

Summary of consultation findings February and March 2025 – needs assessment and flexible funding

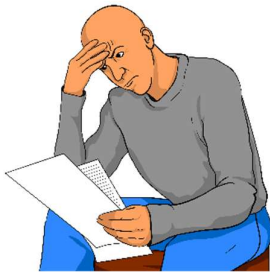


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Before you start



This is a long document.



It can be hard for some people to read a document this long.



Some things you can do to make it easier are:

- read it a few pages at a time
- set aside some quiet time to look at it
- have someone read it with you to support you to understand it.



What you will find in here

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About this Easy Read



This Easy Read is from **Disability Support Services** unit at the Ministry of Social Development.



**Disability
Support Services**

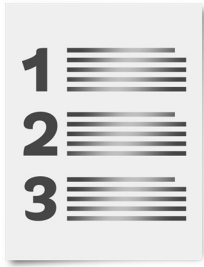
In this Easy Read **Disability Support Services** will be called DSS.

Where it says **we / our** in this document this means DSS.

This Easy Read is:



- information for people who get disability support services
- a **summary of consultation findings.**



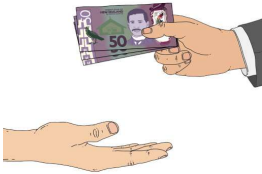
A **summary** is:

- shorter than the main document
- tells you the important ideas.



Here **consultation findings** means the information learned from asking people what they thought of Disability Support Services.

What was the consultation about?



The consultation was about:

- **needs assessments**
- the ways disabled people get their funding from DSS
- **flexible funding.**



A **needs assessment** says what:

- support you need
- funding you can get from the Government.



Flexible funding is money that you can choose how to spend.

The consultation happened in:



- February 2025

and



- March 2025.

About 1 thousand 8 hundred people took part in the consultation including:



- disabled people
- tāngata whaikaha Māori
- disabled Pasifika people
- whānau / aiga / families
- carers
- people who work in the disability sector.



Assessments should be easier



The consultation found that the assessment process is hard to:

- understand
- use.



For some people the assessment process is:

- a bad experience
- stressful.



People said they are often not told about things they might be able to get like:

- supports
- services.





Information should be given to disabled people and their whānau / aiga / families by a person who knows the assessment process.



This information could be given by:

- community organisations
- other whānau / aiga / families
- friends.



Information about getting ready for an assessment



People said they did not know:

- what was going to happen during an assessment
- how to get ready for an assessment
- what information to give during an assessment.



People want information about getting ready for an assessment so that they understand:

- what an assessment is
- what they can get in:
 - services
 - funding.





The information about getting ready for an assessment should be made available in:

- plain language
- accessible formats like:
 - Easy Read
 - Braille
 - large print
 - New Zealand Sign Language / NZSL.



Assessments should look at everything in the life of a disabled person



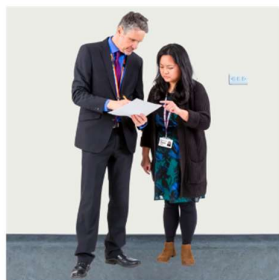
The consultation found that **assessors** should work with everyone in the life of a disabled person including:

- whānau / aiga / family
- carers.



Here an **assessor** is a person who:

- looks at what a disabled person needs
- tells DSS about the needs of a disabled person.





This is so they can understand everything about a disabled person.



The assessment should be done in a way that lets a disabled person decide:

- how they want to take part
- who should be at the assessment
- how it is done
- when it happens
- where it happens.



Other people who should be part of making these decisions include:

- whānau / aiga / family
- carers.





Some groups said that **cultural contexts** for their assessments are important like:

- Māori
- Pasifika people.



Cultural contexts are the reasons why people do something differently in their **culture**.



Culture is a way of:

- thinking that a group shares
- doing things as a group.



These cultural contexts include:

- how things work differently in a:
 - whānau / aiga / family
 - home
- what kind of support a whānau / aiga / family wants.



Assessors should give better support



The consultation found that assessors should be given more training.



This is so assessors can:

- give better support to disabled people
- tell disabled people about all the supports they can get.



More information about the assessment outcome is needed



The consultation found that information about the outcome / decision of an assessment should be made clear to:

- disabled people
- whānau / aiga / families
- carers.





More information about an assessment outcome / decision should be given so people know:

- what happens next
- what they can get for:
 - funding
 - support
- how to get support after an assessment.

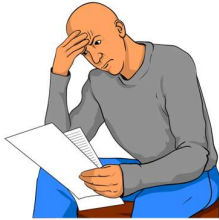


Before a finished assessment is given to DSS it should be easy for people to:

- review / go over their assessment
- give feedback / say what they think.



How reassessment is done is not clear



People told us that **reassessment** is hard to understand.



Here **reassessment** is a disability support assessment that is done again when:

- DSS checks that a disabled person has the right support
- a disabled person needs support that is different to what they have.



People said reassessment should:

- be flexible
- respond to what a disabled person needs.





People said reassessment should not be done at fixed times.



People said it would be better to do reassessment when something changes in the life of a disabled person.

Challenges faced by people who care for disabled people



The consultation found there are many difficult things about taking care of a disabled person.



People said that assessments do not show what these difficult things are.

Support for carers



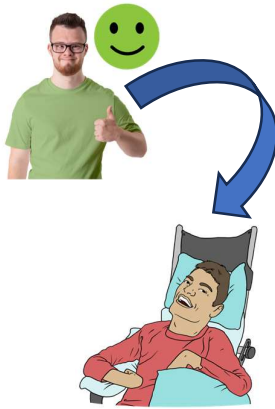
People said they would like assessments to show how disabled people are cared for by:

- whānau / aiga / families
- carers.





People said this would show how they are connected to the disabled person in their life.



People said that supporting the people who care for a disabled person would make the life of the disabled person better.

Flexible needs assessments



People said it is important that assessments look at all the different things that happen in whānau / aiga / families.



For example a disabled person can have:

- 1 person who does a lot of their care

and

- other people who support that care like:

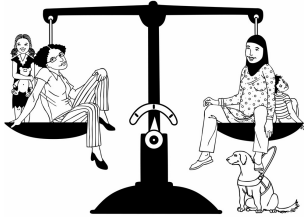
- whānau / aiga / family
- friends
- community members.



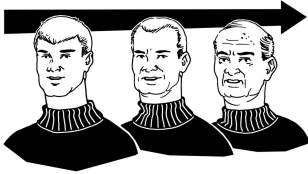
People said support for carers should be:

- flexible
- **balanced.**





Here **balanced** means people get different things to get the same level of support as other people.



People also said support needs to change when the lives of carers change like:

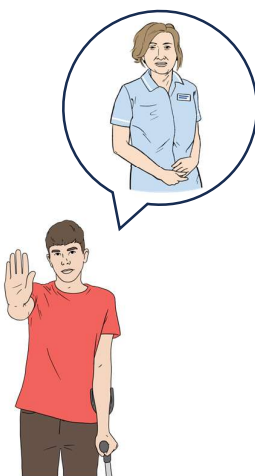
- growing older
- having to care for other people.



Assessments for carers

The consultation found some disabled people do not want to do assessments with:

- whānau / aiga / family
- carers.





This is so:

- disabled people can be kept safe
- everyone can have their feelings taken care of.



The consultation found other disabled people wanted to do the assessment with:

- whānau / aiga / family
- carers.



This was important for cultural reasons like whānau / aiga / family being a big part of their care.

Flexible funding that best meets needs



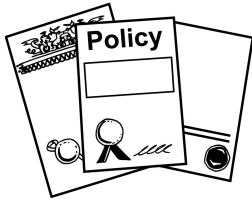
The consultation found that people want to be trusted to use flexible funding in a way that best meets their needs.



People said they are worried about talking to DSS about how to use flexible funding.



People said the changes that happened to flexible funding in March 2024 made things difficult in their lives.



People think DSS does not fully understand how flexible funding policy / rules affect the lives of:

- disabled people
- and
- their whānau / aiga / families.



People said it took a lot of work to figure out how to use flexible funding.



People said they want simple information about how to use flexible funding.



People said flexible funding plans should be good for what an **individual** disabled person needs.



Individual means 1 person.

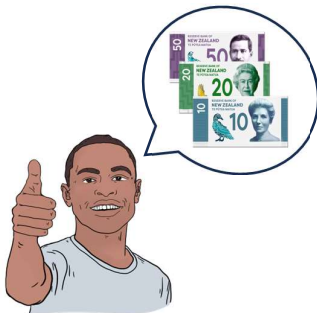


The consultation found flexible funding plans should:

- be able to change when things change in the life of a disabled person
- let the disabled person reach their:
 - life outcomes
 - **goals.**



Here a **goal** is a thing someone wants to happen.

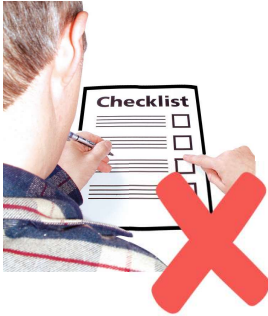


People said they understand that money for flexible funding must be used in a good way.



Most people said it should be watched how flexible funding is used.

Lists for flexible funding are restrictive

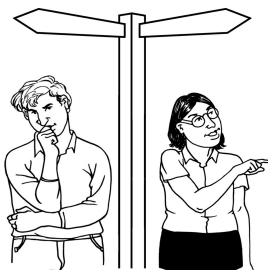


People said they are worried the lists for what flexible funding could be used for:

- are too **restrictive**
- could stop a disabled person from being **independent**.



Here **restrictive** means not having many things to choose from.



Independent means:

- doing things for yourself
- making your own choices.



The consultation found flexible funding lists may not cover all the needs of a disabled person.



For example:

- a disabled person may want to go to the gym for their health

but



- list restrictions mean flexible funding cannot be used for recreation / fun things.



Good things about set lists for flexible funding

People said there are some good things about set lists for flexible funding like they:



- are simple to follow
- let people know what support they can get
- make it easier to use support systems.

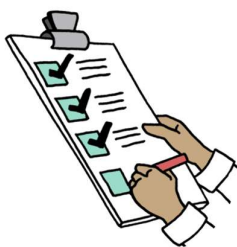


People said some other things could be added to the lists.

This would be good for people who:



- find it hard to figure out flexible funding
- are uncomfortable using DSS.



Some people said it would be good to have lists because they are like guides for flexible funding.



For example lists could show:

- what choices people can make
- what things might cost.



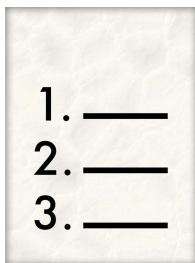
Putting together plans and lists



The consultation found that people like the idea of putting together:

- a plan that shows what a disabled person needs

and



- a list that shows what funding can be used for.



This would support people to understand what flexible funding can be used for.

Not much guidance for how to get flexible funding



People are worried that disabled people are not getting what they need for:

- support
- services.



This was because there is not enough guidance on how to get flexible funding.



The guidelines for flexible funding that changed in March 2025 are hard to:

- understand
- use.



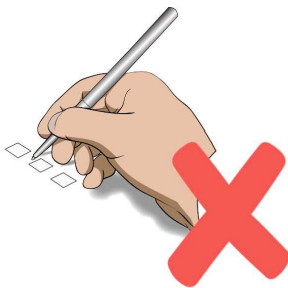
Different thoughts about criteria for flexible funding



The consultation found people had different ideas about adding **criteria** for getting flexible funding.



Criteria means the reasons for how something is decided.



Many people did not want criteria added to flexible funding.



They said criteria would make flexible funding:

- restrictive
- not flexible
- complex / hard
- more difficult to get for some people like:
 - Māori
 - Pasifika people.



Some people said criteria could be useful by making flexible funding:

- clearer to understand
- consistent / the same all the time.



Having criteria could make sure:

- people get what they need in a fair way
- everyone knows what people are getting
- the needs of disabled people are thought about first.



Having criteria could also make sure people are **accountable** for the flexible funding they use.



Being **accountable** means explaining why you do something.

Criteria for managing flexible funding



People wanted criteria options so that disabled people do not have to take care of issues that may happen from using flexible funding.



People thought this would be good for people who:

- have learning disabilities
- speak other languages
- have moved to New Zealand from overseas
- are older
- are autistic.



What happens next?



We used the findings from this consultation to create **advice** for the Government.



Here **advice** means:

- ideas
- reasons.



The Government will think about what changes could be made to the disability support system.

**Disability
Support Services**



This information has been written by Disability Support Services at the Ministry of Social Development.

Make it Easy
Kia Māmā Mai



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.

People First NZ
Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi



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