



13 August 2024

James Webb

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Tēnā koe James Webb

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 24 June 2024, requesting information relating to jobseeker support.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on your request set out below. For the sake of clarity, I will respond to your request in parts.

For the last three calendar years:

- 1. How many individuals in total received jobseeker support payments? How many of those individuals had a recorded disability/impairment/health condition?*

This information is publicly available in our Benefit Fact Sheets published on our website: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/index.html.

- 2. Of those without a recorded disability, what was the average time on jobseeker support?*
 - a. How many of those individuals stopped receiving Jobseeker support due to employment?*
 - b. How many of those individuals stopped receiving Jobseeker support due to not meeting obligations?*

Please find the information requested attached in **Appendix A**:

- **Table One:** Average continuous duration on benefit for current working age Jobseeker Support Work Ready clients as at the end of each quarter from March 2021 to December 2023
 - **Table Two:** Cancellations of working age Jobseeker Support Work Ready benefits for selected reasons during the period 2021 to 2023, by reason for cancellation and calendar year
- 3. What are the guidelines used to determine if an individual is 'work ready'?*

Clients are assessed for 'work readiness' based on their individual circumstances. The Ministry does have broader operational policy guidelines Jobseeker Support (JS) as outlined below.

To qualify for JS a person must generally be available for and seeking full-time employment. Depending on their circumstances, JS clients have specific obligations. These include full-time or part-time work obligations, or work preparation obligations. Guidance on deciding what obligations apply can be found on the Ministry's website here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/work-or-work-preparation-obligations-01.html.

In some situations, the Ministry may grant a temporary exemption or deferral from some or all of a client's obligations. The exemption is granted for a specified period (depending on their circumstances) and after that period ends, the relevant obligation(s) will apply. For more information see:

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/exemptions-01.html
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/deferrals-01.html

Some people may also get JS on the ground of a health condition, injury, or disability. People in this situation have limited capacity to seek, undertake, or be available for full-time employment. Work obligations or work preparation obligations for these clients are determined based on their capacity for work. Guidance for deciding work capacity can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/jobseeker-support/deciding-work-obligations-for-primary-client-health-01.html.

4. *What evidence does MSD have regarding the outcomes of job seminars? This may include independent reports, evaluations of the requirement to attend, anecdotal research, etc.*

Employment Seminars are just one of many tools that the Ministry uses to actively engage with job seekers and provide them opportunities to shift into work. It is a combination of activities, interventions, referrals to jobs, providers and services, as well as engagements with employers which lead to jobseekers shifting into work. Because of this the Ministry does not directly correlate a singular engagement – like Kōrero Mahi, to exits from benefit into employment.

Since November 27th 2023 I request:

5. *A copy of all advice to Ministers on 'work-check ins' and job seminars.*

I have identified one report containing information in scope of your request:

- REP/24/2/223 – Report – *Delivering on your priorities*, dated 14 March 2024.

The four appendices to this report contain advice to the Minister on work check-ins and job seminars. I have decided to provide you with an excerpt of relevant advice under section 16(1)(e) of the Act, as the primary subject of the report and the appendices is outside of the scope of your request.

Please note that some information is withheld from this summary under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being

which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials. The release of this information is likely to prejudice the ability of government to consider advice and the wider public interest of effective government would not be served.

Option		Benefits	Trade-offs
<p>Early steps to improve engagement</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Kōrero Mahi – Let’s Talk Work</p> <p>Commenced February 2024, targeting all new Jobseeker Support Work Ready clients who are not in another service</p> <p>Held within two weeks of someone’s New Application Appointment</p> <p>The seminar component is delivered in a group setting, followed by 1:1 engagement and activity setting with MSD staff</p> <p>Seminar covers employment support, opportunities and clients obligations; 1:1 focuses on keeping clients activated in their employment search and locking them into a next step</p>	<p>Early employment engagement</p> <p>Dedicated employment conversations (i.e. not combined with income discussion)</p> <p>Timely follow-up on employment discussions had at benefit application appointment</p> <p>Includes one-on-one engagement with Employment-focused staff</p> <p>Opportunity for referral to other employment supports</p>	<p>Not all Jobseeker Support recipients (i.e. only Jobseeker Work Ready)</p> <p>Group activity aspects may not suit all people’s needs</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Getting prepared for work seminars</p> <p>One to-many-approach, delivering tailored support for jobseekers who have deferred full time work obligations and aren’t in Dedicated Case Management (for those clients that the seminar is suitable)</p> <p>Will have some regional and local variation, but will take a principled approach</p>	<p>Keeps clients activated in looking or preparing for work</p> <p>Adds another tool in MSD’s toolbox to engage with client</p> <p>Mitigates some of the effects of moving Dedicated Case Management away from these cohorts</p> <p>Regions/sites can tailor an approach that supports their client base and</p>	<p>This cohort may have a variety of barriers to work, and by nature seminars will not be targeted to address more specific client needs</p> <p>The activity wouldn’t be work testable or work-prep for all clients (will require further investigation and refinement of the target cohort)</p>

	Would take place within the first 13 weeks on benefit, but may also target clients who have been on benefit longer	<p>maximises local opportunities</p> <p>Could be set as a work-preparation obligation (where appropriate)</p> <p>Opportunity for referral to other services</p>	<p>A group setting may not be appropriate for some of this cohort. Further investigation will be needed to consider other forms of delivery that are equally high value</p>
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6. A summary of consultation on the above (5), and a list of those consulted.

The advice prepared on this topic was undertaken by the Ministry's Service Delivery and Policy teams. No further consultations were undertaken.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

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 my decision on your request, 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



Magnus O'Neill
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services