

28 August 2013

Ms Jill Adams
fyi-request-1041-4f2e9910@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ms Adams

Ref: H201303036

Thank you for your request for official information, received by the Ministry of Health on 31 July 2013. You have requested information about recent changes to support for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). More specifically, you have asked for the following information:

- *"...all the information eg reports, cabinet minutes, general information and anything else that specifically relates to this change in support for this particular group"; and*
- *"... information about the background to this recent decision, who was involved in this decision making and why a decision was made to change the amount of support that this group are now eligible for."*

As it was not clear from your email what change you were referring to, Toni Atkinson, Group Manager Disability Support Services, contacted you to clarify. In that discussion you were advised that there had been no recent decision about a change in eligibility of people with ASD only to current services. You were also advised that the Ministry is undertaking policy development concerning people with ASD with no co-existing intellectual disability, in order to clarify this group's eligibility for wider disability support services. Therefore, under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982, we are refusing your request for information on the basis that *"the information requested is not held by the department or Minister or organisation"*. Further, we do not believe that the information is held by another department, local authority or connected more closely with the functions of another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation or local authority.

However, please find enclosed a copy of a flow chart that was sent to Needs Assessment Service Co-ordination (NASC) agencies in 2012 to help clarify the position at that time.

By way of background, below is a summary of the current Ministry position with respect to ASD eligibility for your information.

People with ASD and no related intellectual disability have historically, and still do, have access to some funded support through the Ministry of Health.

Access to funded support is dependent on identified need and on the availability of services developed to support those specific needs.

The Ministry's Disability Support Services (DSS) funds services for people who have an intellectual, physical or sensory disability that is likely to last for six months or more, and who can benefit from these services. This means that people with ASD who also have an intellectual, physical or sensory disability are able to access those services developed to meet their needs.

Although people with ASD and no co-existing intellectual disability have always accessed services through the Ministry's funded disability support services, historical regional differences in Needs Assessment Service Co-ordination (NASC) practice and variable availability of appropriate services nationally, access has not been consistent.

Since 2009, funding has been specifically allocated to the Ministry to implement the New Zealand ASD Guideline. Services and programmes developed under the ASD Work Programme include ASD specific parent education, a disability information and advisory service, a resource on recognition and referrals of ASD, ASD specific communication and behaviour support services, an outreach programme, ASD developmental coordination function and respite. Adults with ASD and no co-existing intellectual disability can access the disability information and support service, the recognition and referral resource and respite.

If you have any further concerns or issues with access to services for a specific client, I encourage you to contact Toni Atkinson to discuss these.

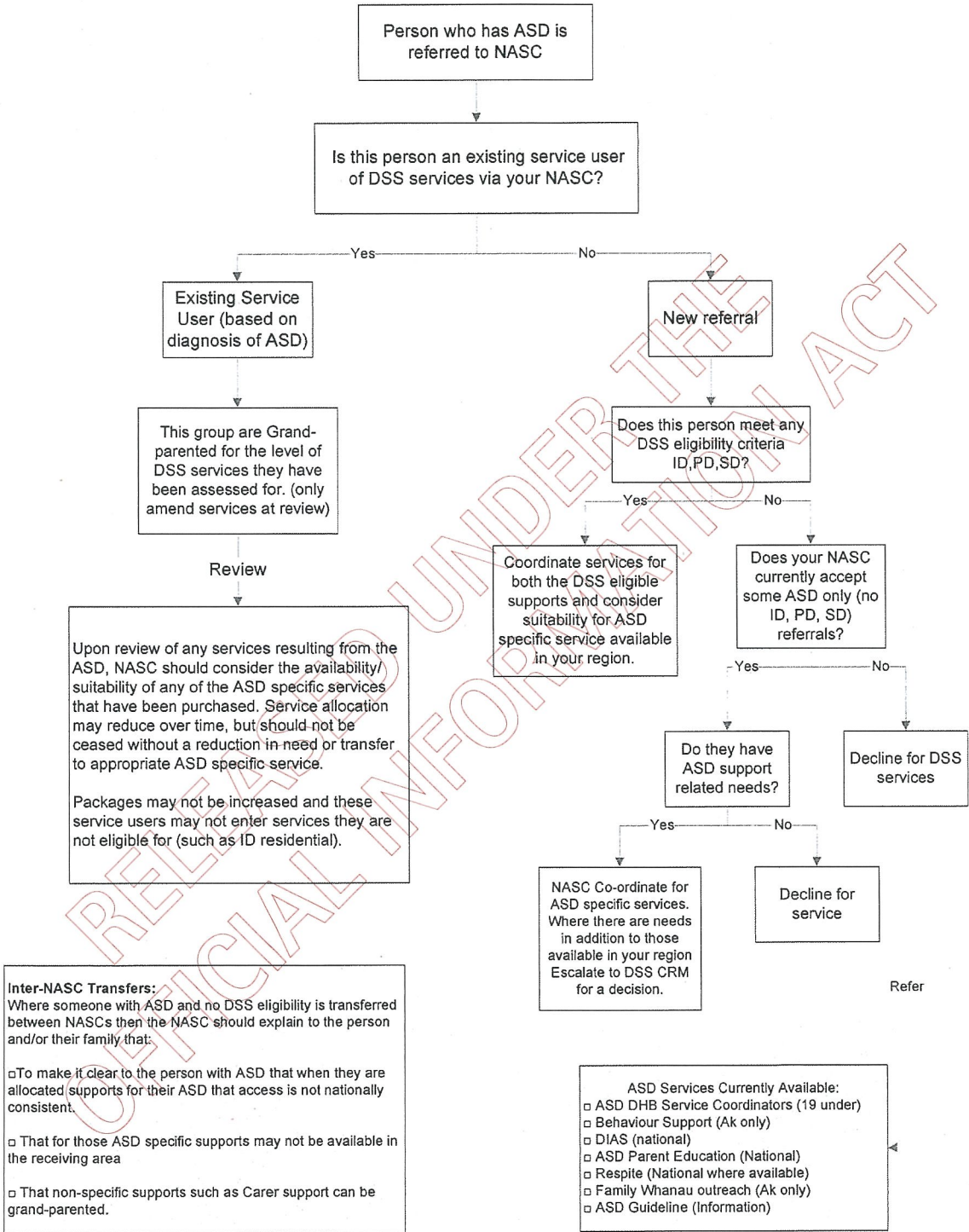
You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to request an Ombudsman review of my response to your request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Chai Chuah', written in a cursive style.

Chai Chuah
National Director
National Health Board

DSS Referral Pathway for people with ASD



*Grand-parented only applies to those who were accepted already by NASC to receive DSS but did not meet the Governments definition of eligibility for DSS, this means that this group will continue to receive their current support services.