Because of data sharing arrangements, we cannot collect identifiable information from community-based providers. This limits our ability to report on whether an individuals' needs were met or the timeliness of the service response they received.

- We are also not able to report demographic information for people receiving welfare support through providers.
 - Provider reporting will cover the total number of people supported, rather than unique clients, which would lead to some duplication.
 - Reporting will not cover people who are referred directly to providers from the health system, rather than coming through MSD. This means the true number of people being supported by providers may be greater than our reporting. This is expected to have a greater impact on our reporting initially, but this will decrease over time as the referral process becomes better established.
 - We are currently determining whether reporting on people with disabilities is possible, but any information will not be available on day one of implementation.
- 11 A number of these reporting limitations are consistent with other cross-government reporting, including information on provider support produced by Te Puni Kōkiri on the Whānau Ora COVID-19 Response.
 - 12 Our intention is to provide the first iteration of this reporting to your office on Wednesday 15 December. We propose to provide this report on a weekly basis thereafter, except for two weeks over the December holiday period (last report on 22 December 2021, reporting resuming on 12 January 2022)¹. We will also work with your office to determine if any information is required on a more regular basis.
 - 13 We recommend forwarding this reporting to other Ministers with an interest in the delivery of welfare support, including the Ministers of Finance, Health, COVID-19 Response, Children, Māori Development and Housing. We will also provide reporting to other agencies, including the Ministry of Health and The Treasury, along with the Caring for Communities Chief Executive's group.

We are engaging with the Ministry of Health to understand what shared reporting will be required

- 14 Because the welfare system response is integrated within the MoH-led COVID-19 Care in the Community Model, we are currently engaging with MoH officials to produce some combined high-level reporting.
- 15 We anticipate needing to provide information to MoH on a weekly basis, which will be a sub-set of the high-level metrics reported in the summary dashboard. Initial discussion suggests these metrics will include the total number of people receiving welfare support, the number of referrals received from MoH, the number of referrals assessed by MSD as low or higher need, the total number referred to providers, and the total number of hardship grants made by MSD.

¹ Note these timing arrangements are subject to change.

- 16 Work underway to develop combined reporting is also referenced in a Cabinet paper MoH are currently preparing on health system readiness and preparation for the Care in the Community Model. This paper is likely to be considered at the Social Wellbeing Committee on 15 December.
- 17 In addition to these weekly metrics, some key information could also be requested by MoH on a more regular basis – for example, the total number of people receiving welfare support at a point in time.

Our reporting approach will also inform Cabinet and joint Minister report back requirements on the CPF welfare approach

- 18 Cabinet has invited the Minister of Housing and yourself to jointly report back to Cabinet in December 2021 on the implementation of the welfare and housing approaches under the CPF [CAB-21-MIN-0493 refers].
- 19 You will receive a separate report providing more detail on the proposed scope of this report back, which will also be discussed in the 6 December officials meeting.
- 20 In addition to the Cabinet report, officials have also been directed to report back to the Minister of Finance and yourself on the reporting, governance, and accountability systems that will support the welfare approach in December [CAB-21-MIN-0493 refers]. We are currently engaging with Treasury officials to understand expectations around this report back and ensure our proposed reporting approach provides the necessary oversight of expenditure and financial controls.
- 21 A key issue to work through is the availability and timeliness of our reporting on Community Connectors and other provider-led forms of support. As noted, there are limitations on the level of information we can collect for these types of services, and some of the required data collection mechanisms are still be designed, meaning information will not be available immediately.

Next steps

- 22 If required, we can provide a mock-up of the proposed summary dashboard to your office next week, once data availability is confirmed. We can also update your office on the combined reporting approach with MoH once these requirements are finalised.
- 23 In addition to this summary reporting, we are also developing operational dashboards to use internally and to support Regional Leadership Groups to understand the level and type of demand for welfare support in their area.

Appendix

24 Appendix one – detailed list of measures

REP/21/12/1333

Author: (Mya Liston-Lloyd, Principal Analyst, System Performance)

Responsible manager: (Rob Hodgson, Group General Manager, Insights MSD)

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Type	#	Measure²	Availability
Overall	1.1	Total number of people receiving welfare support ³ (cumulative #)	WED 15 Dec
	1.2	Number of referrals received from MoH (weekly #)	WED 15 Dec
	1.3	Number of people referred from MoH who are currently receiving other support from MSD, by type of support	WED 15 Dec
	1.4	Average number of people in household associated with referral (cumulative and weekly #)	WED 15 Dec
	1.5	COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme applications, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of applications received (weekly #) - Total applications approved (cumulative #) - Total paid (cumulative #) 	WED 15 Dec
Needs assessment/ service pathway	2.1	Number of referrals from MoH assessed by MSD as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - those triaged as 'low need' (cumulative and weekly #) - those triaged as 'higher need' (cumulative and weekly #) 	WED 15 Dec
	2.2	Identified welfare needs by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food - Medical needs - Accommodation - Caregiving needs - Safety - Mental health 	WED 15 Dec

		- Other (precise categories tbc)	
	2.3	Number referred to providers (cumulative and weekly #)	WED 15 Dec
Timeliness of response	3	Percentage of referrals from MoH contacted by MSD within 24 hours, 48 hours, or longer (weekly #)	WED 15 Dec
Support provided by MSD	4.1	Hardship support provided by MSD, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total \$ granted (cumulative and weekly #) - Number of grants (cumulative and weekly #) - Unique people supported (cumulative and weekly #) 	WED 15 Dec
	4.2	Type of hardship support provided (cumulative and weekly #), by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food - Accommodation related - Medical and associated costs - Other (precise categories tbc) 	WED 15 Dec
Community connectors ⁴	5.1	Number of connector interactions (cumulative and weekly #)	~Early 2022
	5.2	Types of supports provided (cumulative, weekly and per interaction), by (precise categories tbc)	~Early 2022
	5.3	\$ of support provided by types of support provided (cumulative and per interaction)	~Early 2022

² All measures are specific to people receiving welfare support through the COVID-19 Protection Framework (ie, they exclude other forms of MSD welfare support).

³ Excludes direct referrals that do not come through MSD.

⁴ Interim reporting on Community Connectors will include the weekly number of households engaged with and the total amount spent per provider.

	5.4	Number of people in household supported (adults/children)	~Early 2022
Provider food support	6.1	% increase in food parcel demand (number of food parcels provided compared to those in a 'normal' week), by those in self-isolation or not.	WED 15 Dec
	6.2	Total \$ of MSD funding for food, by provider and region (cumulative #)	WED 15 Dec
Community Awareness and Preparedness fund	7	Total \$ provided, by community organisations and region (cumulative #) ⁵	WED 15 Dec
Provider baseline increase	8	Total \$ provided, by provider and region (cumulative #)	Day 30
Provider regional funding	9	Total \$ provided, by region (cumulative #)	Day 30
Provider capability funding	10	Total \$ provided, by region (cumulative #)	Day 30
Housing	11	Number of EH clients in self-isolation (cumulative and weekly #)	WED 15 Dec

⁵ Only applies to funding of \$10,000 or greater.

Aide-mémoire



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Cabinet paper

Date: 10 December 2021 **Security Level:** Cabinet Sensitive

For: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and
Employment

**Report
number:** REP/21/12/1368

Cabinet paper on the COVID-19 Protection Framework

**Cabinet
Committee** Cabinet

Date of meeting 13 December 2022

Minister Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister for Social Development and
Employment

Proposal In the event that a localised lockdown is implemented in
part of the country and economic support is required over
the 2021/22 Christmas holiday period, Ministers with the
Power to Act require the ability to call on a Wage Subsidy
scheme, to support businesses to retain their employees.

Our advice **MSD's focus is on supporting clients through the
Christmas period, as well as ramping up support for
those exposed to COVID-19**

- MSD is forecasting increased demand for MSD services over the Christmas period, as is the norm, including food, hardship support, housing and accommodation, employment, and income support.
- Unlike last Christmas, MSD is also delivering on its priority work programme which relates to

COVID-19. The anticipated demand is forecast to rise over the same period in line with the number of positive COVID-19 cases expected to rise. This work programme includes:

- increased numbers of COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme applications, which has moved from a fortnightly to a weekly payment as of 10 December 2021
- prioritising the Care in the Community Welfare Response, of which MSD is leading the coordination of the national response with other agencies, supporting people to have their welfare needs met while they self-isolate at home with COVID-19
- continue to deliver the Short-Term Absence Payment for people awaiting a COVID-19 test result.
- The eighth payment for the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy August 2021 scheme has also now closed, with MSD processing remaining applications.

There is likely to be significant impacts on MSD if a wage subsidy over the Christmas period is required

- MSD have indicated significant concerns about setting up and operating a new WSS payment over the Christmas period.
- If required to do so, MSD is not able to provide a clear timeframe for delivering a new scheme. This, in part is driven by the uncertainty of when a localised lockdown might be needed over the holiday period, MSD's period of no technical change to reduce operational risk and stand down of critical resources during this period.
- Standing up a new wage subsidy would require 143 FTE (as well as 33 FTE from Inland Revenue). These staff would be required for processing applications as well as responding to calls.

Given timeframes, delivery would be limited to the broad high-level settings that MSD has previously administered

- MSD understands that Ministers are seeking guidance on economic support to be available under a localised lockdown situation, similar to the example of the Section 70 notice issued for northern Hauraki.¹
- MSD would not be able to develop upfront controls that would support targeting the subsidy to eligible businesses or sole traders impacted by a localised lockdown.
- To meet the timeframes expected over the holiday period, any new WSS would be limited to the broad high-level settings that MSD has previously administered including payment rates, the duration of payment, eligibility criteria, and integrity controls. A new comparator period for the revenue test also needs to be determined.

Policy settings also need to be confirmed before design and implementation can start

- Cabinet would need to agree to the policy settings to trigger the new WSS before the operational settings could be worked through.
- MSD would need some time to build a new system, given limited technical resources to setup during this time. These constraints exist across the business and there is a risk that MSD may not be able to deliver a new WSS in the anticipated timeframe of Ministers.

This work would also be contingent upon the availability of Inland Revenue

- Standing up a new wage subsidy also requires support from Inland Revenue (IR) to help validate
-

¹ On 21 September 2021, The Director-General of Health issued a section 70 order under the COVID-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 requiring residents of the northern Hauraki area to self-isolate for a period of time

application details to confirm payment is being made to the correct people.

- There would be operational implications for IR to support the delivery of a new WSS over this period. This includes having staff coverage.
- MSD is yet to receive confirmation that IR would be able to support the delivery of a new WSS over this period.

There are other supports available to support people who need to self-isolate due to COVID-19

- Other supports, such as the Care in the Community Welfare Response and Leave Support Scheme, will still be available for those self-isolating due to exposure to COVID-19.

- s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]

Author: Mana Williams-Eade, DCE Advisor, Service Delivery

Responsible manager: Anoanoa'i Siaki, Director, Service Delivery DCE Office

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