



Have your say on further improvements to Disability Support Services (DSS)

Our earlier work focused on stabilising DSS; now we want to ensure we're on the right track as we plan ongoing improvements to our services and supports for the future.



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Minister's foreword

This Government has taken significant steps to stabilise disability support services, laying the foundation for further operational improvements to these important services.

Informed by the 2024 recommendations from the Independent Review¹ and the feedback from last year's community consultation, there have been improvements to assessments, allocations and flexible funding.

DSS has also made other changes to ensure its systems and processes deliver fair, consistent, transparent and sustainable disability support, and provide a more reliable and responsive experience for disabled people and their whanau.

Progress has given the Government confidence to increase its investment in DSS by \$1 billion in Budget 2025 and to remove purchasing guidelines.

Driving further improvement in services

The next phase of work by Disability Support Services will aim to ensure greater clarity and purpose in the services delivered. It includes improving service responsiveness and designing services and supports that work now and into the future.

DSS is now seeking feedback from the disability community on its next phase of work. This phase focusses on ongoing improvements to DSS services and supports with the aim of delivering the best possible outcomes for disabled people over the longer term.

This consultation builds on what the disability community has identified as most important in their lives in our conversations over the past eighteen months.

Thank you for taking the time to share your views and participate in these consultations. Your insights and perspectives will inform DSS's work to create more opportunities for disabled people, their family, whānau and carers to achieve their goals and aspirations for an everyday life.

Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Disability Issues

¹ Independent Review of Disability Support Services, Phase One Report, 28 June 2024 (available here <https://shorturl.at/sPnoP>)

Providing feedback

We welcome your input

We invite feedback from disabled people, their family, whānau, carers and support people, advocates, organisations, and others with an interest in disability support, on the questions in this consultation document.

Audio, Braille and Large Print versions of this document are available. You can find these on our website (www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/haveyoursay).

You can also find a short (five page) summary document on our website (www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/haveyoursay). This document is available in NZ Sign Language, Easy Read, Audio, Braille and Large Print. Te Reo Māori, Tongan and Samoan language translations are also available.

Use of information

The feedback we collect through this consultation will be used to make further improvements to the services and supports that we provide.

What we are consulting on

We're seeking your feedback on six key areas for improvement. These are areas that have been raised with us in our previous consultation with the community, and where we want to make our services and supports more purposeful, responsive, and effective both now and in the future. They are summarised below:

- Topic 1: Outcomes that matter for disabled people
- Topic 2: A more proactive approach to support
- Topic 3: Better feedback and complaints processes
- Topic 4: Better support for carer respite and breaks
- Topic 5: More choice and control in our services
- Topic 6: Improving our information and advice

How to have your say

This document builds on what we have already heard from you. It explains why we are consulting with you and asks for your feedback. There are questions in each section. You can choose which questions you want to answer. You don't have to answer them all.

There are multiple ways to provide feedback to ensure that consultation is accessible to all parts of the community. You can provide feedback in one or more of the following ways:

- Make a written or recorded submission to the questions in this document (**a full list is in Appendix 1**) by email to DSS_submissions@msd.govt.nz or by post to:

Disability Support Services
Ministry of Social Development
PO Box 1556
Wellington 6140

Please contact NZSL_submissions@msd.govt.nz if you wish to send us an audio or video response.

- Complete the online survey – a link is available on our website (www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/haveyoursay)
- Attend an online or in-person workshop – where we talk and discuss these questions with you. These are between 1.5 and 2 hours each. You can learn more about when we are holding workshops and how to attend on our website (www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/haveyoursay).

Consultation period

Consultation will run from **Monday, 8 June 2026 and close at 5pm on Friday, 31 July 2026**. If you have any problems with meeting this deadline, please send an email to DSS_submissions@msd.govt.nz.

Next steps after consultation

After consultation closes, we will summarise and consider feedback before advising the Minister for Disability Issues on the next steps. A summary of the responses will be published on our website.

No information will be released that will identify you or what you have said. However, a list of submitters may be published. Please tell us in your submission if you do not wish your name, or any other personal information, to be included in the summary that we publish. Further details on the use and release of information are in Appendix 2.

About Disability Support Services (DSS)

DSS provides support to around 55,000 disabled people, their families, whānau and carers. We also fund access to a range of devices, equipment, and housing and vehicle modifications for approximately 100,000 New Zealanders. Child Development Services is also part of DSS and assists about 26,000 children and families.

Other government agencies also provide services and support to disabled people – through health, education, social welfare and transport agencies and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC).

This consultation focuses on the support that is funded by DSS.

Find out more about who can get DSS support and how to access DSS support here: <https://shorturl.at/X4K0U>

Our role within the support system for disabled people

The services we provide help remove barriers to participation and provide choices for disabled people about how they want to live their everyday life. We provide disability supports fairly and consistently from within funding available, considering the needs and circumstances of disabled people.

The Laws and Principles that guide our work

Alongside our role there are laws and principles that guide and inform our work, these include:

- The Enabling Good Lives (EGL) vision and principles.
- Relevant New Zealand policy, particularly the New Zealand Disability Strategy, the Carers Strategy, and the recommendations from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.
- International treaties, particularly the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- New Zealand legislation including the Human Rights Act 1993.
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi.

Background to this consultation

Since DSS was established as a business group within the Ministry of Social Development in September 2024, we have made many changes to ensure better stewardship of our budget while also improving the fairness, consistency and transparency of support accessed by disabled people, families, and whānau and carers.

We know there is still more work to do to ensure services and supports meet the needs of disabled people, and to give them certainty for the future. Throughout the process of change, and in this consultation, the Government is committed to disability support services that are: fair, consistent, transparent and sustainable.

Building on past consultation

We know that there has been a lot of consultation in recent years with disabled people, families, whānau and carers about the support they need. We highly value the time that has been put into making submissions, and the information that has been shared.

The feedback we have received has informed this consultation including, what has worked in our engagement with you, and the improvements we have made to our services and supports.

You can read about our previous consultations and the feedback we received on our website:

- February – March 2025: Findings from community consultation on needs assessment and allocation processes, and flexible funding (available here <https://shorturl.at/HfpPv>) and,
- October – November 2024: Findings from community consultation on issues experienced by disabled people when using DSS (available here: <https://shorturl.at/r9sl2>).

Topic 1: Outcomes that matter for disabled people

We have heard that we need to be clearer about what we provide and how we fit into the wider support system for disabled people and the wider disabled community. This is not about changing what we do for disabled people but improving our services.

We aim to support disabled people to have choice and control, live everyday lives, participate in their communities, and achieve outcomes that reflect their aspirations.

Progress towards these outcomes needs to be achieved within the funding allocated by Government in a sustainable way to ensure supports are fair, effective, and enduring for those most in need.

The outcomes we are responsible for

Because our supports are essential to many lives, we need to know that they work and make a meaningful difference. This means defining the outcomes, or the long-term changes that will happen because of the support we provide.

In this section, we propose two outcomes that we are responsible for and that our funding must achieve.

Outcome 1

- **Daily Living:** We provide disabled people with the essential supports required for everyday life (for example, personal cares, residential care).

Outcome 2

- **Safety:** Disabled people are safe from physical or psychological harm, and free from abuse or neglect, in the services and support we provide.

Wider benefits of the support DSS provides

We propose five wider benefits that we contribute to, alongside support from other government agencies. These cannot be delivered by DSS alone, but we make an important contribution.

- **Autonomy:** Enabling people to grow, maintain, or regain autonomy in everyday life.
- **Connection:** Enabling meaningful personal, social, and community networks.
- **Contribution:** Supporting people to contribute meaningfully to their communities.
- **Growth:** Supporting people to grow the skills and knowledge required in their everyday life.
- **Experience:** People can feel positive about their everyday life.

How will we know when we are making a difference?

Outcomes provide a goal that we can aim towards and measure our performance against. With the feedback collected from this consultation, we will do more work to develop ways to measure our progress towards the outcomes and the wider benefits of our services.

We want to ask you:

1. What outcomes or wider benefits from our services are the most important to you? Are there any that we have missed?
2. We have two outcomes that we must achieve (Daily Living and Safety as described above). Can you please rank our five wider benefits in order of importance to you from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important)
3. We want to find ways to measure our progress towards the outcomes and wider benefits described above, what would tell us that things are improving in your life in any of these areas?
4. Do our outcomes and wider benefits reflect the needs of all people that access DSS support?
5. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts about the questions you have just answered, or more generally about what DSS is aiming to achieve for disabled people?

Topic 2: A more proactive approach to support

In this section we want to understand how we could be more planned and proactive, alongside the ongoing and day to day support that we provide.

Shifting from one phase of life to another often comes with changes in needs and levels of support. These key life stages are often predictable, such as starting school or leaving home.

We have been told that our services and supports could better anticipate people's changing needs. For example, by investing early to provide the right support for children and young people

We have also heard that our services could help people maintain their level of independence. The right support at the right time could allow a person to experience independence for longer, remain in their own home, or help to prevent, delay, or reduce the need for more intensive support in the future.

We want the services we provide to take a consistent approach to planning additional support when a person's support needs are likely to change. These might include:

- at key points in the development of children and young people,
- when young people age out of Oranga Tamariki care,
- when people want to experience greater independence in the community,
- support to maintain independence when a condition is progressing
- when people are experiencing the effects of ageing,
- when a parent or primary carer's ability to provide support changes,
- when people are entering or exiting hospital services,
- or others.

For some people, support needs will be ongoing and increase over time as their needs change. For others, short periods of targeted additional support may be enough to allow them to experience increased levels of independence.

We want to ask you:

6. In a more proactive system, what would you want to see happen differently from how the system or services work with you now?
7. What additional supports should DSS provide at key transition points in people's lives (for example, one-off funding to invest in technology, facilitative support that aims to reduce over time, assistance with navigation, planning, and connection)?

8. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered, or on how can we get better at providing the right support at the right time?

Topic 3: Feedback and complaints processes

Improving the quality of the services we provide

Work is currently underway to improve the way that we monitor the quality or performance of the services we provide. Service quality can include whether the service is reliable, consistent, responsive, and/or safe. It also includes choice and control and supports that reflect a person's culture and values.

This work will mean that we have better oversight of the services that we provide and will help to give people that use those services confidence in them.

Making it easier for people to give feedback

Better feedback on the supports and services people receive from our funded providers, will help us understand what is going well, and what could be improved.

A simple feedback mechanism (for example, a short survey) is one way that would allow people to tell us how our supports and services worked for them. It could also help us to respond more quickly if changes need to be made.

Making our complaints process easier to access and use

The community has told us that our providers need to improve their process for receiving complaints. This includes when a support or service doesn't do what it should, or about a decision that has been made.

A DSS provider's complaints process should be simple, visible and easy to use. They also need a clear process for how complaints will be considered and resolved. When issues can't be resolved, there should also be a clear dispute resolution process.

A robust complaints process is an important step towards improving fairness, transparency and consistency of the services we fund.

We want to ask you:

9. Thinking about the support you receive from a DSS provider what matters to you when you are being supported? How do you know when you have received a quality and safe service?
10. Do you know how to give feedback about the services that you receive from a DSS provider?
11. Do you know how to make a complaint about the services you receive from a DSS provider? Or, how to escalate your complaint when a provider does not address your concerns?

12. Would a short, regular feedback survey be a good way for your DSS provider, and national agencies, to monitor how well your supports and services are working and respond where improvements are needed?
13. How would you prefer to give feedback on the support or services you get from DSS providers?
14. What would give you confidence in a DSS providers' complaints process?
15. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered?

Topic 4: Better support for carer respite and breaks

Last year the Draft Carers Action Strategy Plan was released by MSD, in partnership with the Carers Alliance and an Advisory Group of organisations representing the needs of carers (available here: <https://shorturl.at/CVGnz>). One of the three priorities of the plan is that: *“Health and wellbeing outcomes are equitable between carers and non-carers².”*

The plan will inform our ongoing work. The area we are interested in getting your views on is how we can make the existing services we fund for carers better.

We know it can be difficult to access respite care and day-programmes for the disabled people carers support. Through this consultation, we want to understand how we can make improvements in these areas.

We recently made it easier to use flexible funding for respite services. We’ve also updated assessments so that the needs of family, whānau, and carers are considered when they are important to the disabled person’s wellbeing. These changes will help many carers, but we know there are areas where we can further improve what we fund.

We want to ask you:

16. Can you tell us about the issues you, or your carers, face when accessing respite care, day-programmes, or other DSS services that support carers?
17. What changes to services for carers would make it easier for you to take a break when you need it most?
18. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered on the support DSS provides for carers?

² Draft Carers Action Strategy Plan 2025 (available here: <https://shorturl.at/CVGnz>).

Topic 5: More choice and control in our services

Flexible funding (i.e. individualised funding with flexible budgets) was introduced to give more choice and control in what disability supports people receive and how.

Changes to flexible funding were introduced in April. These reflect the feedback received from the disability community during consultation in 2025.

They will give people who use flexible funding more choice, control and certainty, and provide support to help people manage their flexible funding in line with their plan.

But we are aware flexible funding can still be complicated and difficult to manage for some people.

Getting the support you need through the providers we fund directly

People that get their disability supports from the range of providers that we fund have told us that they sometimes cannot get the services they need. For example, some people in residential services feel they don't have as much flexibility in the supports they receive as they would like.

Many people would like more flexibility from DSS supports, but don't want to go as far as managing a flexible funding budget or take on the responsibilities of employing a carer or support worker.

We want to consider whether there are other options for providing more flexible services and supports. We need your help to think about the options for improvements and for how funding is delivered, but it could be for example:

- Developing services that give people more choice, such as home and community support services that enable people to choose their care or support worker (e.g. a friend, someone known to them, or from a mainstream provider).
- Different or more flexible services from providers, for example providers working with you to decide what time of day they deliver your support, and tailoring supports to your interests.

Are we providing the right range of services?

We want to provide a range of options that suit disabled people and the way they want to live their lives.

In this consultation, we want to find out if there are any services DSS doesn't currently fund, that we could consider adding, to further improve support for disabled people.

Developing new services takes time. We are asking these questions now because we want to understand how DSS can improve in the longer-term.

We want to ask you:

19. Currently there are two main options for DSS support - flexible funding budgets or a fixed range of services available from the providers that DSS funds. What could DSS do to give you more flexibility, choice and control in accessing services; without full responsibility for managing a flexible funding budget?
20. How could DSS improve, or add to the services we provide, so they work well for everyone?
21. Are there specific considerations, or different types of services, we should have for children and young people?
22. Are there any services that DSS doesn't currently provide that we should consider adding to help deliver better outcomes for disabled people?
23. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered about the flexibility and range of services that DSS provides?

Topic 6: Improving our information and advice

DSS currently funds information and advice services through a range of providers, channels, and formats, including community-based, Kaupapa Māori, and national services.

Some is aimed at DSS users and are directly relevant to our services, supports and processes, others provide information that is relevant to any disabled person.

We have heard it can be difficult to get information about our services, and that it is not easy to navigate the wider supports that are available from other government agencies.

We do not currently have a good understanding of what information disabled people need from DSS. We want your views on how we can improve our information and advice services.

In this section we want to understand more about the problems that people experience getting the information and advice they need, so we can do better.

We want to ask you:

24. Where do you currently get information about disability supports from?
25. What are the biggest challenges you face when trying to access information about DSS?
26. What information do you want, or need, to know about the services DSS provides?
27. What else could DSS do to make it easier for you to understand and access information about disability supports?
28. What would make it easier to navigate the support for disabled people provided by DSS and other government agencies or community groups?
29. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered about the information and advice that DSS provides?

Appendix 1:

Full list of questions

Topic One: Outcomes that matter for disabled people

1. What outcomes or wider benefits from our services are the most important to you? Are there any that we have missed?
2. We have two outcomes that we must achieve (Daily Living and Safety as described above). Can you please rank our five wider benefits in order of importance to you from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important)
3. We want to find ways to measure our progress towards the outcomes and wider benefits described above, what would tell us that things are improving in your life in any of these areas?
4. Do our outcomes and wider benefits reflect the needs of all people that access DSS support?
5. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts about the questions you have just answered, or more generally about what DSS is aiming to achieve for disabled people?

Topic 2: A more proactive approach to support

6. In a more proactive system, what would you want to see happen differently from how the system or services work with you now?
7. What additional supports should DSS think about providing at the key transition points in people's lives (for example, one-off funding to invest in technology, facilitative support that aims to reduce over time, assistance with navigation, planning, and connection)?
8. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered, or on how can we get better at providing the right support at the right time?

Topic 3: Feedback and complaints processes

9. Thinking about the support you receive from a DSS provider, what matters to you when you are being supported? How do you know when you have received a quality and safe service?

10. Do you know how to give feedback about the services that you receive from a DSS provider?
11. Do you know how to make a complaint about the services you receive from a DSS provider? Or, how to escalate your complaint when a provider does not address your concerns?
12. Would a short, regular feedback survey be a good way for my DSS provider, and national agencies, to monitor how well my supports and services are working and respond where improvements are needed?
13. How would you prefer to give feedback on the support or services you get from DSS providers?
14. What would give you confidence in a DSS providers' complaints process?
15. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered?

Topic 4: Better support for carer respite and breaks

16. Can you tell us about the issues you, or your carers, face when accessing respite care, day programmes, or other DSS services that support carers?
17. What changes to services for carers would make it easier for you to take a break when you need it most?
18. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered on the support DSS provides for carers?

Topic 5: How we offer more choice and control in our services

19. Currently there are two main options for DSS support - flexible funding budgets or a fixed range of services available from the providers that DSS funds. What could DSS do to give you more flexibility, choice and control in accessing services; without full responsibility for managing a flexible funding budget?
20. How could DSS improve, or add to the services we provide, so they work well for all users?
21. Are there specific considerations, or different types of services, we should have for children and young people?

22. Are there any services that DSS doesn't currently provide, that we should consider adding, to help deliver better outcomes for disabled people?
23. and you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered about the flexibility and range of services that DSS provides?

Topic 6: Improving our information and advice

24. Where do you currently get information about disability supports from?
25. What are the biggest challenges you face when trying to access information about DSS?
26. What information do you want, or need, to know about the services DSS provides?
27. What else could DSS do to make it easier for you to understand and access information about disability supports?
28. What would make it easier to navigate the support for disabled people provided by DSS and other government agencies or community groups?
29. Can you provide us with any additional thoughts you have about the questions you have just answered about the information and advice that DSS provides?

Demographic Questions:

30. Are you responding to this survey as a (please select all that apply):
- disabled person
 - family / whānau member
 - social worker, transition worker or youth worker
 - carer
 - service provider
 - NASC
 - EGL site
 - community group
 - Other (please write)

31. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity? (please select all that apply):

- Māori
- New Zealand European / Pākehā
- Samoan
- Cook Islands Māori
- Tongan
- Niuean
- Fijian
- Chinese
- Indian
- Other (please write)

32. Which region do you live in most of the time? (please select one)

- Northland
- Auckland
- Waikato
- Bay of Plenty
- Taranaki
- East Coast
- Central
- Wellington
- Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast
- Canterbury (including Chatham Islands)
- Southern

33. What services and supports do you receive from DSS (or provide)? (please write)

34. Can DSS publish your name, or any other personal information that might be contained in your submission, in a summary document on the DSS website?

- Yes
- No

35. Are you Deaf?

- Yes
- No

36. How would you best describe your disability? (please select all that apply):

- Physical disability, such as mobility, traumatic brain injury, or amputation
- Vision impairment, such as blindness, low vision or Deafblind
- Hard of Hearing or experiencing hearing loss
- Neurodivergent, a non-medical umbrella term used to describe how some people's brain activity processes, interacts with or experiences the world around them differently, such as an autistic person
- Learning disabilities such as Down syndrome
- Experiencing mental distress or mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression
- Chronic or invisible disabilities such as endometriosis, diabetes or Tourette's syndrome
- I am disabled myself and also care for or am a family / whānau member of a disabled person.
- Other (please write)
- I don't identify with any of the above

Ways to submit your response:

Email:

DSS_submissions@msd.govt.nz

Post:

Disability Support Services
Ministry of Social Development
PO Box 1556
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

Please contact NZSL_submissions@msd.govt.nz if you wish to send an audio or video response.

Appendix 2:

Use and release of information

Information provided through this consultation will help us develop advice to Ministers.

It is important that you understand that people can request access to submissions under the Official Information Act 1982. Please make it clear in the beginning of your submission if you do not want your submission to be released, which parts you do not want released and why. We may get in touch with you if there is an Official Information Act request. If you have any questions about this, please contact DSS_submissions@msd.govt.nz.

Private information

The Privacy Act 2020 establishes certain principles with respect to the collection, use and disclosure of information about individuals by various agencies, including MSD. Any personal information you supply to MSD through making a submission will only be used for the purpose of assisting in the development of advice in relation to this consultation, for contacting you about your submission, or to advise you of the outcome of the consultation, including any next steps. We may also use personal information you supply through a submission for other reasons permitted under the Privacy Act (e.g. with your consent, for a directly related purpose, or where the law permits or requires it). Please clearly indicate in your submission if you do not wish your name, or any other personal information, to be included in any summary of submissions that MSD may publish.

We will only retain personal information as long as it is required for the purposes for which the information may lawfully be used. Where any information provided (which may include personal information) constitutes public records, it will be retained to the extent required by the Public Records Act 2005. We may also be required to disclose information under the Official Information Act, to a Parliamentary Select Committee or Parliament in response to a Parliamentary Question. You have rights of access to and correction of your personal information which can be found on the MSD website.