



Memorandum

Date: 14 March 2024

For: Hon Penny Simmonds
Minister for Disability Issues

Update on implementing changes to EMS and flexible funding to manage Whaikaha expenditure

1. Purpose

This memo updates you on the steps we are taking to:

- prioritise equipment and modification services, and
- limit what can be purchased with flexible funding.

2. Background and Context

2.1 In the briefing REP/WHK/24/2/018 we advised you we would:

- introduce demand management measures for Equipment and Modification Services (EMS) for the 2023/24 financial year, and
- temporarily change flexible funding options to limit sensitive expenditure while work is completed to review operational policy settings for flexible funding.
- As we advised you on 7 March, we are now preparing to implement the changes to EMS and flexible funding on 18 March 2024.

Equipment and Modification Services

2.2 The EMS priority rating system has two levels, P1 urgent, P2 non-urgent. This prioritisation will ensure disabled people with the most urgent needs are able to continue to access the equipment and modifications that have been recommended for them.

2.3 Disabled people with less urgent needs will be required to wait until funding is available to access the equipment and modification services that have been recommended for them. Funding of priority two applications is unlikely before 1 July 2024. Disabled people will be advised to contact their assessor if their needs become more urgent.

Flexible Funding

2.4 The public release of changes to flexible funding will take place on Monday 18 March at which time an updated set of purchasing rules will be provided. These changes will be in place while we develop advice you have requested about the longer-term operational policy settings for flexible funding.

3. Engagement

3.1 We began engaging with key stakeholders, including EMS Assessors (allied health professionals), EMS providers and organisations with responsibilities for flexible funding (eg: Individualised Funding hosts) during the week of 11 March.

3.2 We will provide information for disabled people, family, carers and other providers on Monday 18 March 2024.

3.3 We have a comprehensive communications and engagement plan to ensure consistency in messages, outlining the changes being implemented address how we manage increased costs and demand within our budget.

3.4 s9(2)(g)(i) OIA [REDACTED]. The communications material identifies several risks and mitigations through a series of questions and answers. These can be provided if required and will be available on our website in a suitable format for general consumption.

3.5 We will be meeting with community members ahead of public release on Monday 18 March.

3.6 Our key over-arching message is that we are making changes to the system ensure to prioritise funding to support disabled people of the highest support need first. Our priority to retain flexibility, choice and control and support equitable outcomes across the system.

3.7 We have prepared key messaging for you.

End

Responsible Official

Amanda Bleckmann

Deputy Chief Executive, Commissioning, Design and Delivery

Appendix: 1 Timeline and Key Messages for Flexible Funding

Date	Phase	Description
<i>By 4 March</i>	Prepare	Agree scope of support to give effect to exclusions.
<i>By 6 March</i>	Prepare	Prepare explanation and guidance to Hosts.
<i>By 8 March</i>	Prepare	Confirmed plan for how these exclusions will be implemented in the EGL Sites / NASCs equitably.
<i>By 13 March</i>	Prepare	Agree Q&As and key messages
<i>By 15 March</i>	Inform	Advise Te Whatu Ora team leading their implementation of flexible rules for Carer Support of our intention to make changes.
<i>By 15 March</i>	Inform	Discuss with Te Whatu Ora Sector Ops our intended change for their work (Carer Support processing).
<i>On 18 March</i>	Inform	Explain to EGL Sites the changes to be made, why they are happening, what is expected of them, and where to find resources for explaining to affected people.
<i>On 18 March</i>	Inform	Explain to IF Hosts and other key stakeholders / providers the changes to be made, why they are happening, what is expected of them, and where to find resources for explaining to affected people.
<i>On 18 March</i>	Inform	Advise partnership groups / community leaders the changes to be made, why they are happening, where to find resources for explaining to affected people, and how they can participate in the next stage.
<i>On 18 March</i>	Notify	Commence communications to flexible funding recipients. Post information about the changes on Whaikaha website.
<i>Ongoing from 18 March</i>	Inform	Host forums with family and disabled person groups to explain further the changes and what happens next, informed by sector and community feedback.
<i>By 29 March</i>	Complete	End of grace period for people potentially incurring costs without knowing about the changes.
<i>By 12 April</i>	Complete	End of claiming period for people to claim costs from before the rules were changed.
<i>From 25 March</i>	Monitor	Regular check-ins with providers about emerging issues and/or compliance with changes.

Appendix: 2 Timeline and Key Messages for EMS

<i>On 14 March</i>	Inform	Advise Lead Allied Health Directors that the priority rating system will be in place from 18 March 2024. This will be included in the EMS portal.
<i>On 18 March</i>	Inform	Inform EMS assessors and supplier groups that a prioritisation system is in place from 18 March 2024. This will be included in the EMS portal. Priority Two applications will be waitlisted until funding becomes available. Priority One (urgent) applications will be processed following the usual processes. Provide EMS assessors with written advice that they can provide to disabled people during the assessment.
<i>From 18 March to 23 March.</i>	Update	Planned daily engagement with Enable New Zealand, Accessable and Enigma, our providers of EMS services and the EMS portal. Develop updated FAQs for stakeholders.
<i>Ongoing from 18 March</i>	Inform	Join hosted forums with family and disabled person groups to explain further the changes and what happens next, informed by sector and community feedback.