



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

09 December 2021

Ms Sarah A
fyi-request-17586-69898e7a@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Ms Sarah A

On 15 November 2021, you emailed the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), the following information:

- 1. Concerns raising the investigation, and whether it was narrowed to issues of management and employment, or if it also included clients' experiences.*
- 2. Amount of funding MSD provided to Shakti following and preceding the investigation, and whether any inconsistency in funding can be attributed to the findings of the investigation.*
- 3. Results of Shakti's charity accreditation assessment in September 2021.*
- 4. Data showing turnover rates of employees in the years 2019 to 2021.*
- 5. Data showing the number of clients who have sought Shakti's services in the years 2019 to 2021.*
- 6. Copies of anonymised evaluation forms clients are to complete once their departure from safe houses are confirmed.*
- 7. A copy of the anonymous open letter released 18 March 2021 on Medium, authored by former staff.*
- 8. Whether MSD made any attempts to seek personal recounts from past employees and/or clients to contribute to the investigation.*
- 9. If possible, copies of all governmental reviews of Shakti in the years 2019 to 2021.*

For the sake of clarity, your questions will be answered individually.

1. Concerns raising the investigation and whether it was narrowed to issues of management and employment or if it also included clients' experiences

Complaints against Ministry contracted service providers/organisations may be initiated by their employees or clients, or by third parties. With regard to complaints made by employees or clients against the practices of a Ministry contracted service provider/organisation, it is the Ministry's position that employees of that provider/organisation should initially follow the process set out by their employer. The Ministry's accreditation process ensures that organisations/providers have appropriate processes in place to deal with complaints, and that they follow the resolution of complaints related to the service provision standard, which provides the following guidance:

The organisation will ensure:

- *people are kept safe through the complaints process and complaints are resolved in a reasonable timeframe,*
- *clients and staff have been informed of the complaints process and know how to make a formal complaint,*
- *complaints inform or lead to service improvements.*

If, in the course of laying a complaint, a complainant does not have their needs met despite the provider being accredited, they can follow Social Services Accreditation's (SSA) complaints process about laying a complaint against a provider. This states that SSA will determine whether the complaint is in scope, the seriousness of the allegations, and whether they will investigate further. SSA can only answer complaints that refer to a breach, or potential breach of the standards.

The concerns that were raised in relation to Shakti were allegations of bullying, exploitative working conditions and abusive behaviour by management. Due to the sensitive nature of these allegations, it would be inappropriate for the Ministry to elaborate further.

2. Amount of funding MSD provided to Shakti following and preceding the investigation and whether any inconsistency in funding can be attributed to the findings of the investigation

The Ministry contracts Shakti to deliver a range of services that respond to family violence. This contracting relationship has not changed since Shakti commenced their own internal investigation into the concerns raised, or since the Ministry arranged for Deloitte to undertake an independent review of the concerns.

Please find attached **Appendix A** providing **Table One** which shows the breakdown of funding to Shakti for the current and previous financial years. This reflects funding levels both prior to and following concerns being raised.

As both the Deloitte review and the internal investigation commenced by Shakti are underway, it would not be appropriate for the Ministry to comment on how the outcome of this could or would impact funding levels.

3. Results of Shakti's charity accreditation assessment in September 2021.

Your request for the results of Shakti's accreditation assessment is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the assessment report is still in draft and does not yet exist.

4. Data showing turnover rates of employees in the years 2019 to 2021.

This request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act as the information you have requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds to believe that the information is held by another department or Minister of the Crown or organisation.

5. Data showing the number of clients who have sought Shakti's services in the years 2019 to 2021.

Please see **Table Two** in **Appendix A** which provides the number of clients who have been referred to Shakti's services for the last three financial years.

6. Copies of anonymised evaluation forms clients are to complete once their departure from safe houses are confirmed.

Service providers and organisations are not required to provide this type of information to the Ministry, therefore the Ministry does not hold this information. As such, this part of your request is also refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act.

7. A copy of the anonymous open letter released 18 March 2021 on Medium, authored by former staff.

The Ministry does not hold a copy of the anonymous open letter to Shakti that was published online. The Medium account that authored the letter has been deactivated. The link to the previously published letter is here:

<https://stop-abusenz.medium.com/an-open-letter-to-shakti-community-council-14408ad44fc0>.

The link to Shakti's response is also publicly available, here:

<https://shaktiqualityassurance.medium.com/response-to-shakti-community-council-open-letter-7a700d7688e4>.

8. Whether MSD made any attempts to seek personal recounts from past employees and/or clients to contribute to the investigation.

The Ministry has asked a third party, Deloitte, to undertake an independent review of the concerns raised against Shakti. Any complaints received were provided to Deloitte to assist them in their process which includes interviewing complainants. The Ministry has not specifically sought past employees and/or clients to contribute to this process itself.

9. *If possible, copies of all government reviews of Shakti in the years 2019 to 2021.*

As Deloitte's review is currently in progress, we are unable to provide this information at this time.

The principles and purposes of the Official Information Act 1982 under which you made your request are:

- to create greater openness and transparency about the plans, work and activities of the Government,
- to increase the ability of the public to participate in the making and administration of our laws and policies and
- to lead to greater accountability in the conduct of public affairs.

This Ministry fully supports those principles and purposes. The Ministry therefore intends to make the information contained in this letter and any attached documents available to the wider public. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter and attachments on the Ministry's website. Your personal details will be deleted, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you as the person who requested the information.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with this response concerning information on the Shakti investigation, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui



Mark Henderson
General Manager
Safe Strong Families and Communities

Appendix A

Table One: MSD funding with Shakti Community Council (Shakti) for F21 and F22

Notes:

- This report contains funding as at 1 December 2021.
- It contains only what has been contracted to date. Funding in the current financial year is still subject to contracting and may alter.

Service	Description	F2021	F2022
Family violence helplines	24/7 crisis phone counselling, intervention, advocacy and support for vulnerable ethnic women	\$77,272.50	\$77,272.50
Family violence Integrated Safety Response services ¹	Funding to host 1 FTE Whanau Support Workers (WSW) to provide practice advice, support and practical guidance to the NGO collaboration partners, ISR response team, and wider partner and a Low Risk Response (LRR) for referrals from the ISR Operations Team.	\$110,000.00	-
Women's Refuge Services for people experiencing family violence	Culturally responsive women's refuge responses to family violence led by a refugee/migrant approach, where the safety of women/children is essential. This can include advocacy, safety planning, safe housing, 24/7 crisis response, awareness/education, counselling and collaborative community participation.	\$1,260,000.00	\$1,687,500.00
Other responses for people experiencing family violence ²	Provision of a refuge service for ethnic migrant women and their children who are victims of domestic violence and do not have permanent residence status.	\$66,000.00	-
Innovative programmes and services	This grant provides one-off funding to increase capacity during the national response to COVID-19.	\$230,000.00	-
Total		\$1,743,272.50	\$1,764,722.50

¹ Funding MSD administers on behalf of NZ Police for services delivered under the Integrated Safety Response pilots. Questions about decisions related to this funding should be directed to NZ Police.

² Funding MSD administers on behalf of MBIE for provision of women's refuge services to women (and their children) who do not hold permanent residency. Questions about decisions related to this funding should be directed to MBIE.

Table Two: Referrals to Shakti Community Council (Shakti) in F19, F20 and F21

Notes:

- This report contains data reported to the Ministry as at 1 December 2021.

Reporting Measure	F2019	F2020	F2021	Grand total
Total number of new clients referred	793	1154	1917	3864
Of total referrals received, number of clients who started service	716	850	842	2408