

Taskforce Update

October 2024



Welcome to the first update from the Disability Support Services Taskforce.

Who we are?

The Disability Support Services Taskforce (DSSTF) has been established to implement the seven recommendations made by the [Independent Review of DSS](#).

A newly branded business unit within the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), leading the DSSTF, is Deputy Chief Executive, Chris Bunny.

Disability Support Services (DSS) Operations transferred from Whaikaha to MSD on 16 September 2024. Leading DSS is Anne Shaw, Associate Deputy Chief Executive.

As the Taskforce gets established and builds its work programme, we recognise the need to provide updates about what we're doing and how and when you can be involved. We'll be providing regular updates. More information on this further down.

Why we're here?

We acknowledge this year has been tough for disabled people, carers, whānau and the wider disability sector.

DSS provide services and supports to approximately 50,000 disabled people and approximately 100,000 people who need equipment modification services.

The Government provided a significant additional investment \$1.1 billion funding boost for DSS over five years in Budget 2024, taking the total amount available to fund these services for disabled New Zealanders to \$2.6b in 2024/25.

The Minister for Disability Issues has been clear that disabled people deserve support services that are fair, consistent, transparent and sustainable.

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The Independent Review identified improving financial controls and better management of cost pressures as the highest priorities for early attention.

The challenges in stabilising disability support services are significant, particularly given the long-standing nature of some of the problems identified in the Independent Review.

What we've done so far

Some [immediate measures](#) were put in place in August to limit further acceleration of costs, ahead of a wider review of how disability services are funded. If people need additional support, or if their needs change, they should talk to their NASC, EGL site or provider.

We welcomed our new colleagues when DSS Operations transferred from Whaikaha to MSD on 16 September.

In addition:

- we've reinstated budgets and have set up reporting measures for NASCs
- our Policy team is building its work programme to respond to the recommendations
- we've started to meet with different groups and organisations and we'll continue this.

Who we've met with so far

The Taskforce has met with a range of groups including some NASCs and EGL sites, some peak bodies, providers, advocacy group and government officials.

What we've heard

Below outlines the key themes we've heard so far:

Universal agreement DSS requires significant change for fair, consistent, transparent and sustainable support services for disabled people.

General agreement the review recommendations are the appropriate focus.

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A theme that NASCs have varying capability and streamlining the process and consolidation would be useful.

- Residential providers flagged issue of the transactional complexity managing a referral – lots of back and forth with NASC.
- Concerns expressed about inconsistent supports between NASCs but especially NASCs compared with EGL.
- Sentiment about 'wastage' in system caused by administrative efficiency.

What's coming up next?

As the Taskforce establishes itself and builds a work programme, we'll be providing regular updates, using this channel until the end of October while a new disabilitysupport.govt.nz website is being built.

For the new site, we're developing regular newsletters for disabled people and providers, and we'll be sharing updates on our progress, our engagement plan including timelines and how you can be involved. You'll be able to subscribe to the newsletters, so they arrive in your inbox. We will publish the newsletters on the site too.

We're aware of the pressures within the sector and everyone is busy. The Taskforce doesn't want to unnecessarily add to that through our engagement with you. So, in the interim, we've set up a temporary email address until the new website goes live (dss_ideas@msd.govt.nz) and if you have any ideas, you can write to us.

To receive the newsletters, you will still need to subscribe once the new website goes live. We will send further reminders and information on how to do this once the website is live.

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