

Disabled People’s Experiences of Accessing MSD Support Funds

**April 2023**

A report for DPA prepared by Angela-Marie Desmarais

Contents

[Executive summary 4](#_Toc133076234)

[Background 6](#_Toc133076235)

[Support Funds eligibility criteria 6](#_Toc133076236)

[Disabled People in the labour market 7](#_Toc133076237)

[Data on Support Funds 8](#_Toc133076238)

[Budget and spending 8](#_Toc133076239)

[Access to the funding maximum 9](#_Toc133076240)

[A decline in applications 9](#_Toc133076241)

[Inconsistencies in data 10](#_Toc133076242)

[Data on inflation 11](#_Toc133076243)

[Disabled people’s experiences of accessing Support Funds 12](#_Toc133076244)

[Support Funds can be difficult to access 12](#_Toc133076245)

[Applying is a difficult and laborious process 13](#_Toc133076246)

[The ‘fund of last resort’ 14](#_Toc133076247)

[Access to transport support 14](#_Toc133076248)

[Self-employment challenges 15](#_Toc133076249)

[Declined applications 16](#_Toc133076250)

[Reasonable accommodations 17](#_Toc133076251)

[Support Funds can be difficult to maintain 17](#_Toc133076252)

[Renewing funds 17](#_Toc133076253)

[A drop in applications 18](#_Toc133076254)

[Employing support people 18](#_Toc133076255)

[Funding caps 19](#_Toc133076256)

[Support Funds can be inequitable 20](#_Toc133076257)

[Awareness of Support Funds 20](#_Toc133076258)

[Access to equipment 21](#_Toc133076259)

[Access to interpreters 21](#_Toc133076260)

[Access to offsite work events 22](#_Toc133076261)

[Impact of inaccessible formats 23](#_Toc133076262)

[Ageing out 23](#_Toc133076263)

[Disabled people are discouraged from applying for Support Funds 24](#_Toc133076264)

[In employment 24](#_Toc133076265)

[In education 24](#_Toc133076266)

[Barriers to funding can impact employment outcomes 25](#_Toc133076267)

[An Enabling Good Lives approach 25](#_Toc133076268)

[Conclusion 27](#_Toc133076269)

[Recommendations 28](#_Toc133076270)

[Appendices 29](#_Toc133076271)

[Appendix A: MSD support available 29](#_Toc133076272)

[Support Fund assistance categories 29](#_Toc133076273)

[Modification grant 30](#_Toc133076274)

[MSD programmes 30](#_Toc133076275)

[Productivity allowance 31](#_Toc133076276)

[Appendix B: Data on Support Funds (2021) 32](#_Toc133076277)

[Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) 32](#_Toc133076278)

[Parliamentary Written Question 16186 (2021) 33](#_Toc133076279)

[Parliamentary Written Question 26088 (2021) 33](#_Toc133076280)

[Parliamentary Written Question 26089 (2021) 34](#_Toc133076281)

[Parliamentary Written Question 26097 (2021) 34](#_Toc133076282)

[Parliamentary Written Question 26098 (2021) 35](#_Toc133076283)

[Appendix C: Data on Support Funds (2022) 36](#_Toc133076284)

[Parliamentary Written Question 17438 (2022) 36](#_Toc133076285)

[Parliamentary Written Question 17439 (2022) 37](#_Toc133076286)

[Parliamentary Written Question 17440 (2022) 37](#_Toc133076287)

[Parliamentary Written Question 17448 (2022) 38](#_Toc133076288)

[Parliamentary Written Question 17449 (2022) 38](#_Toc133076289)

[Parliamentary Written Question 17452 (2022) 39](#_Toc133076290)

[Appendix D: Inconsistencies in data on Support Funds 40](#_Toc133076291)

[Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) vs. 17439 (2022) 40](#_Toc133076292)

[Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) vs. 17440 (2022) 41](#_Toc133076293)

[Parliamentary Written Question 17438 (2022) vs. 19557 (2022) 41](#_Toc133076294)

[References 43](#_Toc133076295)

# Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to review the Ministry of Social Development’s Job Support and Training Support Funding scheme and provide insights into the experiences of disabled people in accessing the scheme. This report has been possible thanks to Disabled Persons Assembly NZ members sharing their experiences of finding information about, receiving, and appropriateness of Support Funds.

The Support Funds scheme is greatly appreciated by those who are able to access it and many of the people we spoke to emphasized that their continued involvement in the labour workforce was a direct result of being able to access these funds. However, members shared insights into issues with the scheme, including that Support Funds can be:

* difficult to access;
* difficult to maintain;
* inequitable;
* disabled people are discouraged from applying; and
* these barriers to funding can impact employment outcomes.

Despite there being a real need for such a fund, the above factors are thought to have contributed to a significant drop in applications for Support Funds over the past decade, as shown below in recent data released through Parliamentary Written Questions (see Appendix B and C), which reveals drops in:

* allocated budget (-16%);
* spending on Job Support (-38%);
* spending on Training Support (-83%);
* individuals receiving Job Support (-44%); and
* Job Support applications submitted (-41%).

Notably, the maximum funding amount of $16,900 has not risen since the fund was introduced in 1994, despite an 89.2 percent (general) and 155.5 percent (wages) rise in inflation and a 47.1 percent (general) and 60.9 percent (wages) drop in purchasing power over the same time period.[[1]](#endnote-2)

It is therefore strongly recommended that the Ministry:

* increase the maximum Job Support Funding amount in line with inflation, living wage and cost of living;
* increase the maximum Training Support funding amount in line with inflation, living wage and cost of living and review the period of time it covers;
* increase the Support Funds budget in line with inflation, living wage, cost of living, and population increase;
* review the Support Funds eligibility criteria and application process, in collaboration with disabled people;
* expand eligibility criteria and streamline processes to make accessing funds more accessible for all disabled people, in particular those who are self-employed or consulting;
* raise awareness about function and availability of Support Funds with disabled people and employers;
* review the application of the ‘fund of last resort’ criteria;
* clarify the term ‘reasonable accommodations’ to provide clearer expectations for employers;
* establish review panels made up of disabled people, as is the case with Enabling Good Lives; and
* undertake a formal external evaluation of Support Funds policies and processes, ensuring that this is disabled-led.

The feedback from disabled people shared in this report reflects experiences over the period of time before the transfer of Support Funds administration from Workbridge back to the Ministry of Social Development in March 2023. Findings included in this report provide valuable insights for any future reviews of Support Funds.

# Background

## Support Funds eligibility criteria

Job Support and Training Support are funded by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and have been administered by Workbridge since 1994. At the time of writing this report, MSD announced that the administration and management of these funds would be going back to MSD during the first quarter of 2023.[[2]](#endnote-3) Once someone is eligible for Job Support or Training Support (Support Funds), there are several support assistance categories they can apply under. Additionally, there are some supports that can be paid directly to their employer (see Appendix A).

In order to access funding for employment support, disabled people must fulfil a list of criteria and complete application forms that have, until recently, only been available online in PDF format.[[3]](#endnote-4) [[4]](#endnote-5) Since moving back to MSD, these forms are available on the Work and Income NZ website alongside Word documents and alternate formats in Māori, Easy Read, large print, audio file, and Braille.[[5]](#endnote-6) Comprehensive information about eligibility criteria, what you can get, and how to apply for both Job Support and Training Support, is now available all in one place on the same Work and Income NZ webpage. MSD advises that to be eligible for Support Funds, you must:

* have a disability or a health condition that is likely to last longer than 6 months;
* need to pay for extra support to do a job or training because of your health condition or disability, these should be costs a non-disabled person would not have if they do the same job or training;
* be aged 16 to 64 years old;
* be ordinarily resident in New Zealand; and
* be either a New Zealand citizen or resident with the right to work, a refugee or protected person, or a temporary class visa holder with the right to work.

You are not eligible for Job Support or Training Support if ACC or the Ministry of Health are already covering your job or training costs.

Disabled people can apply for Job Support if they are in employment or self-employment. However, eligibility criteria differ between the two.[[6]](#endnote-7) Disabled people in employment are eligible for Job Support if their job is considered open employment, meaning that anyone can apply for the job and the job is not reserved or created for a person with a disability. They must also have an employment contract that sets out conditions of employment, and the job must pay at least the adult minimum wage, or a similar rate of pay that would be paid to a non-disabled person doing the same job. There are some situations where a person would not be eligible. For example, if they are employed by an organisation that receives funding from any other government source to provide job opportunities.

When self-employed, disabled people seeking Job Support must meet different criteria. For example, they must receive the net returns of the business, work at least 15 hours per week, receive a wage or salary that a person without a disability would receive for doing the same job, and demonstrate to be receiving at least a minimum wage. Additionally, the business must not be a hobby-type operation, meaning its purpose must be to create a profit.

## Disabled People in the labour market

The most recent Statistics NZ Disability Survey reports that 24 percent of the total New Zealand population are disabled, and that only 45 percent of disabled adults are employed compared to 72 percent of non-disabled adults.[[7]](#endnote-8) At the time of writing this report, the most recent Statistics NZ labour market statistics data for disability showed that 41.5 percent of disabled people were employed in the June 2022 quarter compared with 80.4 percent of non-disabled people.[[8]](#endnote-9) This gap has widened since the previous reporting period.[[9]](#endnote-10)

There are many systemic barriers that affect disabled people’s participation in the labour market.[[10]](#endnote-11) On top of societal attitudes, assumptions, and the devaluation of disabled people, digital inequity and a lack of accessible and affordable transport and housing also present significant barriers. Employment plays an important role in a person’s well-being through providing not just income but “social connection and a sense of purpose”. [[11]](#endnote-12) However, there continues to be a disproportionate rate of unemployment for disabled people in New Zealand.

Working Matters, an action plan to ensure disabled people and people with health conditions have an equal opportunity to employment, was released by MSD in July 2020. It stated that 74 percent of disabled people not in paid work would like to be employed if a job was available.[[12]](#endnote-13) Despite the demand for workers currently being at a record high,[[13]](#endnote-14) there is still clearly an underutilised disabled workforce, highlighting the profound impact that barriers have on the employment of disabled people.

In contrast, disabled people have a higher rate of self-employment at 24 percent, compared with 17 percent of the non-disabled working-age population.[[14]](#endnote-15) However, the support needs of disabled people entering self-employment can be higher than for non-disabled people embarking on the same journey.[[15]](#endnote-16)

## Data on Support Funds

Across 2021 and June 2022, a number of Parliamentary Written Questions were submitted to the Minister of Disability Issues and the Minister for Social Development and Employment. The data in their responses referred to both employed and self-employed disabled people accessing Job Support and Training Support over the past ten years (see Appendix B and C).

### Budget and spending

The total allocated budget for Job Support dropped from $7,526,491 in the 2012/13 financial year to $6,333,659 in 2020/21.[[16]](#endnote-17) This budget allocation provides funding for both Job Support and Training Support. Although it is acknowledged not all people that require support need to access the maximum funding amount, the 2020/21 budget would theoretically only equate to approximately 375 disabled people accessing the full amount. This indicates severe underfunding.

Data also shows that there has been a steady drop in spending on both Job Support and Training Support. For example, the total spend on Job Support in the 2012/13 financial year was $6,457,908 compared to 2020/21, when $4,003,342 was spent.[[17]](#endnote-18) For Training Support, the total spend in the 2012/13 financial year was $648,623 compared to 2020/21, when $112,156 was spent.[[18]](#endnote-19) The Minister advised that the average funding per applicant during the 2019/20 financial year was $4,957.00 and the average funding per applicant for the 2020/21 financial year was $4,021.00 as at 31 March 2021.[[19]](#endnote-20)

From the Parliamentary Written Questions accessed online, it has been calculated that there has been a 16 percent drop in allocated budget, a 38 percent drop in spending on Job Support and an 83 percent drop in spending on Training Support.

### Access to the funding maximum

A very small number of people were able to access the Job Support funding maximum of $16,900. The total number of applicants accessing the full amount fluctuated between 16-49 in a ten-year period.[[20]](#endnote-21) This includes self-employed applicants because they are also classified as Job Support applicants. Applications from those in self-employment fluctuated between 0-7[[21]](#endnote-22) across the same time period.

### A decline in applications

There has been a steady decrease in the number of applications being made for Job Support. This is unlikely to be due to a lessened need for support and may be indicative of other factors. For example, difficulty engaging in the application process, as suggested by many disabled people we spoke to.

In the 2020/21 financial year, which is the most recent full year of data, 933 individual disabled people accessed Job Support, with a total of 1,329 applications made.[[22]](#endnote-23) [[23]](#endnote-24) Higher application numbers here can be explained by the fact that disabled people can apply more than once in a one-year period. This data also showed that in the 2012/2013 period, 1,677 individuals received funding through 2,259 applications. Likewise, the number of applications for Training Support dropped significantly, from 699 to 96 between 2012/13 and 2020/21.[[24]](#endnote-25)

From Parliamentary Written Questions accessed online, it was calculated that there has been a 44 percent drop in individuals receiving Job Support and a 41 percent drop in Job Support applications submitted across that ten-year period.

The Ministry of Social Development suggests that the decline in applications for Job Support and the decline in successful applications includes reasons such as:

* the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020 and subsequent flexible and work-from-home working arrangements for many disabled people due to immunity vulnerability;
* advances and improvements in accessibility features of Microsoft and Apple software packages, reducing the need for specialist adaptive software;
* employers being more aware of providing reasonable accommodations to support disabled employees; and
* a drop-off in applications for ineligible medical technologies following information sent out to audiologists.[[25]](#endnote-26)

### Inconsistencies in data

When placing the data released by the Ministry in July 2021 and June 2022 side-by-side, it was noticed that some of the data was inconsistent or contradictory, raising questions of the accuracy and reliability of Support Fund data (see Appendix D).

For example, information on the number of individuals who have received Job Support each year for the last ten years differs significantly between responses to the same question a year apart (Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) vs. 17439 (2022)). Similarly, information on the number of applications for Job Support each year for the last ten years differs significantly between responses to the same question a year apart (Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) vs. 17440 (2022)).

Furthermore, information on total applications for Training Support funding is held centrally. However, unlike with Job Support, the number of individuals receiving funding for Training Support is communicated as not being centrally held (Parliamentary Written Question 17438 (2022) vs. 19557 (2022)).

## Data on inflation

The maximum amount for Job Support annually, and for Training Support over a lifetime, has remained at $16,900 for almost thirty years since the fund was introduced in 1994. In the time period between 1994 (fourth quarter) and 2022 (fourth quarter), there has been an 89.2 percent rise in inflation and a 47.1 percent drop in purchasing power overall. However, when looking solely at wages, the impact is even more pronounced, with data showing a 155.5 percent rise in inflation and a 60.9 percent drop in purchasing power over the same time period.[[26]](#endnote-27)

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand reports inflation changes each quarter, calculating changes in inflation and purchasing power. ‘General’ data is sourced from the Consumer Price Index and ‘wages’ data is sourced calculated on information from the Statistics NZ Quarterly Employment Survey.

# Disabled people’s experiences of accessing Support Funds

In May 2022, Disabled Persons Assembly NZ put a call out to its members to ask them to get in touch with their insights and experiences around MSD’s Support Funds. For example, experiences of finding information about, receiving, or appropriateness of Job Support. The general view expressed by members was that Support Funds is a scheme that is greatly appreciated by those who are able to access it, but that the application process is complicated and eligibility criteria are restrictive. Overall, access to Support Funds is not always seen as equitable.

“My understanding is that job support funds are there to provide equitable support for me as an employee. As appreciative as I am with the support that I do get, it can sometimes seem like it doesn’t quite meet its own ideal.”

This report provides an overview of feedback from DPA members across five themes showing that: Support Funds is difficult to access, Support Funds is difficult to maintain; Support Funds is inequitable; disabled people are discouraged from applying for Support Funds, and that funding barriers have a negative impact on disabled people’s employment outcomes.

## Support Funds can be difficult to access

Support Funds have been difficult to access for most of the people we spoke to. The process of applying was reported to be difficult and laborious, with the application process being restrictive for many. Transport support was seen to be a difficult area to navigate due to a lack of flexibility and additional challenges existed for those who are self-employed or on casual employment contracts. Many disabled people shared that difficulty in accessing Support Funds sometimes led to them being excluded from workplace events.

### Applying is a difficult and laborious process

In our discussions, disabled people shared that accessing Support Funds is a difficult process to navigate in general and that there are multiple barriers to accessing this much-needed support. The term ‘gatekeeping’ came up frequently, with members talking often referring to having to jump “over hurdles” and “through hoops” to access funding. These issues contributed additional barriers to a system that was already seen to be confusing.

The difficult application process was suggested as a reason for disabled people not seeking employment and one member reported staying on the benefit because it was “just too hard” to engage with the Support Funds process. Oftentimes there were delays and people felt like they were “going around in circles”, causing them to give up. The process was easier for those with knowledge of how to phrase their applications, with one person suggesting that “it’s just as much about how you argue your case as what you ask for”. This is something that benefits those with the time and energy to put into their applications and disadvantages those who don’t.

It was widely observed by employment consultants and disabled people accessing the funds that eligibility criteria had tightened significantly over recent years. A consultant shared the experience of a disabled person they supported, whose application was repeatedly questioned over many months before eventually being approved, but they were then left having to restart the whole process and apply for additional funds because their condition had deteriorated while waiting for the initial application to be approved.

The labour of applying for Support Funds was described by people as requiring a lot of emotional and physical effort and involving time-consuming administration. There were also references to time-consuming communication cycles within and between departments, where inquiries and applications would often be delayed, or where people would be shuffled between agencies and departments. One disabled person we spoke to talked about the cycle of being incredibly tired due to a lack of support at work and, as a result, not having the physical or emotional energy to push through the barriers of applying for Support Funds. This felt to them like a “Catch-22” that could be solved by making the application process less laborious.

### The ‘fund of last resort’

Applying for Support Funds is predicated on the statement that it should be “a fund of last resort”. Applicants have to prove they have exhausted all funding avenues before being considered. For example, asking their employer and exploring philanthropic avenues before an application will be considered. Some disabled people receive a great deal of support from their employers already and many feel it is unreasonable to expect employers to foot the bill. Having to ask for support from an employer before securing a job is seen as an extra barrier to employment, with the fear that it will lead to not being successful in securing a role.

It quickly became apparent through these discussions with members that the term evoked a range of feelings. People talked about it giving them the impression that the fund was probably unobtainable. For some, even though their funding was in fact a last resort, they still felt judged by those with decision-making power. They wished that people understood they already receive other supports and were “not simply running to government for a hand-out”. It was also acknowledged that, even with other funding sources, most applicants would not be able to remain employed without access to Support Funds.

When exploring all possible options, people who are under ACC are required to provide, in writing, proof of decline for funding. This involves a laborious process taking up to 20 working days before the Support Funds process can even begin. This can leave disabled people unsupported in the workplace for a significant amount of time and highlights the challenges some people face in demonstrating their request for Support Funds as a ‘last resort’.

### Access to transport support

For many people who require Support Funds for transport, the frequency of their travel needs is indeterminable. Funding for transportation is only approved when public transport is not available or accessible. Despite demonstrating this as the case, one disabled person we spoke to experienced judgement when applying and others felt uncomfortable constantly having to justify their transport choices when oftentimes there was no choice.

For those who have flexible or hybrid work arrangements, accessing Support Funds for travel-related support is particularly challenging due to a lack of flexibility around the uncertainties of when transport support is required. For example, people who can only provide a guestimate of the number of trips they require would often be questioned repeatedly and feel pressured to give a number. This created anxiety for some. People feared that if they didn’t use up all their allocated trips, they wouldn’t be able to get funding for that amount the next time or feared that they would be left short. This was the case for many people whose workplaces shifted to work-from-home during COVID-19 lockdowns and have still not returned to the office. For those people, there was a feeling that an unpredictable work schedule jeopardised their ability to access transport support. Many people who felt Support Funds staff were hesitant to approve applications for transport support suspected this uncertainty came from not understanding the nuances around people’s transport needs.

Disabled people also felt this was a way for the Support Funds to be conservative with funding allocations. They understood the strategy but also felt that it created more administration and a lack of flexibility which resulted in more precariousness around Support Funds in general. However, it was also acknowledged that there were fewer nuances around funding transport than there had been in the past, which was appreciated by many.

### Self-employment challenges

Self-employed disabled people felt that accessing Support Funds posed significant challenges. For example, highly skilled people who have their own consultancy businesses felt they were constantly working outside of a narrow scope, making it harder to be successful in their business and missing out on career opportunities due to an inability to access Support Funds. This was especially the case for those who were new to being self-employed and needing to have audited accounts, which is something most who are self-employed would not otherwise need, creating further financial and access barriers.

Members providing casual contracts for services also found they did not qualify for funding and wished that there was more flexibility to cover these situations, as exists for those under ACC. It was emphasised that a person’s difference in employment type did not change their need for support.

### Declined applications

The Ministry of Social Development stated that a transfer of administration of the funds from Workbridge to them “will allow the Ministry to have a single view of an applicant’s needs and determine all Ministry products and services they may be eligible for and applicants will receive their full and appropriate entitlements.”[[27]](#endnote-28) This is viewed as promising, with a hope that “full and appropriate” is considered in disabled people’s applications for Support Funds because it is the experience of many that applications are often declined due to decisions that are perceived as either unfair or not making sense.

It is understood that not all Support Fund applications will be approved. However, discussions with disabled people revealed that having their lives decided upon by non-disabled people was inappropriate and at times traumatizing. For example, having panels of non-disabled people reviewing decisions on funding was seen as particularly problematic. One member explained having to “plead their case” to non-disabled people in order to “get access to their dignities” and was left feeling like their autonomy was taken away when the application was declined. This is illustrated in the experience of a disabled teacher, who requested for their funding to be used to purchase digital devices for the classroom, enabling them to do their job independently. The review panel made suggestions that the disabled person viewed as removing their agency.

There was also genuine bewilderment at some of the decisions made around eligibility. For example, when applications were partly approved and partly declined even though the equipment being requested would be needed in unison. An example given was when a member was approved funding for some assistive software but not the headset to use it because this was deemed an accommodation to be made by the employer.

### Reasonable accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are something that are generally expected to be covered by employers. The term ‘reasonable’ is open to interpretation and can result in decisions leading to disabled people not receiving funds. Many disabled people we spoke to questioned what the term meant and felt that the flexible interpretation of ‘reasonable’ was used as an excuse, by both Support Funds and employers, for not funding much-needed support. Funding for workspace health and safety meetings is available through Job Support, except in cases where the employer has a legal responsibility to provide that support or when the employer should be providing it as a reasonable accommodation.[[28]](#endnote-29) However, without an agreed definition, this responsibility continues to be up for debate.

For some d/Deaf people we spoke to, challenges in accessing interpreters for end-of-year staff events meant they often missed out on important team-building social interactions, further excluding them from the workplace and resulting in reduced well-being outcomes. This was often due to the cost not being seen as ‘reasonable’ by either Support Funds or the employer. This can also be the case for Staff Christmas events and other social events, where disabled employees miss out on important networking and team building that takes place.

## Support Funds can be difficult to maintain

Additional barriers can exist for those who have already had applications approved. For example, having a choice over how to use the funds, and the time and effort it takes to follow up funding renewals. Some people found the funds too difficult to maintain, resulting in no longer being able to access the support they need to work. Others spoke about struggling to get basic employment support that they had been approved for, which left them feeling frustrated and upset.

### Renewing funds

For those who are able to access Support Funds, the process of reapplying is a difficult and time-consuming process. Disabled people who have life-long impairments expressed frustration at having to continually renew applications and approval even though their situation remains unchanged. This was the case for an amputee who spoke of having to continually demonstrate they were still disabled. However, experiences of renewing support for Blind people we spoke to differed. While some spoke of having to continually prove they are Blind, others who were supported by Blind Low Vision NZ in this process recounted not having to do so very frequently. Some disabled people also shared that they were required to re-apply for funding every time their circumstances changed, e.g. moving house, which was seen as added administration in an already laborious process.

### A drop in applications

The drop in applications for Support Funds seen over the past ten years (see Appendix B and C) could partly be explained by the fact that software and technology are now more likely to incorporate accessibility functions, reducing the need for Blind and low vision people to require as much access to Support Funds for adaptive technology. Likewise, availability of NZ Relay service could be contributing to a reduction in applications for interpreter support. However, many disabled people described giving up on reapplying because of the stressful and inaccessible application process, suggesting that the drop we see in applications over the past ten years is likely to also be representative of inaccessible systems and processes rather than a lack of need.

In fact, the process was described by one person as so “daunting” that they couldn’t progress with the application and others talked about desperately needing the support but not being able to handle the stress of seeking that support formally through Support Funds. Members felt that increasing the funding budget, widening eligibility criteria, and working more closely with disabled people on “fixing the issues” would work towards removing barriers in accessing the fund and make it more likely that people would seek employment, thus improving employment outcomes overall.

### Employing support people

For disabled people who employ their own support staff, there are additional challenges in navigating the Support Funds process. For some, this was the most difficult aspect of the process due to strict rules around how much a support person can be paid, how many hours they can work, and the type of employment contract they can hold. Additionally, the required administration is needlessly time consuming. For example, many people expressed frustration at having to submit a weekly time sheet signed by the disabled person and support staff before funds could be released.

All of these restrictions make it especially difficult for disabled people to find and keep support staff. Members talked about the onerous task of finding someone willing to receive a maximum of $325 per week to manage their own income tax, ACC, KiwiSaver, and Student Loan obligations. One member illustrated their struggle by pointing out that not being able to pay more than minimum wage and not being able to offer more than 20 hours in any given week meant that they couldn’t offer anyone a contract or guarantee of income. As a result, many people were losing good support staff because they would go somewhere else that offered more sustainable employment. There were also fears that the complexity around leaving contractors to pay their own tax would lead some not making any such payments at all, which would expose them, the disabled person, and even the Ministry to significant risk.

In March 2023, minimum wage in New Zealand rose to $22.70,[[29]](#endnote-30) posing further issues for sustaining the payment of support staff out of Support Funds and illustrating the need for the overall budget to increase to allow for changes over time.

### Funding caps

Disabled people feel undervalued when considering the amount of funding available has never increased, despite inflation and cost of living rises. This causes a major barrier for people in obtaining equitable access to the workplace. The maximum amount for Job Support and Training Support has remained $16,900 for almost thirty years since the fund was introduced in 1994.

The key difference with Training Support, in comparison with Job Support, is that the maximum amount able to be accessed per individual is across a lifetime rather than yearly. This is seen as highly problematic as it does not account for retraining into different careers later in life or upskilling to re-enter the workforce after unforeseen situations such as redundancies. Many members expressed concern that younger people may not realise they could need to access further training support later in life.

Once someone’s Training Support is spent, there is no opportunity for more. For the d/Deaf community, this becomes highly problematic because the high cost of interpreters and transcribers means there is a limited number of training events or professional development that they are able to access across a lifetime, which is seen as an inequitable allocation of funds.

The amount of funding available to a person often depends on how much has been accessed in the past and advice on this is not seen as being straightforward. When given a funding cap in any given year, some people do not realise that they can still apply for increased funding in the coming years.

## Support Funds can be inequitable

Not all disabled people have equal access to Support Funds. Depending on a person’s impairment type, the allocation of funding can have varying impact, and a person’s age can exclude them from continuing to access the fund. For those who are not connected with employment consultants or the disabled community, Support Funds is something they may have never even heard of.

### Awareness of Support Funds

When reaching out to members for feedback on their experience of accessing Support Funds, a large number of people remarked that they weren’t even aware that any funding existed and what a difference it would make to their ability to sustain employment had they known it was even an option. Likewise, employers were often unaware of the existence of Support Funds, either leaving them unable to communicate to employees the support available to them, or leaving disabled employees in the position of educating their employer or potential employer on the scheme and what they should be covering. It was widely felt that there had been no awareness training for employers about what is covered by Support Funds.

People also felt that eligibility for the fund was getting stricter around what is perceived as Health and Safety-related activities that the employer should covering. However, disabled people worry that not all employers have the budget for providing support nor the awareness that this might be expected of them and they hope that work would be done to provide employers with all the information they need.

### Access to equipment

A number of disabled people we spoke with use Support Funds to acquire workplace equipment. They shared that they could not do without the equipment they access and that both the support and equipment they get is invaluable. Despite this positive feedback, many people also shared their observations of inequities in eligibility for accessing equipment through Job Support. For example, partial approvals could lead to issues with asset retention, as was the case with a disabled person who was denied full funding for an ergonomic chair. They negotiated with their employer to cover part of the cost, although the employer included a condition that the organisation would keep the chair if they ever left the company. This left the disabled person with the financial burden of having to cover the cost themselves so as not to jeopardise their access to a chair when changing jobs. This was a common theme, with another person sharing that they have equipment funded by ACC that stays with them throughout their career, but wished this was also the case for everyone else.

Some equipment is often not fully funded because it has the potential of also being used outside of the workplace. For example, noise cancelling headphones that assist some disabled people in managing loud workplaces may also be used elsewhere. This includes use on public transport, which was felt to be unfair because it would also be something enabling access to employment. These funding choices have the impact of financial stress for those who cannot afford the remaining amount, or have employers that cannot, leading to inequitable access to the workplace.

### Access to interpreters

A big issue for the d/Deaf community was explained as being around the right to access interpreting services of their choice. For example, accessing on-call interpreters over video is not always appropriate and some d/Deaf people prefer interpreters that they have established a trustful relationship with. People we spoke to were disappointed in not having this choice, describing it as disempowering. However, it was acknowledged that applicants do technically have a choice for how to access interpreting services but it was also noted that, for many, this choice was not apparent in the wording of the application form, with one person suggesting “the tone on the forms tells a different story”.

From a service provider perspective, access to interpreters for d/Deaf people seeking employment was seen as lacking. One Employment Consultant explained that Job Support was not able to be used to meet with a d/Deaf person to support them in obtaining employment. This was seen as an additional barrier to even beginning the journey into employment.

### Access to offsite work events

Disabled people are at times required to travel offsite for their work. This may be for meetings, client visits, or conferences. The need for work-related travel can be disabling for some people, impacting on their career projection.[[30]](#endnote-31) These situations are seen as being difficult to gain funding for and, at times, declined applications for funding participation in these events would lead to reduced or no participation.

The lack of flexibility around funding work trips is specifically referenced in a situation where a disabled person required a support person to travel with them to an out-of-town work event for both employment support and personal care. This required funding the same support person through two different funding streams; Ministry of Health Individualised Funding and Job Support. However, this was not considered within the scope of Support Funds so there was no flexibility around reimbursing the cost of support staff travelling with the disabled person. This member felt it was “deeply inappropriate” to ask the person running the workshop to assist them in their duties, as was suggested to them by Support Funds.

Interpreting costs can be a large proportion of an event budget if a d/Deaf person wishes to attend, especially if an organiser isn’t prepared. Often an organiser will assume Support Funds cover the event and some members felt it was “demoralising” to then have to educate them. This often causes the person to feel guilty about costing the organisation so much just to have equitable access to events. One member suggested creating a fund for interpreters at one-off events like conferences or hui so that attending such events wouldn’t affect their personal Support Fund allocation.

### Impact of inaccessible formats

When receiving written communication from MSD, some people felt that messaging was unclear and sometimes contradicted by what other people within the same department had communicated both in writing and over the phone. This often resulted in people losing confidence in the Support Funds process, which could lead to disengagement with both the application process and seeking employment.

There is an expectation that public service agencies will provide documentation in accessible formats. Since the transfer of the Support Funds back to the Ministry in March 2023, information about Support Funds has become more consolidated on one single website with access to information and application forms not only in their traditional PDF format, but also as a Word document and in alternate formats such as Māori, Easy Read, large print, audio file, and Braille. However, people’s experiences prior to this transfer were often that the application process was inaccessible, particularly for d/Deaf, Blind and Deafblind members.

### Ageing out

MSD advises that “those with sickness, injury, or disability who have received assistance to enter and retain sustainable employment under the programme before turning the age of 65 can receive assistance to retain the same employment after they turn 65, if they choose to continue in that employment.”[[31]](#endnote-32) However, despite this, some people felt the rules were ageist because they were discriminating by age.

Disabled people understood that these criteria were in line with other supports because superannuation is expected to kick in at this age. However, some discussed the likelihood of needing to work well into their sixties or seventies and that superannuation would not be enough to cover their additional disability-related costs. Some people questioned how they would be able to access much-needed Support Funds in the workplace once they reach the expected retirement age, particularly those who need to change roles or take on additional work after they turn 65.

It is important to acknowledge that this age cut off is due to legislative restrictions. Support Funds exists within the Social Security Act 2018,[[32]](#endnote-33) but there is a shift to the New Zealand Superannuation and Retirement Income Act 2001[[33]](#endnote-34) when a person turns 65.

## Disabled people are discouraged from applying for Support Funds

Job Support and Training Support funding can make a profound impact to a person’s ability to gain equitable access to the workplace or learning environment. However, due to barriers to accessing funding, people can feel discouraged from applying. Furthermore, some people are actively discouraged from applying.

### In employment

For one member, a traumatic experience of dealing with Support Funds resulted in a loss of trust and an unwillingness to further engage in the process, leaving them without the support they required. Their employment consultant was consequently left feeling that they should discourage clients from applying for Support Funds so as to protect them from experiencing the same trauma they had seen others go through. Other employment consultants also talked about no longer promoting the fund due to not wanting to “get hopes up” for something their clients may not receive.

### In education

For some people, it is not a personal choice to disengage from the application process. A disabled tertiary student we spoke to explained that they were actively discouraged from applying for Training Support by the Disability Services representative at their university. The reason given was because of the poor reputation Support Funds has when it comes to the timeline of having applications approved. This resulted in the person having to purchase the software they required to access their course by depleting the postgraduate allowance usually reserved for binding a student’s thesis and attending conferences. They felt this was inequitable.

## Barriers to funding can impact employment outcomes

When people experience barriers to accessing support, the impact of inequitable access affects their employment outcomes. Although Support Funds is felt to be an excellent scheme in theory, many disabled people felt that, in practice, it no longer followed its own guidelines. Data supports a clear drop in the number of Support Funds applications being submitted each year and difficulty in accessing the funds appears to have contributed to this drop. There are concerns that this may give a false impression that Support Funds is not needed as much as they used to be. The general feeling from members was that the funds are just as needed as ever but they are either not known about by those who would benefit from them most, or people are so discouraged by negative experiences in accessing Support Funds that they no longer bother to apply.

Disabled people felt that the barriers to accessing Support Funds have a negative impact on their ability to participate fully in employment. For some, it is the difficulty of finding information about how to access the funding, whereas for others it is the difficulty in applying for and maintaining access to the funding. Our discussions revealed that not only have many missed out on employment opportunities such as career progression or training due to funding barriers and restrictions, but many had also been excluded from employment altogether.

## An Enabling Good Lives approach

The flexibility of an individualised funding approach means disabled people would be in control of how and when their funding is used. Having choice and control over funding in a way that meets support needs and enables sustained employment is a reflection of the Enabling Good Lives approach and principles.[[34]](#endnote-35) A member we spoke with suggested that this would enable them to employ support staff for more hours on a competitive wage, thereby removing the need for them to function as contractors and manage their own tax as well as improving the retention of staff.

Enabling Good Lives was brought up often in discussions as an aspirational funding model for the Ministry to consider in the Support Funds context. Members often suggested that an approach to Support Funds that aligned with the Enabling Good Lives approach and principles was vital. This change in approach would enable disabled people to combine their different types of funding and allow them to achieve the best employment outcomes possible.

# Conclusion

The Support Funds scheme is greatly appreciated by those who are able to access it and many of the people we spoke to emphasized that their involvement in the labour workforce is a direct result of being able to access these funds. However, the application process is laborious and the eligibility criteria restrictive. Furthermore, the allocation of funding is not equitable. These inequities are experienced by most disabled people seeking Support Funds, but the d/Deaf community are affected disproportionately.

There are many systemic barriers that affect disabled people’s participation in the labour workforce. Contributing to these barriers is the difficulty in accessing and maintaining Support Funds. Inequities in accessing the funding has a negative impact on disabled people’s employment outcomes. These persistent barriers to disabled people achieving equitable access to the workplace have been further impacted by the Support Funds budget and funding caps not rising in line with cost of living, inflation, and minimum wage, along with the impact of population growth on the funding pool available.

Support Funds is a necessity for many disabled people to gain and sustain equitable access to the workplace. From discussions with disabled people about their experiences of accessing these funds, it is apparent that the scheme would benefit from a formal evaluation of its policies and processes that is led by disabled people, who can best ensure that any future iteration of the scheme is fit for purpose and aligns with the Enabling Good Lives approach and principles.

# Recommendations

Despite a continued need for Support Funds by many disabled people, barriers to accessing and maintaining employment support appears to be contributing to negative employment outcomes and career opportunities for many disabled people.

It is therefore strongly recommended that the Ministry:

* increase the maximum Job Support funding amount in line with inflation, living wage and cost of living;
* increase the maximum Training Support funding amount in line with inflation, living wage and cost of living and review the period of time it covers;
* increase the Support Funds budget in line with inflation, living wage, cost of living, and population increase;
* review the Support Funds eligibility criteria and application process, in collaboration with disabled people;
* expand eligibility criteria and streamline processes to make accessing funds more accessible for all disabled people, in particular those who are self-employed or consulting;
* raise awareness about function and availability of Support Funds with disabled people and employers;
* review the application of the ‘fund of last resort’ criteria;
* clarify the term ‘reasonable accommodations’ to provide clearer expectations for employers;
* establish review panels made up of disabled people, as is the case with Enabling Good Lives; and
* undertake a formal external evaluation of Support Funds policies and processes, ensuring that this is disabled-led.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: MSD support available

### Support Fund assistance categories

Support assistance categories include funding for equipment, interpreter services, a support person, transport, a job coach, and workplace assessments.

#### Equipment

Funding for equipment may include specialist office furniture or adaptive software, which an employer would not normally provide. In some cases, only part of the cost may be funded, with the remainder being paid by you or your employer. Maintenance and repairs are not covered by the fund.

#### Interpreter services

Funding for NZSL interpreter services may include having an NZSL interpreter for job interviews, however other avenues must be advanced first, e.g. the use of NZ Relay. Funding for transcribers also comes under this category, despite not technically being an interpreter service.

#### Support person

Funding for a support person is available for instances when you need a person to assist you in tasks, e.g. a reader, writer, or driver. Support people must be independent contractors contracted by the person receiving Support Funds. They cannot be employees of Support Funds, Workbridge or MSD. A support person providing driving support must hold a drivers licence and their vehicle must meet the requirements of NZTA.

#### Transport

Funding for transport is available for travelling to and from your place of work or study when public transport is not available or accessible. The standard cost of travel for your journey, e.g. the cost of the bus trip, is deducted from any funds paid to you.

#### Job coach

Funding for a job coach provides the opportunity for intensive short-term coaching when you start work, when your job description has changed, or if a change in your disability affects your ability to perform your usual employment tasks. Job coaches must be independent contractors. You may need to have a workplace assessment to gain access to a job coach.

#### Assessment

Funding for workplace assessments is used to determine that the most appropriate support is being funded, e.g. those listed above. An assessment can be undertaken at the request of MSD, Workbridge, the applicant, or the applicant’s agent. Assessments cannot be used for obtaining a diagnosis.

### Modification grant

Funding for modifications[[35]](#endnote-36) are administered by Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ). They provide financial assistance to disabled people to gain or retain employment by removing barriers. These grants are paid to the employer to fund modifications to the workplace, such as ramps and handrails, purchase of specialised equipment necessary to take up or retain work, and adaptation of equipment. In these cases, the equipment would remain with the employer should the employee leave. Support Funds cannot be used for modifications where the responsibility for the modification lies with the building owner under government or local council laws, regulations, or requirements.

### MSD programmes

#### Mainstream

Mainstream[[36]](#endnote-37) can help you get into paid work and support you towards getting a long-term job. You may also get help with extra training or equipment costs related to your disability and job. An Employment Service provider works with you to find or create a role that suits your skills. Once you're in a role, MSD pays your employer:

* 80% of your wages for the first six months; and
* 50% of your wages for the last six months.

#### Mani in Mahi

Mana in Mahi[[37]](#endnote-38) matches employers with people who are keen to start a career and need extra support to begin and maintain their work and training journey. Work and Income NZ will pay your employer a wage subsidy and your employer can also access coaching and funding for you to pursue formal industry training while on the job.

#### Flexi-wage

Flexi-wage[[38]](#endnote-39) is available if you haven't worked for a long time or have difficulty getting or keeping a job. Your employer is paid a contribution to your wages.

### Productivity allowance

A productivity allowance is a wage subsidy available to your employer while you gain skills and establish workplace supports that would be available to anyone starting a new job. It is not available if you have previously participated in MSD programmes such as Mainstream, Mana in Mahi, or received other wage subsidies such as Flexi-wage. A productivity allowance is only considered after all other support services have been provided, including physical supports relevant to your disability. The productivity allowance is not permanent and it is expected it will lead to unsubsidised employment.

Further information about different types of supports is available within the MSD and Workbridge Operational Guidelines.[[39]](#endnote-40) [[40]](#endnote-41)

## Appendix B: Data on Support Funds (2021)

The Ministry of Social Development notes in the communication of this data that:

* To protect confidentiality, the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
* These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
* The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
* The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.

### Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment (04 May 2021): How many individuals have received support under the Job Support fund each year since its conception? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Social Development and Employment) replied.[[41]](#endnote-42)

Table 6 (16187): the number of individuals who have received Job Support funds each year since the financial year 2011/12.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  **Financial year** | **Number of individuals receiving Job Support funding support** | **Total number of applications for Job Support funds** |
| 2011/12 | 1,518 | 2,552 |
| 2012/13 | 1,408 | 2,258 |
| 2013/14 | 1,242 | 1,949 |
| 2014/15 | 1,241 | 2,053 |
| 2015/16 | 1,140 | 1,851 |
| 2016/17 | 1,065 | 1,682 |
| 2017/18 | 1,156 | 1,794 |
| 2018/19 | 1,051 | 1,607 |
| 2019/20 | 950 | 1,535 |
| 2020/21 to 31/3/21 | 721 | 1,035 |

Notes:

* Due to the availability of reporting information the Ministry can only provide the data from 2011/12 financial year.
* This is a count of the total application numbers as well as a count of individuals. Individuals can make more than one application in a 52-week period.

### Parliamentary Written Question 16186 (2021)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment (04 May 2021): How many applications to the Job Support fund have been declined each year for the last five years? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Social Development and Employment) replied.[[42]](#endnote-43)

Table 5 (16186): The number of Job Support funds applications that have been declined each year for the last five years as at 11 May 2021.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Calendar year** | **Number of applications fully declined** | **Number of applications partially declined** |
| 2016 | 41 | 21 |
| 2017 | 35 | 15 |
| 2018 | 61 | 26 |
| 2019 | 101 | 24 |
| 2020 | 40 | 25 |
| 2021 | 18 | 6 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 26088 (2021)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (22 Jun 2021): How many self-employed Job Support fund applications have been approved for partial funding each year for the last ten years?Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied**.**[[43]](#endnote-44)

Table 1 (26088): The number of applications for self-employed Job Support funding where some assistance was approved and some assistance was declined or required a personal contribution from the applicant over the past ten years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2010/11 | 0 |
| 2011/12 | 0 |
| 2012/13 | 5 |
| 2013/14 | 8 |
| 2014/15 | 2 |
| 2015/16 | 4 |
| 2016/17 | 3 |
| 2017/18 | 2 |
| 2018/19 | 7 |
| 2019/20 | 0 |
| 2020/21 | 0 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 26089 (2021)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (22 Jun 2021): How many self-employed Job Support fund applicants have received the full amount of funding available, each year for the last ten years?Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied**.**[[44]](#endnote-45)

Table 2 (26089): The attached table sets out number of self-employed job support applicants who have received the maximum funding amount of $16,900 (or more if additional funding has been approved).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2010/11 | 0 |
| 2011/12 | 0 |
| 2012/13 | 0 |
| 2013/14 | 2 |
| 2014/15 | 3 |
| 2015/16 | 3 |
| 2016/17 | 4 |
| 2017/18 | 4 |
| 2018/19 | 6 |
| 2019/20 | 7 |
| 2020/21 | 2 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 26097 (2021)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (22 Jun 2021): How many Job Support fund applications have been approved for partial funding each year for the last ten years? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied.

Table 3 (26097): The number of applications for Job Support funding where some assistance was approved and some assistance was declined or required a personal contribution from the applicant.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2010/11 | 0 |
| 2011/12 | 0 |
| 2012/13 | 29 |
| 2013/14 | 41 |
| 2014/15 | 24 |
| 2015/16 | 29 |
| 2016/17 | 17 |
| 2017/18 | 15 |
| 2018/19 | 28 |
| 2019/20 | 15 |
| 2020/21 | 15 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 26098 (2021)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (22 Jun 2021): How many Job Support fund applicants have received the full funding entitlement each year for the last ten years? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied.[[45]](#endnote-46)

Table 4 (26098): the number of Job Support fund applicants who have received the maximum funding amount of $16,900 (or more if additional funding has been approved). The figures include self- employed information from Q26089 as they are also classified as Job Support fund applicants.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2010/11 | 19 |
| 2011/12 | 17 |
| 2012/13 | 16 |
| 2013/14 | 24 |
| 2014/15 | 33 |
| 2015/16 | 30 |
| 2016/17 | 46 |
| 2017/18 | 46 |
| 2018/19 | 41 |
| 2019/20 | 49 |
| 2020/21 | 28 |

## Appendix C: Data on Support Funds (2022)

The Ministry of Social Development notes in the communication of this data that:

* To protect confidentiality, the Ministry uses processes to make it difficult to identify an individual person or entity from published data.
* These data tables have had random rounding to base three applied to all cell counts in the table.
* The impact of applying random rounding is that columns and rows may not add exactly to the given column or row totals.
* The published counts will never differ by more than two counts.

### Parliamentary Written Question 17438 (2022)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (01 Jun 2022): How many applications have been received, each year for the last ten years, for Training Support funding? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied.[[46]](#endnote-47)

Table 5: (17438) The number of applications for Training Support funding received by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) each year for the last ten years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2012/13 | 699 |
| 2013/14 | 639 |
| 2014/15 | 678 |
| 2015/16 | 570 |
| 2016/17 | 594 |
| 2017/18 | 588 |
| 2018/19 | 324 |
| 2019/20 | 129 |
| 2020/21 | 96 |
| 2021/22 as at 31/3/22 | 33 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 17439 (2022)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (01 Jun 2022): How many individuals have received Job Support funding, each year for the last ten years? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied.[[47]](#endnote-48)

Table 4: (17439) The number of individuals who have received Job Support funding each year over the last ten years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2012/13 | 1,677 |
| 2013/14 | 1,185 |
| 2014/15 | 1,575 |
| 2015/16 | 1,476 |
| 2016/17 | 1,341 |
| 2017/18 | 1,446 |
| 2018/19 | 1,272 |
| 2019/20 | 1,143 |
| 2020/21 | 933 |
| 2021/22 as at 31/3/22 | 795 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 17440 (2022)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (01 Jun 2022): How many applications have been received, each year for the last ten years, for Job Support funding? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied.[[48]](#endnote-49)

Table 6: (17440) the number of applications for Job Support funding received by the Ministry of Social Development each year for the last ten years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2012/13 | 2,259 |
| 2013/14 | 1,950 |
| 2014/15 | 2,052 |
| 2015/16 | 1,851 |
| 2016/17 | 1,683 |
| 2017/18 | 1,794 |
| 2018/19 | 1,605 |
| 2019/20 | 1,536 |
| 2020/21 | 1,329 |
| 2021/22 as at 31/3/22 | 1,272 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 17448 (2022)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (01 Jun 2022): What has been the annual spend, each year for the last ten years, for Training Support funding? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied.[[49]](#endnote-50)

Table 2: (17448) The annual spend on Training Support funding each year for the last ten years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2012/13 | $648,623 |
| 2013/14 | $625,166 |
| 2014/15 | $621,514 |
| 2015/16 | $627,890 |
| 2016/17 | $579,277 |
| 2017/18 | $669,880 |
| 2018/19 | $462,101 |
| 2019/20 | $182,940 |
| 2020/21 | $112,156 |
| 2021/22 as at 31/3/22 | $36,763 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 17449 (2022)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (01 Jun 2022): What has been the annual spend, each year for the last ten years, for Job Support funding? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied.[[50]](#endnote-51)

Table 3: (17449) The annual spend on Job Support funding each year for the last ten years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2012/13 | $6,457,908 |
| 2013/14 | $5,658,150 |
| 2014/15 | $5,632,776 |
| 2015/16 | $5,269,798 |
| 2016/17 | $5,091,209 |
| 2017/18 | $5,449,272 |
| 2018/19 | $5,330,898 |
| 2019/20 | $4,709,320 |
| 2020/21 | $4,003,342 |
| 2021/22 as at 31/3/22 | $2,522,033 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 17452 (2022)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (01 Jun 2022): What is the annual budget, each year for the last ten years, for Job Support funding? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied: I am advised that the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) can only provide annual budget for Support Funds in total. As this is an on-demand service, there is no specific budget allocation to the various assistance categories. The uptake varies from year to year between categories.[[51]](#endnote-52)

Table 1: (17452) The annual budget for the Support Funds in total each year for the last ten years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2012/13 | $7,526,491 |
| 2013/14 | $5,529,075 |
| 2014/15 | $6,029,075 |
| 2015/16 | $5,529,075 |
| 2016/17 | $4,700,000 |
| 2017/18 | $6,783,333 |
| 2018/19 | $6,373,414 |
| 2019/20 | $6,333,659 |
| 2020/21 | $6,333,659 |
| 2021/22\* |   |

## Appendix D: Inconsistencies in data on Support Funds

Information on the number of individuals who have received Job Support each year for the last ten years differs significantly between responses to the same question a year apart (Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) vs. 17439 (2022)). Similarly, Information on the number of applications for Job Support each year for the last ten years differs significantly between responses to the same question a year apart (Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) vs. 17440 (2022)).

Furthermore, information on total applications for Training Support is held centrally. However, unlike with Job Support, the number of individuals receiving funding for Training Support is communicated as not being centrally held (Parliamentary Written Question 17438 (2022) vs. 19557 (2022)).

### Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) vs. 17439 (2022)

Table 1: (16187) the number of individuals who have received Job Support funds each year since the financial year 2011/12;[[52]](#endnote-53) alongside (17439) The number of individuals who have received Job Support funding each year over the last ten years.[[53]](#endnote-54)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **16187 (2021)**Number of individuals receiving Job Support funding support | **17439 (2022)** |
| 2011/12 | 1,518 | - |
| 2012/13 | 1,408 | 1,677 |
| 2013/14 | 1,242 | 1,185 |
| 2014/15 | 1,241 | 1,575 |
| 2015/16 | 1,140 | 1,476 |
| 2016/17 | 1,065 | 1,341 |
| 2017/18 | 1,156 | 1,446 |
| 2018/19 | 1,051 | 1,272 |
| 2019/20 | 950 | 1,143 |
| 2020/21 \*as at 31/3/21 | \*721  |  933 |
| 2021/22 \*as at 31/3/22 | - | \*795 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 16187 (2021) vs. 17440 (2022)

Table 2: (16187) the number of individuals who have received Job Support funds each year since the financial year 2011/12 (including number of applications); [[54]](#endnote-55) alongside (17440) the number of applications for Job Support funding received by the Ministry of Social Development each year for the last ten years.[[55]](#endnote-56)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **16187 (2021)**Total number of applications for Job Support funds | **17440 (2022)** |
| 2011/12 | 2,552 |  |
| 2012/13 | 2,258 | 2,259 |
| 2013/14 | 1,949 | 1,950 |
| 2014/15 | 2,053 | 2,052 |
| 2015/16 | 1,851 | 1,851 |
| 2016/17 | 1,682 | 1,683 |
| 2017/18 | 1,794 | 1,794 |
| 2018/19 | 1,607 | 1,605 |
| 2019/20 | 1,535 | 1,536 |
| 2020/21 \*as at 31/3/21 | \*1,035 | 1,329 |
| 2021/22 \*as at 31/3/22 | - | \*1,272 |

### Parliamentary Written Question 17438 (2022) vs. 19557 (2022)

#### Parliamentary Written Question 17438 (2021)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (01 Jun 2022): How many applications have been received, each year for the last ten years, for Training Support funding? Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Minister for Disability Issues) replied.[[56]](#endnote-57)

Table 3: (17438) The number of applications for Training Support funding received by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) each year for the last ten years.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Financial year** | **Totals** |
| 2012/13 | 699 |
| 2013/14 | 639 |
| 2014/15 | 678 |
| 2015/16 | 570 |
| 2016/17 | 594 |
| 2017/18 | 588 |
| 2018/19 | 324 |
| 2019/20 | 129 |
| 2020/21 | 96 |
| 2021/22 as at 31/3/22 | 33 |

#### Parliamentary Written Question 19557 (2022)

Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues (15 Jun 2022): How many individuals have received Training Support funding, each year for the last ten years? Hon Poto Williams (Minister for Disability Issues) replied:[[57]](#endnote-58)

“I am advised by the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) that information concerning the number of applications for Training Support funding and Job Support funding is not centrally recorded. In order to compile this information, the Ministry would be required to undertake substantial manual collation and divert staff from their core duties. In accordance with Speaker’s Ruling 185-4, I consider that the time, and hence the expense, of answering the Member’s question is not in the public interest.”

# References

1. Reserve Bank of New Zealand. (2023). *Inflation Calculator: 1994 Q4 compared with 2022 Q4.* Retrieved from: https://www.rbnz.govt.nz/monetary-policy/about-monetary-policy/inflation-calculator [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Ministry of Social Development. (2022). *Changes to the management of Job and Training Support Funds for the disability community.* Retrieved from: https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/2022/changes-to-the-management-of-job-and-training-support-funds-for-the-disability-community.html [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Workbridge. (2022). *Job Support Application Form*. Retrieved from: https://supportfunds.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WOR241J-Job-Support-Application-Apr-17.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Workbridge. (2022). *Training Support Application Form*. Retrieved from: https://supportfunds.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WOR241T-Training-Support-Accessible-Aug2013.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Ministry of Social Development. *(2023) Job and Training Support Funds.* Retrieved from: https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/work/health-and-disability-job-support/job-and-training-support-funds.html [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. Ministry of Social Development. *(2023) Job and Training Support Funds.* Retrieved from: https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/work/health-and-disability-job-support/job-and-training-support-funds.html [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. Statistics NZ. (2013). *Disability survey: 2013.* Retrieved from: https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/disability-survey-2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. Statistics NZ. (2022). *Labour market statistics (disability): June 2022 quarter.* Retrieved from: https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-disability-june-2022-quarter?fbclid=IwAR0RoTLUANz2a70cq4NHfE4sL20\_GWXCoYvvi6RvithBeMhnzaVS49w0f7M [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. Statistics NZ. (2022). *Labour market statistics (disability): June 2021 quarter.* Retrieved from: https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-disability-june-2021-quarter [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. Disabled Persons Assembly NZ. (2023). *Systemic Barriers to Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.infoexchange.nz/systemic-barriers-to-employment/ [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. 1news. (2022). *Minimum wage exemption still in place for disabled workers.* Retrieved from: https://www.1news.co.nz/2022/04/12/minimum-wage-exemption-still-in-place-for-disabled-workers/ [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. Ministry of Social Development. (2020). *Working Matters: An Action Plan to ensure disabled people and people with health conditions have an equal opportunity to access employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/what-we-can-do/disability-services/disability-employment-action-plan/working-matters-2020-spreads.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. New Zealand Immigration Law. (2022). *Data shows NZ has a labour shortage not just a skills shortage.* Retrieved from: https://nzil.co.nz/news/data-shows-nz-has-a-labour-shortage-not-just-a-skills-shortage/ [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. Statistics NZ. (2022). *Labour market statistics (disability): June 2022 quarter.* Retrieved from: https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-disability-june-2022-quarter?fbclid=IwAR0RoTLUANz2a70cq4NHfE4sL20\_GWXCoYvvi6RvithBeMhnzaVS49w0f7M [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. CCS Disability Action. (2019). *Disability and self-employment: Supporting people and their dreams*. Retrieved from: https://ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz/assets/resource-files/Disability-and-self-employment-CCS-Disability-Action.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17452 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17452\_2022/17452-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
17. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17449 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17449\_2022/17449-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
18. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17448 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17448\_2022/17448-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
19. New Zealand Parliament. (May 4, 2021). *16188 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_16188\_2021/16188-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-social-development [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
20. New Zealand Parliament. (June 22, 2021). *26098 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_26098\_2021/26098-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
21. New Zealand Parliament. (June 22, 2021). *26089 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_26089\_2021/26089-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
22. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17439 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17439\_2022/17439-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
23. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17440 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17440\_2022/17440-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
24. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17438 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17438\_2022/17438-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
25. New Zealand Parliament. (June 3, 2021). *23200 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_23200\_2021/23200-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-social-development [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
26. Reserve Bank of New Zealand. (2023). *Inflation Calculator: 1994 Q4 compared with 2022 Q4.* Retrieved from: https://www.rbnz.govt.nz/monetary-policy/about-monetary-policy/inflation-calculator [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
27. New Zealand Parliament. (September 16, 2022). *34623 (2022). Hon Louise Upston to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_34623\_2022/34623-2022-hon-louise-upston-to-the-minister-for-social [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
28. New Zealand Parliament. (May 4, 2021). *16185 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_16185\_2021/16185-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-social-development [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
29. Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (2023). *Current minimum wage rates.* Retrieved from: https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/minimum-wage/minimum-wage-rates/ [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
30. Karl, M., Pegg, S., & Harpur, P. (2022). Exploring constraints in business travel for disabled workers: An ecological systems perspective. *Disability & Society, 1-24.* [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
31. New Zealand Parliament. (September 16, 2022). *34609 (2022). Hon Louise Upston to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_34609\_2022/34609-2022-hon-louise-upston-to-the-minister-for-social [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
32. Parliamentary Counsel Office. (September 28, 2023). Social Security Act 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2018/0032/latest/DLM6783115.html [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
33. Parliamentary Counsel Office. (October 11, 2001). *New Zealand Superannuation and Retirement Income Act 2001.* Retrieved from: https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2001/0084/latest/DLM113924.html [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
34. Enabling Good Lives. (2023). *Enabling Good Lives Approach.* Retrieved from: https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/ [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
35. Ministry of Social Development. (2023). *Modifications to your workplace.* Retrieved from: https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/employers/subsidies-training-and-other-help/modification-grant-for-your-business.html [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
36. Ministry of Social Development. (2023). *Mainstream programmes*. Retrieved from: https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/mainstream-programmes.html [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
37. Ministry of Social Development. (2023). *Mana in Mahi - For employers*. Retrieved from: https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/employers/subsidies-training-and-other-help/mana-in-mahi.html [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
38. Ministry of Social Development. (2023). *Flexi-wage – job seeker information*. Retrieved from: https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/flexi-wage.html [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
39. Workbridge. (2022). *Job Support Funds Operational Guidelines*. Retrieved from: https://supportfunds.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Workbridge-Job-Support-Funds-Operational-Guidelines-July-2018-V1-FINAL.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
40. Workbridge. (2022). *Training Support Funds Operational Guidelines*. Retrieved from: https://supportfunds.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Workbridge-Training-Support-Funds-Operational-Guidelines-July-2018-FINAL.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
41. New Zealand Parliament. (May 4, 2021). *16187 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/mi/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_16187\_2021/16187-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-social-development [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
42. New Zealand Parliament. (May 4, 2021). *16186 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_16186\_2021/16186-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-social-development [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
43. New Zealand Parliament. (June 22, 2021). *26088 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_26088\_2021/26088-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
44. New Zealand Parliament. (June 22, 2021). *26089 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_26089\_2021/26089-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
45. New Zealand Parliament. (June 22, 2021). *26098 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_26098\_2021/26098-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
46. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17438 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17438\_2022/17438-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
47. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17439 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17439\_2022/17439-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
48. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17440 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17440\_2022/17440-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
49. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17448 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17448\_2022/17448-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
50. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17449 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17449\_2022/17449-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
51. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17452 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17452\_2022/17452-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
52. New Zealand Parliament. (May 4, 2021). *16187 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/mi/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_16187\_2021/16187-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-social-development [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
53. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17439 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17439\_2022/17439-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
54. New Zealand Parliament. (May 4, 2021). *16187 (2021). Jan Logie to the Minister for Social Development and Employment.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/mi/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_16187\_2021/16187-2021-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-social-development [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
55. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17440 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17440\_2022/17440-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
56. New Zealand Parliament. (June 1, 2022). *17438 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_17438\_2022/17438-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
57. New Zealand Parliament. (June 15, 2022). *19557 (2022). Jan Logie to the Minister for Disability Issues.* Retrieved from: https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/order-paper-questions/written-questions/document/WQ\_19557\_2022/19557-2022-jan-logie-to-the-minister-for-disability [↑](#endnote-ref-58)