

Visual description: A green Disability Support Services logo sits to the left of the New Zealand Government crest in black.

# **MSD Disability Support Services Operational Policy**

## **Purchasing Operational Policy**

**Effective from 1 April 2026**

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## **Purpose**

1. This operational policy sets out the general conditions and prior approval requirements that apply to flexible funding arrangements from 1 April 2026.

## **Scope**

2. The following funding arrangements are in scope:
  - a. Individualised Funding (IF) – Personal Care, Household Management, and Respite;
  - b. Enhanced IF;
  - c. Hosted Enabling Good Lives (EGL) Personal Budgets;
  - d. Carer Support; and
  - e. Flexible Disability Support.
3. The Purchasing Rules that were implemented on 18 March 2024 are lifted for these supports. Choice in Community Living is excluded from this operational policy, with the Purchasing Rules implemented on 18 March 2024 continuing to apply to it.
4. This operational policy provides a set of conditions that:
  - a. disabled people and providers must comply with when they are buying support using one of these purchasing arrangements; and
  - b. Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) organisations, EGL sites, providers and hosts need to assist disabled people to meet the requirements of their hosted flexible funding arrangement.

## **General conditions that must be met**

5. All the general conditions that disabled people must comply with, and NASCs, EGL sites, providers, and/or hosts need to be satisfied have been met, are listed below:
  - a. The expenditure must be reasonably attributable to a disabled person's disability that makes them eligible for Disability Support Services-funded supports.
  - b. The expenditure must be for a disability support, which assists the disabled person to overcome the challenges they or their carers face because of the eligible disability.
  - c. The disability support must be provided in a community setting i.e. it must not be on residential care. For the avoidance of doubt, residential respite care is not considered to be residential care unless it becomes continuous and ongoing.

- d. The expenditure must be consistent with a disabled person's My DSS Funding Plan.
- e. Any relevant prior approval requirements specified in this operational policy have been complied with.
- f. Reasonable steps have been taken to identify supports that are similar in form or purpose available from other government agencies and, if so, they are unavailable in a timely manner.
- g. The funding can never be used for drugs, alcohol, tobacco, gambling or illegal activities.

## **Prior approval**

- 6. The following types of support require prior approval before the disabled person spends the funding:
  - a. Equipment;
  - b. Complementary therapies;
  - c. Overseas travel;
  - d. Repeat purchase of items of a similar nature or intent, before the expected life of a previously purchased item has expired; and
  - e. Purchase of items above specified values that will be published on the [DSS website](#).

### **Who prior approval is obtained from**

- 7. The disabled person must obtain prior approval:
  - a. from their host, where they are supported by a host;
  - b. from their provider, if one is contracted to manage their flexible support allocation; or
  - c. from their NASC or EGL site, where they are not supported by a host or provider.
- 8. Hosts, providers, NASCs and EGL sites may specify the information they require to make a prior approval decision.

### **Further detail relating to prior approvals**

#### *Equipment and complementary therapies – overall approach*

- 9. The focus of the prior approval process for equipment and complementary therapy is on identifying and appropriately managing situations in which there is a high risk. The degree of risk associated will usually be affected by a range of factors, such as the equipment or therapy itself, the circumstances in which it will be used, and the particular challenges that a disabled person has, not

just by the equipment or complementary therapy itself. The processes therefore seek to identify situations where there is a higher degree of risk.

#### *Equipment*

10. Equipment may only be purchased if (as appropriate) a host, provider, NASC, or EGL site:
  - a. reaches a view that the equipment does not pose a high risk of harm to the disabled person; or
  - b. receives advice from a registered health professional operating within their scope of their practice confirming that the equipment is safe, supported by evidence, and any risks are appropriately managed.

#### *Complementary therapy*

11. Complementary therapies may only be purchased if (as appropriate) a host, provider, NASC or EGL site
  - a. **Either:** reaches a view that the proposed purchase does not pose a high risk of harm to the disabled person;
  - b. **Or:** receives advice from a registered health professional operating within their scope of practice which shows that:
    - i. the complementary therapy will be used in ways that are consistent with the available evidence base on efficacy and risk management;
    - ii. there will be ongoing oversight by a health professional; and
    - iii. alternative support plans have been developed in the event that the complementary therapy is not effective for the person.
12. Where independent evidence is not available regarding the efficacy of a complementary therapy, a trial by the disabled person may be required to demonstrate efficacy before the complementary therapy can be purchased.

#### *Exclusions from the definition of complementary therapy*

13. Prior approval is **not** required for the following supports as they are excluded from the definition of complementary therapy:
  - a. activities that people generally undertake to improve their wellbeing, such as exercising in a gymnasium or yoga; or
  - b. activities that people generally undertake to connect with their community, such as line dancing or riding for the disabled.

#### *Overseas travel*

14. In addition to the general conditions that must be met for all types of expenditure, overseas travel may only be funded where:

- a. the travel costs that funding is sought for are over and above those that would have been incurred if the person did not have a disability;
- b. that the travel is consistent with, and likely to achieve, one of the disabled person's funding purposes;
- c. that approving the travel will not compromise the disabled person's ability to access future supports; and
- d. the disabled person is responsible for arranging any required supports while overseas.

*Items of a similar nature*

- 15. Hosts, providers, NASCs or EGL sites will review proposed purchases of items of a similar nature that are being replaced before their expected expiry date. The aim is to determine whether the proposed purchases are necessary, continue to be appropriate for the disabled person, and/or whether another type of support may be more appropriate.

## Glossary: Terms and definitions

Term	Description
<b>Complementary Therapies</b>	Complementary therapies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Either:</b> have the purpose of improving or sustaining a person’s functional adaptation to living with a disability;</li> <li>• are recommended or prescribed by health professional; and</li> <li>• complement or replace mainstream health or disability support services.</li> <li>• <b>Or:</b> are Rongoā, and the provider is accredited by ACC.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligible disability</b>	The particular disability that a person has which they are able to seek funding for from a NASC or EGL site.
<b>High risk of harm</b>	High risk of harm means at least one of the following applies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is limited or only emerging evidence of efficacy and the circumstances the equipment or complementary therapy should be used in.</li> <li>• The equipment or complementary therapy is itself harmful, or the level of activity involved could be harmful, unduly intrusive or involves unreasonable pain.</li> <li>• The equipment or complementary therapy promotes exclusion rather than inclusion.</li> </ul>
<b>Host</b>	An organisation contracted to DSS to provide host services or a flexible disability support provider when they are offering host services.
<b>Hosted Enabling Good Lives (EGL) Personal Budget</b>	The portion of an EGL personal budget that a disabled person uses to buy support with assistance from a host.
<b>EGL Personal Budgets</b>	The amount of funding that a disabled person is allocated by an EGL site.
<b>EGL Site</b>	Three initiatives in which the support offered is based on the EGL Vision and Principles: EGL Christchurch, EGL Waikato and Mana Whaikaha (in the MidCentral region).
<b>Equipment</b>	Tools, devices and products that support a disabled person’s functioning, independence, safety, or participation in daily life.
<b>Flexible support allocation</b>	The amount of funding allocated to a disabled person that is to be managed through one of the arrangements specified in this policy.

Term	Description
<b>Funding purposes</b>	Purposes specified in a My DSS Funding Plan.
<b>Individual Service Plans</b>	Agreements between a disabled person and a host, as specified in the IF Host Service Specification.
<b>Item</b>	Equipment, technologies, physical or digital objects (e.g. noise cancelling headphones) or subscriptions (e.g. a gym membership) that helps overcome disability related barriers.
<b>My DSS Funding Plan</b>	<p>An agreement with a NASC or EGL site setting out how the disabled person agrees to use the funding they have been allocated. The agreement may take several forms:</p> <p>16. Where people have received a new allocation of support, or had their support allocation reviewed or reassessed, on or after 1 April 2026, the My DSS Funding Plan described in the MSD DSS <a href="#">Assessment and Allocation of Disability Support Funding Operational Policy</a>.</p> <p>17. Where people have existing support allocations on 1 April 2026 but have not had their allocations reviewed or reassessed under the MSD DSS <a href="#">Assessment and Allocation of Disability Support Funding Operational Policy</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Individual Service Plans for an Individualised Funding allocation.</li> <li>○ Support Agreement and/or EGL Funding Plan for an EGL Personal Budget.</li> </ul>
<b>Provider</b>	An organisation contracted by DSS to deliver disability support to disabled people, but does not include a NASC or a host.
<b>Purchasing Rules</b>	A set of rules that determined how DSS funding could be used which came into effect on 18 March 2024. <a href="#">Understanding the purchasing guidelines   Disability Support Services</a> .
<b>Support Agreement</b>	An agreement between a disabled person and a Flexible Disability Support Provider, as specified in the Flexible Disability Support Service Specification.

