



9 AUG 2018

Mr Alastair Robertson
fyi-request-8041-24cbbead@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Robertson

On 15 June 2018, you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information in relation to Accommodation Supplement applications.

For the sake of clarity I will answer each of your questions in turn:

- *The guidelines that the Ministry for Social Development uses in establishing the validity of rents paid by applicants. Also, do the guidelines require any checks to see if the rent is paid to any related party?*

An Accommodation Supplement is paid to a client to help with the payment of their accommodation costs.

Accommodation costs do not always need to be verified. However, it is the Ministry's policy that rent and board costs should be verified where costs claimed are unusually high or where there are doubts about the authenticity of a claim. This may include when a client is paying accommodation costs to another family member. Additionally, all costs claimed by home owners need to be verified.

The following information is used to evaluate whether costs claimed are unusually high:

Cost type		Maximum Threshold Amount
Board	All Areas	\$400.00 a week for all Accommodation Supplement areas
Rent	Area 1	\$500.00 plus \$50.00 a week for each dependent child
	Area 2	\$500.00 plus \$50.00 a week for each dependent child
	Area 3	\$400.00 plus \$50.00 a week for each dependent child
	Area 4	\$350.00 plus \$50.00 a week for each dependent child

Please find attached the Ministry's intranet page which outlines the process and practice guidelines for determining if a client's rent or board costs are above the threshold for their area and household size.

- *Also, I would like to know the number of Accommodation Supplement applications accepted for persons receiving Superannuation and who a) have a Parent Resident Visa and b) have a Parent Retirement Resident Visa, and c) the number of Accommodation Supplement applications rejected for each of those two resident visa categories*

To qualify for New Zealand Superannuation, a client must:

- have been resident and present in New Zealand for not less than 10 years since the age of 20. This must include 5 years or more since the age of 50.
- and
- be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident (that is, not be in New Zealand unlawfully, here on a temporary entry visa or a temporary permit); or,
 - be deemed to hold a residence class visa in New Zealand under the Immigration Act 2009 (eg Australian citizens or residents); and,
 - be ordinarily resident in New Zealand on the date of application.

Some clients have been granted permanent residence on the condition that they will be supported by a New Zealand sponsor.

Before a decision can be made about the client's application for a benefit, any reasons why their sponsor can no longer support the client must first be determined and verified. This is done for the purpose of assessing whether the client is in hardship.

To be able to receive an Accommodation Supplement a client must:

- meet a cash asset test
- meet an income test
- have accommodation costs
- be a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident (i.e. not in New Zealand unlawfully, here on a temporary entry visa or a temporary permit) or
- be deemed to hold a residence class visa in New Zealand under the Immigration Act 2009 (e.g. Australian citizens or residents) and
- generally be ordinarily resident in New Zealand.

The residency status of a client is recorded in a reportable manner as this is required to determine eligibility to financial assistance, however details of the specific visa type such as Parent Resident Visa or a Parent Retirement Resident Visa, if recorded, is only noted in individual client files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. As such, I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act and hope that you find the information that I have been able to provide helpful. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

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 shortly. The Ministry will do this by publishing this letter on the Ministry of Social Development'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, regarding the Accommodation Supplement 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.

Yours sincerely



Cassandra Wise
Team Manager Issues Resolution

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Online Change of Address/Accommodation costs

This page provides the process and practice guidelines for Online Change of Address and/or Accommodation costs submitted through myMSD, managed by Centralised Services Mangere & Rotorua.

On this Page:

Exceptions

Exception	Action required
Expired/Suspended benefit	<p>If suspended due to "address unknown", it is appropriate to resume if a new address is declared.</p> <p>If not appropriate to resume;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add/change address, costs (any home ownership costs still need to be forwarded), contact details and district code • Add a MVN that, "Address has been updated but benefit could not be resumed due to <insert suspension/expiry reason>. Benefit and supplementary reassessment is required upon resumption."
Client is in receiving Residential Care/Support Subsidy (RCS or RSS)	<p>Cancelled Benefit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the address/contact details <p>Do not action. Email SPS Whangarei to review subsidy accordingly; MSD_RCS@msd.govt.nz MSD_RSS@msd.govt.nz</p>
Change in home owner costs	<p>Applicable where the change includes one or more of the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortgage costs • HNZ mortgage repayment costs • Mortgage protection insurance costs • House insurance costs • Repairs and maintenance costs • Ground lease costs • Body corporate fees • Council rates • Water rates <p>Add/change address, contact details and district code as applicable and;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward the CEN to the office's Ready for Processing queue as MyMSD will have prompted the client to provide verification.
Client's rent or board costs are above the threshold for their area and household size	<p>If costs are over the threshold;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add/change address, contact details and district code • Send a letter to the client requesting verification • Add to CEN – why AS has not been updated and that the client has been advised to provide verification of their costs in order to update their record accordingly. • Complete the CEN and task
Cost Type:	Maximum Threshold Amount:

	<p>Board: \$400.00 a week for all AS areas</p> <p>Rent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area 1 - \$500.00 plus \$50.00 a week for each dependent child Area 2 - \$500.00 plus \$50.00 a week for each dependent child Area 3 - \$400.00 plus \$50.00 a week for each dependent child Area 4 - \$350.00 plus \$50.00 a week for each dependent child
<p>NZS or Veterans client moving overseas</p>	<p>Do not make any changes:</p> <p>Email: International_Services@msd.govt.nz [mailto:International_Services@msd.govt.nz]</p> <p>Stating that the client has declared a move overseas and where the information can be found (i.e. previous CEN).</p> <p>(Copy & paste email into CEN and complete)</p>
<p>International Services district codes</p>	<p>Check the IOBI (portability inquiry screen) in SWIFTT to ascertain if the client is in receipt of a portable pension.</p> <p>Portable pension current or suspended – email: International_Services@msd.govt.nz [mailto:International_Services@msd.govt.nz] to review accordingly.</p> <p>(Copy & paste email into CEN and complete)</p> <p>No Portable pension or cancelled – update record BAU (address, contact details, district code, AS costs)</p>
<p>Accommodation Supplement manual override</p>	<p>Add/change address, contact details, district code and accommodation costs in the SADTA screen but do not reassess.</p> <p>Forward to the office's Ready for Processing queue to reassess AS entitlement.</p>
<p>Same accommodation costs recorded against Special Benefit</p>	<p>Manually process the change in accommodation costs and forward to the office's Ready for Processing queue to reassess SPB.</p>
<p>Client changes from mortgage to rent or board (or vice versa), OR mortgage to mortgage</p>	<p>Suspend AS from FAD and issue the LSUM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add/change address, contact details and district code • FWD to the Service Centre's Ready for Processing queue <p>A letter will need to be sent to the client to advise that their AS has been suspended.</p> <p>You will not need to send a letter to the client requesting verification as the system (myMSD) will advise the client.</p>
<p>YP/YPP clients</p>	<p>Do not action.</p> <p>Forward to Youth Services who will complete all actions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign in CMS to the "YSSU Ready for Processing" queue
<p>Client is receiving Disability Allowance</p>	<p>If any of the following costs are included in the SDAWA screen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardening, lawns and outside window cleaning • Transport – counselling • Transport – disability

- Transport – personal health

And there has been a change of address we will:

- send a letter requesting verification of any changes to their costs
- note CMS with actions taken
- forward to the sites Work on Hold queue

“Doctor in other District”

When the district is changed, SWIFTT will display the above message. We need to check if it is feasible for the client to live in that district and travel to a doctor in another district. If feasible, no further action is required.

If you deem the distance as not feasible, this should be forwarded to the offices Ready for Processing queue for follow up.

This can be searched in Google maps and compared with the districts under “Regional Maps” in Global. If you are unsure about the feasibility of travel, please discuss with a SME or T and Q.

Please complete the relevant action as per below table, when water rates are received as part of a COA task.

Scenario	Recommended Action
Change of address, water rates listed in SWIFTT	Update client record BAU and delete the current water rates before reassessment, complete CEN.
Change in accommodation cost, same address, no change to current water rates	Update client record BAU, complete reassessment with current water rates listed, complete CEN.
Same address, change in current water rates	Update client record BAU, complete the reassessment with current water rates (do not action the change) and Forward to the SC Work on hold queue to action once verification is received.
No water rates listed, new water rates declared (same or different address)	Update client record BAU, check for verification of new costs in the scanned documents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If verification is present, add the water rates into SADTA and continue any supplementary reassessment. • If verification is not present, do not add the water rates, complete the CEN.

Water rates

*When a change in water rates is declared the system will ask the client to provide verification.

If the client states they are a HNZ client;

Social housing client

- All Social Housing changes will be updated by Centralised Unit Housing – do not update any information for this reason.
- Assign the CEN to the Centralised Unit Housing Ready for Processing work queue.

Allowable childcare costs can be included in Temporary Additional Support where the childcare provider is not a recognised childcare organisation.

Client is receiving TAS and has declared childcare costs

SWIFTT will not automatically include childcare costs as allowable costs for Temporary Additional Support. The client must provide verification of their childcare costs.

Check STAWA and see if childcare costs have been added

If so:

- Add new costs if declared and are different to existing costs or
- If costs are the same, complete STASC review (BAU)

If not: Refer to Service Centre RFP queue for a discussion to be held with the client regarding these costs.

Note: When forwarding a Client Event Note to the Service Centre or other unit, clear and accurate notes must be left to explain what action has been taken (if any), and what action is required by the office/unit.

Certain Situations

Change of address and/or costs - more than 30 days in the past

- If current declaration dates back more than 3 months and/or there are multiple changes to circumstances during this time, **do not** action. Send a letter to the client requesting verification of costs and date of change. Forward this CEN to the SC RFP queue with notes advising a discussion is required.
- If current declaration is within three months, and there are **not** multiple changes in circumstances;
 - Complete change of address
 - Update district code
 - Update contact details *and/or*
 - Accommodation costs BAU
 - Complete the CEN

Future change of address/costs

- Where the future change is *within* the current working week;
 - Process the action BAU
 - Where the future change is from FAD of the *following* working week;
 - Copy & Paste the COA details from STP into a new CEN (Subject: Future COA/Costs) - this is so there is a record of the client making contact for these changes
 - In the body of the note add "Task added to STP to be processed on <insert date>"
 - Add the action in STP, adding the delay date as the 'day before the change' (this is so it returns to the queue for processing at the appropriate time)
- Note: if it is a COA for a cancelled benefit, update contact details immediately. There is no need to delay the action.

Effective date is prior to benefit commencement date

Add/change address and reassess supplementary assistance from the date benefit commenced (remember to apply the 14 day rule [http://hiya/Content/Documents/Images/Pathways_14_Day_Rule_Flowchart.gif] where applicable)

Another user is in the record

If you receive a message that another user is in the SWIFTT record, make contact with that user by phone and ask if they have finished with the record before continuing. If contact cannot be made, put the record on hold and check back at 10 minute intervals.

Duplicate records

This is when the client has declared the same information more than once in the same day and the action appears to have been completed by another user. You first need to check that;

There are no other multi-assigned tasks in STP and

No recent tasks in the client event notes before you result your current task as 'duplicate'.

You should always check that the information in your declaration matches the changes that have already been made. Ensure all steps have been completed correctly;

Address/contact details changed (incl. partner and children's records)

- District code change and AS costs updated
- Reassessment of supplementary assistance done *and*
- Any necessary referrals are done e.g. manual rate in place - forward to the office's Ready for Processing queue.

Multiple Declarations

This is when the client has made multiple declarations for an address and/or accommodation cost change, within the time frames stated below. This may be due to the client being in emergency housing and/or moving around friends and family due to this. This may also be due to a client trying to receive increased payments.

If within 14 days and

The client has moved two or more times.

OR

This is the client's second or more increase in costs, or switch between rent and board (or board to rent).

- Call the client to confirm new costs and accommodation type. If no contact, do not action changes and send an email and letter requesting verification. Forward CEN to the office's RFPQ advising a discussion is required with the client regarding their changing living situation.

If more than 14 days and

The client has increased rent costs at the same address more than once within 6 months.

- Do not process. Call client or send an email and letter (if no contact) to explain that verification is needed, and entitlement will be assessed once received. Under tenancy law rent cannot be increased within this time frame - <https://www.tenancy.govt.nz/rent-bond-and-bills/rent/increasing-rent/> [<https://www.tenancy.govt.nz/rent-bond-and-bills/rent/increasing-rent/>].

Forward to SC RFP queue. Create a MVN not to action any changes until verification is received.

OR

The client has changed address and/or costs frequently (four or more changes within 1-2 months).

Update address, SC and District, do not update costs.

- Request verification of costs and/or address (via phone or email/letter).
- Forward to SC RFP queue. Create a MVN not to action any changes until verification is received.

Remember to complete ALL relevant tasks open in CMS (this will prevent rework)

Issued amount for the client or partner assessed to be less than \$0.00 (zero)

This message will appear when;

- The client's (and partner, if any) outgoing payments i.e. debt offsets, are more than the benefit amount payable *and/or*
- The client is no longer entitled to supplementary assistance due to a change in costs e.g. AS costs now below the threshold

Complete a DREW assessment to check entitlement.

- If nil entitlement, **SUSPEND** appropriate assistance from the effective date (date address/costs changed)
- If still eligible;

Reduce the debt offset amount to equal the payment amount due

Add a MVN advising, "Debt offset has been reduced to <insert amount> due to a change in accommodation costs resulting in the 'issued amount being less than zero'. Please increase the offset to the original amount of <insert amount> when entitlement increases."

Complete action BAU

Example: If the client has a debt offset of \$30.00 per week, but the benefit amount due is \$15.00, you will reduce the debt offset to \$15.00.

Payees are greater than the payment due OR you cannot reduce their debt offset (to fix the error message);

- Suspend benefit from FAD
- Complete DREW assessment to work out any benefit or supplementary entitlement
- Pay entitlement to benefit or supplementary assistance via backdated review (BDR)
- Edit the letter to advise client to make other payment arrangements as the payee has not been paid

If you find that the client's benefit has been suspended for some time due to payees being greater than their benefit entitlement, send a letter to advise the client that their benefit will remain suspended for this reason and that this can be resolved by the client paying for their payee direct from their bank account, rather than the benefit payment i.e. rent payment of \$400.00.

A potential change of benefit entitlement

If a client has indicated that they are now living with a partner, but don't have a partner in CMS/SWIFTT,

- Suspend the benefit from FAD and forward the action to the office's RFPQ for follow up

This process will also apply where the client has indicated that they no longer live with a partner, but have a partner showing in CMS/SWIFTT.

Note: Clients often do not list their children as "living with them", and usually only provide details of other people in the home i.e. siblings and flatmates. In the case of change of address or accommodation costs only, continue to process the action as the children are still included, unless there is a CEN to state otherwise.

A potential change of benefit entitlement - NZS or VP clients

This is where a client has declared they are single and living alone or have declared a partner and this differs to the information we hold.

Update record with the change of address, contact details, district code (for the client declaring the change only), then forward to the appropriate queue to review assistance as follows;

NZ Super

Business Group: Seniors

Event type: Change of Circumstances

Sub-type: NZ Super Living Situation

Veterans Pension

Business Group: Seniors

Event type: Change of Circumstances

Sub-type: Veterans Pension Living Details

Client receiving Living at Home Rate or is moving in with parents

If a Jobseeker Support client aged 18-19 has indicated that they have moved back home with their parents, or are moving out, we will review the benefit rate in the SDT1A screen in SWIFTT;

- Change the 'Living at home? (Y/N)' field to [Y or N] press ENTER
- Reassess benefit via SPBR screen
- Effective date [this will be the date the client moved or FAD - remember to use the 14day rule http://hiya/Content/Documents/Images/Pathways_14_Day_Rule_Flowchart.gif]
- Reason for reassessment [347] press ENTER

Accommodation Supplement suspended due to "Address unknown"

Where this occurs, check client event notes for the reason why, e.g. "client has advised they have no fixed abode". If the client declares a new address, resume the AS from the date the client changed their address/costs or from the date advised in the CEN.

In the SSUPI screen in SWIFTT, select the Accommodation Supplement and [RES] to Resume

- Enter date received [today's date]
- Effective date [date client changed address/costs] and ENTER

Change accommodation costs in the SADTA screen and reassess AS accordingly.

Client indicates they "would like to check if they can get extra payments for their accommodation costs"

In the 'Products and Services' tab in CMS, select 'Financial Assistance' and 'New Request for Financial Assistance'.

- In 'Reason for financial assistance' write "Extra help - ASup request" - click SAVE.
- Click on the green action toggle and select 'Create Letter'.
- The correct letter template will pre-fill. Click Next > Save > and 'Launch ECS Letter'.
- Use the 'from and to' dates from the request added in CMS for the date boxes in the letter. View the draft and select 'Overnight print'.

Different residential and postal address - Agent?

If a client has indicated a different residential address and postal address *and* has a current Agent on file (check MVN and PYECC screen), we need to make contact with the client to confirm whether the postal address is for the Agent or not. This is required as Agents who have authority to receive client mail will have an indicator on the system activated to reflect this.

- If the client wants their *mail sent to the Agent*, in the 'Client Contact' tab in CMS (client home page) select the green action toggle and 'edit' the agents details - select 'Receive client's mail' (or Select 'New' if you are adding an agent and complete the necessary fields)
- If all *mail is to go to the client*, remove the tick from the agent to 'Receive client's mail' box and update the postal address in CMS and the PYECC screen then forward CEN to the office's RFPQ to advise that the agent MVN needs updating.

Temporary Accommodation Assistance (TAA)

If a client resides in Canterbury who is paying temporary accommodation and receiving Temporary Additional Assistance (<https://quakeaccommodation.govt.nz/apply-for-temporary-accommodation-assistance>), and are still maintaining their property (i.e. homeowner), their residential address in CMS should display their own property and the postal should be updated to show their temporary address.

A MVN must also be added if this update is made.

You will need to email CETAS - CETA_Client_Query@msd.govt.nz to inform them of this change.

Different postal address?

If the client requests for their postal address to be updated to an address that is not their temporary address (i.e. PO Box), you will need to change the client's postal address to what is being requested and add the client's temporary address to a MVN (select 'client interaction' as the note subject and extend the expiry date to 31/12/2019' - this is the date the TAA is available to (<http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/temporary-accommodation-assistance/expiry-01.html>)).

Assets from sale of a home

From 19 April 2017, the proceeds from the sale of a home are considered a cash asset for the purpose of Accommodation Supplement for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Sale of a home already disregarded

Clients, whose sale of a home has already been disregarded as a cash asset for the first 12 months (prior to 19 April changes), will not be affected by the policy change and can continue to have the proceeds of the sale disregarded for the first 12 months.

However, if the client has a change of circumstances that affects the rate of Accommodation Supplement before the end of the 12 month period, then the proceeds from the sale of the home must be used to reassess AS entitlement.

Where this happens we will suspend the AS from FAD and forward the action to the office's RFPQ to review further.

Refugee client receiving EB and TAS

Clients with a refugee status and in receipt of TAS may need a manual rate of payment added in the STASC screen. To decide whether this needs to happen, click [here](http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/business-groups/helping-clients/service-delivery/centralised-services/centralised-processing-unit-cpu-/news/2017/income-refugee-tas.html) [http://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/business-groups/helping-clients/service-delivery/centralised-services/centralised-processing-unit-cpu-/news/2017/income-refugee-tas.html] for the calculation and further instructions.

Client has declared nil accommodation costs

Suspend the AS from the date that the client has declared accommodation costs have stopped from.

Use SSUPI to suspend AS if;

- The client is receiving a main benefit or
- Receiving other non-beneficiary assistance e.g. DA or TAS

Use SBSR to suspend AS if;

- The client is receiving AS only through non-beneficiary assistance

International Address

To update the client's record with an international address, follow the steps outlined in the document below;

Registered Benefit

Where the benefit is in a registered state, update contact details only.

Forward any AS cost information to the office's RFPO to follow up

Study link clients

Do not action for clients who are showing under the 'Studylink' district in SWIFTT.

Forward to Studylink using the STP queue "Studylink BCP".

Copy & paste all COA details in to the 'notes' section of STP including the reason for referral.

Staff Assistance

Staff members will have a special cautions note on their CMS record which will appear when you enter the record.

Staff members receiving Non-Bene (Working for Families) assistance - forward to the Staff Assistance Unit (via email: Staff_Assistance_Unit@workandincome.govt.nz [mailto:Staff_Assistance_Unit@workandincome.govt.nz]) to process. Copy & paste all COA details into the email.

Copy & paste the 'sent' email into the CEN note and result STP accordingly.

For Staff members who are receiving a main benefit - process BAU.

[International Address \(Word 280.98KB\) \[http://doogle/documents/business-groups/helping-clients/service-delivery/centralised-services/centralised-services-cpu/online-services/international-addresses.docx\]](http://doogle/documents/business-groups/helping-clients/service-delivery/centralised-services/centralised-services-cpu/online-services/international-addresses.docx)

Content owner: [Work and Income Centralised Processing Unit \(CPU\)](#) Last updated: 19 June 2018