



Tēnā koe

I would like to extend my apologies for the delay in responding to your request for information.

On 28 January 2022, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. What training do workers on the Covid-19 Welfare Phone Line receive? Please provide copies of training materials/manuals*
- 2. Please provide copies of any scripts, checklists etc workers use when making/receiving calls on the welfare phone line.*
- 3. How many referrals have been made to date to Police, Oranga Tamariki, mental health services? (please break down by agency)*
- 4. Where there are known or suspected instances of domestic violence, how are these logged and what action is taken?*
- 5. How many instances of domestic violence have been logged by welfare line staff?*
- 6. Where there are known or suspected instances of self-harm, how are these logged and what action is taken?*
- 7. How many instances of self-harm have been logged by welfare line staff?*
- 8. How many people are employed to work on the Covid-19 Welfare Phone Line?*
- 9. What is the average number of calls each worker will make/take per day?*
- 10. How many people have been supported via the welfare line to date?*



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

- 1. What training do workers on the Covid-19 Welfare Phone Line receive?  
Please provide copies of training materials/manuals*
- 2. Please provide copies of any scripts, checklists etc workers use when  
making/receiving calls on the welfare phone line.*

All staff on the Covid-19 Welfare phone line are formally trained. 769 Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) and 218 staff from Centralised Services and Integrity and Debt have received this training. The training was 1.5 hours in duration, consisting of 45 minutes of self-directed training on Hiya (a Ministry knowledge base for CSRs) followed by a 45-minute virtual group session with Capability Developers (CDs). This virtual group session had allowed staff to ask questions and CDs to check staff understanding.

This training was scheduled in groups. The first groups were trained before the Covid-19 Welfare line went live. The Ministry continues to train groups as call volumes require.

There are several measures in place to give ongoing support to staff on the Covid-19 Welfare line: there is a chat group, CDs and Service Managers are available on all sites to answer further questions, and Service Managers monitor staff calls and deliver feedback to staff accordingly.

Please find enclosed the following documents, which are used for training purposes for staff on the Covid-19 Welfare phone line:

- *Omicron Service Response*
- *Approach for Self-Harm*
- *Family Violence Intervention Programme and Historical Claims*

You will note that the names and contact information for some individuals in the *Omicron Service Response* have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information.

- 3. How many referrals have been made to date to Police, Oranga Tamariki,  
mental health services? (please break down by agency)*

The Ministry cannot determine which referrals made to external agencies were made by staff members working on the Covid-19 Welfare phone line without substantial manual collation. As such, this portion of your request is refused



under section 18(f) of the 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.

*4. Where there are known or suspected instances of domestic violence, how are these logged and what action is taken?*

Under the Family Violence Intervention Programme (FVIP), Work and Income case managers have been trained to identify and respond appropriately to clients who are living in or leaving violent family situations. By providing a skilled response, closely linked into local family violence service providers, Work and Income can make a significant contribution to reducing family violence and promoting the safety and wellbeing of clients and their families. Family Violence Response Coordinators provide support and guidance to case managers and maintain relationships with family violence service providers.

The best practice when managing risk is for staff to immediately consult with Family Violence Response Co-ordinator (FVRCs) who are the experts in the Family Violence arena or inform their manager, who will then consult with a FVRC. This is imperative when staff are dealing with any high-risk family violence situations.

Front-line staff and managers regularly consult with FVRC regarding clients who are experiencing family violence or threats to their family's safety. When a FVRC believes that someone is at serious and imminent risk, the New Zealand Police will be contacted immediately. If the NZ Police are to be contacted, then the FVRC and/or Service Centre Manager (SCM) will make the appropriate decision. If the SCM is not already aware of the situation then the FVRC will alert the Regional Operations Manager for Public Relations and their own Regional Operations Manager.

*5. How many instances of domestic violence have been logged by welfare line staff?*

The Ministry cannot determine the number of instances of domestic violence logged by staff members working on the Covid-19 Welfare phone line without substantial manual collation. As such, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the 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.

*6. Where there are known or suspected instances of self-harm, how are these logged and what action is taken?*

*7. How many instances of self-harm have been logged by welfare line staff?*

As per instances of family violence, best practice is for staff to immediately consult with FVRCs or inform their manager, who will then consult with a FVRC. This is imperative when staff are dealing with any high-risk family violence clients and situations.

The Ministry cannot determine the number of instances of self-harm logged by staff members working on the Covid-19 Welfare phone line without substantial manual collation. As such, this portion of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the 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.

*8. How many people are employed to work on the Covid-19 Welfare Phone Line?*

The Ministry currently has 769 CSRs who have been trained to answer the Covid-19 Welfare phone line calls.

*9. What is the average number of calls each worker will make/take per day?*

The Covid-19 Welfare line is answering approximately 500 calls per day Monday to Friday and 229 calls Saturday and Sunday. 3,339 calls were answered during the week ending May 8 2022. This is trending downwards as Covid-19 moves through the country. Our CSRs take a wide range of calls which vary in length, they answer on average 30 calls per day.

*10. How many people have been supported via the welfare line to date?*



The Ministry is unable to identify how many individuals have been supported, however, call data shows the has answered 118,137 inbound calls since the line went live on 3 December 2021.

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. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments 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 regarding the COVID-19 Welfare phone line, 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.

Ngā mihi nui

Geoff Cook  
**General Manager**  
**Contact Centre and Digital Services**

