

Alert Level 3 guidance for disabled people and whānau who employ their own support workers

26 APRIL 2020

This guidance is for people who are on Individualised Funding (IF), Enhanced Individualised Funding (EIF), and Enabling Good Lives / Mana Whaikaha personal budgets who employ their own support workers

Moving to Alert Level 3 and extending your 'bubble'

On Tuesday 28 April 2020, New Zealand moves to COVID-19 Alert Level 3. We will stay in Alert Level 3 for 2 weeks. The Government will then decide if we need to stay in Alert Level 3 a bit longer or if it is safe for New Zealand to move to Alert Level 2.

In Alert Level 3, you still need to stay home as much as possible and limit the amount of physical contact you have with others who are not in your household 'bubble'.

But

In Alert Level 3, some of the restrictions from Alert Level 4 have been loosened. Some businesses and schools can reopen, and you can begin to increase the size of your existing bubble slightly to include a few more people. This will mean you can better access the supports and friendship you might need. This would become your 'extended bubble'.

For more information about extending your bubble and keeping safe see:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-information-disabled-people-and-their-family-and-whanau>

Essential and 'safe' services in Alert Level 3

Essential services will continue

Disability, health and other services which were essential at Alert Level 4 will continue to be essential services under all alert levels.

Essential services provide you with the things you need to keep you healthy, living safely in your home and out of hospital.

Services that can operate safely will reopen

Alert Level 3 also allows for other services (which aren't essential) to begin operating if they can do so safely. To operate safely means they can:

- Maintain 2 metres distance between you
- Use good hygiene and infection control practices
- Wear things like gloves and a mask if they can't keep 2 metres distance (for example, when providing personal cares).

Services will not be allowed to operate if they cannot follow these safety rules, or they will have to operate in a different way, such as virtually.

For more information about what are essential and 'safe' services under Alert Level 3 see:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-information-disabled-people-and-their-family-and-whanau

Changes to how you can use your funding

During COVID-19 changes have been made to how you can use your funding. These changes provide more flexibility and will be in place until 30 June 2020. We will let you know what will happen after that, near the end of June.

Buying things

You can continue to use your funding to buy things that you couldn't before COVID-19. For example:

- To pay for grocery delivery rather than pay a care or support worker to help you with shopping
- To buy things that will help you stay in touch with others during COVID-19 (for example, a tablet for video messaging), to improve your skills, do activities in your home, or support you family and whānau to continue to do their care and support role.

Talk to your IF Host or Coach, your Connector or Kaitūhono about what is reasonable for you to buy.

You can also find out more about what you can buy at:

www.health.govt.nz/publication/what-people-can-buy-disability-funding-ministry-health-purchasing-guidelines

Paying resident family members as carers

While contracts with support workers need to be honoured, during Alert Level 3 and 4 you can employ family and whānau members who live with you to support you if your usual support worker is not available. If you decide to do this, you should:

- Make sure you pay them the same amount as you would any other care or support worker. Speak to you Host, Coach, Connector or Kaitūhono about pay equity rates or see: <https://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/pay-equity-settlements/care-and-support-workers-pay-equity-settlement/pay-equity-settlement-information-employees>
- Not pay them for more than 40 hours of care a week. This is because it is important that family carers maintain their health and wellbeing as well. If you need more than 40 hours care or support a week, speak to your NASC, IF Host or Coach, Connector or Kaitūhono to arrange additional support.

Paying leave for support workers in Alert Level 3

If your support worker can't come to work

In Alert Level 3, your support workers must not come to work if they or someone they live with:

- could be sick with COVID-19
- have had close contact with someone with COVID-19
- are at higher risk of severe illness if they contract COVID-19.

If any of these apply, you should discuss and agree with your support worker, and their employer if they have one, that they must not come to your home to work.

In Alert Level 3, you can apply to the Ministry of Social Development for funding for support workers who cannot work. This funding is called **COVID-19 Leave Support**. You can apply for this funding here:

<https://workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/covid-19-essential-workers-leave-support.html>

If you ask a support worker to not provide support during Alert Level 3

To keep your bubble safe, you may want to reduce the number of support workers who provide support to you during Alert Level 3. If this is the case, you will need to get your support workers' agreement. This may include agreeing to changes in hours or days worked within your allocated support hours. You must comply with the employment agreements you have in place, and provide any relevant notice period, prior to making the change.

You will also need to continue to talk to support workers you do not need to come to your home.

If you ask a support worker not to come to your home during Alert level 3, you will still have to pay the support worker for the period of time they are not required. Keep a record of the special leave that you have paid. This record will be used by the NASC who will need to review your funding if you have spent it early because of extra costs during Alert Level 4. Make sure you talk to your IF Coach or Host, Connector or Kaitūhono.

The Ministry of Health has agreed to consider requests for funding of paid special leave during Alert Level 4.

You can also find out more about making changes to your support worker hours at:

www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/changing-an-employees-work-arrangements/

If you want to continue to have a smaller number of support workers after Alert Level 3 is over, then you must go through a proper employment process with your support workers. Make sure you also talk to your IF Host or Coach, Connector or Kaitūhono.

You can find out more about terminating an employment agreement at:

www.employment.govt.nz/ending-employment/

If your funding runs out or expires

If your funding runs out because you've had to pay support workers who are on special leave during COVID-19, the Ministry may be able to start your next budget earlier. Please contact your NASC, funding specialist, Connector or Kaitūhono if you need to do this. You will need to keep a record of the extra costs you have had to pay to be able to do this.

If your funding is due to expire before 30 June 2020, it will automatically be renewed for another 12 months. There are no reviews or assessments at present.

Keeping you and your support workers safe

If your support worker also provides supports to other people, they should take precautions to work safely with you. Working safely means keeping two metres away from you, washing and drying their hands thoroughly, coughing or sneezing into a tissue or their elbow, and/or wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) like gloves and a mask if they can't keep two meters away from you. They must also not visit you if they, or you, are unwell, or have been in contact with someone who is unwell or has COVID-19 symptoms.

For guidance about when you should use PPE see:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-advice-essential-workers-including-personal-protective-equipment/personal-protective-equipment-use-health-care

If you do not have PPE but think you and your support worker need to use it, talk to your IF Host or Coach, Connector or Kaitūhono. They can help get PPE for you.

For more help

Talk to your IF Host or Coach, Connector, Kaitūhono or NASC if you have any questions, or if you would like to discuss the best options for you during COVID-19. We will provide more advice as it becomes available.