



Policy: Prioritisation and allocation of claims

Type:	Policy
Date approved:	February 2026
Approved:	General Manager, Network and Regulatory
Owner:	Manager, Sensitive Claims

Purpose | Ko te whāinga

1. This policy sets out the Ministry's approach to prioritising and allocating sensitive claims in its resolution process in a way that is fair and equitable to all claimants.

Context | Te horopaki

2. The Ministry operates an alternative dispute resolution service to resolve claims of abuse and neglect in respect of eligible state schools. More information about the eligibility criteria can be found here: [Sensitive claims of abuse in state schools - Ministry of Education](#).
3. The Ministry receives claims through the claim lodgement form, either completed directly by the claimant or by a trusted representative. The sensitive claims team can also assist with the lodgement of a claim via phone. Claimants can inform the Ministry of any health or age concerns as part of the lodgement process.
4. To assist in managing the lodgement of claims the Ministry has a prioritisation and allocation policy to determine the order in which claims will be reviewed. In certain cases, there are pathways where claims are expedited, while in other cases a full review of the allegations is either required or requested by the claimant.
5. Regardless of the approach, the Ministry is committed to operating a process that ensures all claimants are treated fairly and equitably in the allocation of claims and throughout the claims review process.

Scope | Ko te hōkaitanga

6. This policy applies to all eligible claims the Ministry receives alleging abuse and/or neglect in state care. All sensitive claims staff are expected to give effect to this policy.
7. The policy outlines how claims are prioritised and allocated for review and settlement.
8. Prioritisation of claimants accessing the Wellbeing Service is not addressed by this policy.

Policy principles | Ngā tikanga whakahaere

9. The policy is underpinned by these principles:
 - Claims will be reviewed and resolved as quickly as possible and in accordance with Ministry policies and processes.
 - The claims allocation process will be fair and equitable.
 - The Ministry will be transparent and accountable in all its processes.

Policy | Kaupapa here

10. Generally, claims are responded to in the chronological order in which they are received. This means the general approach is that claims received earliest will be allocated for review first once there is capacity within the team to process them.
11. However, the Ministry also operates different queue groupings depending on the circumstances of the claim and/or the claimant. These groupings are:
 - Claims that relate to an eligible rapid payment school.
 - Claims where the claimant is eligible for a prioritised payment due to terminal illness.
 - Claims where the claimant is over the age of 70 or in serious ill health.

Claims that relate to an eligible rapid payment school

12. Claimants who attended an eligible rapid payment school are offered a choice between a rapid payment and a full review. Eligible schools are where research has been undertaken to enable standard findings relating to abuse and neglect on which settlement offers are based. Eligible schools are identified on [Rapid payment options - Ministry of Education](#).
13. The rapid payment school process offers a simplified, faster, path to resolving claims. Allegations are not collected or reviewed, rather the amount of the financial redress offer to settle the claim is based on the approved parameter for the school. For example, for Waimokoia Residential school the payment amount is based on the time period in which the claimant attended.
14. Claimants who choose the rapid payment process are allocated to a Senior Advisor for immediate response. The redress package is a financial payment at a set level, letter of apology from the Secretary of Education, and reimbursement of legal fees. These claims are commonly resolved in two to four weeks of the claimant requesting a rapid payment offer.
15. All eligible rapid payment school claims in this dedicated queue will be responded to in the order in which they were received.
16. For more information about the rapid payments for eligible schools see [Rapid payment options - Ministry of Education](#) (refer Key documents).

Prioritised payment where the claimant is terminally ill

17. Prioritised payments are an option for any claimant who:
 - has had their claim accepted for review by the Ministry, and
 - has been diagnosed with a terminal illness with a life expectancy of under 12 months.
18. Prioritised payments can be requested at any time by the claimant and are subject to them providing a medical certificate. Eligibility for a prioritised payment requires approval by the Manager, Sensitive Claims.
19. These prioritised payments take precedence over all other types of claims due to the need for extreme urgency for a person with a limited life expectancy. Requests for a prioritised payment are commonly resolved within one to three weeks of the necessary medical certificate being provided.
20. For more information see [Rapid payment options - Ministry of Education](#) (refer Key documents).

Prioritising claims of claimants who are in serious ill health or aged over 70

21. Claimants in the full assessment process who are experiencing serious ill health (including mental and/or physical health challenges) or who are over 70 years old can have their claim prioritised for processing. Prioritised claimants will continue in the full assessment process but will move to the front of the queue in having their claim allocated and reviewed. This prioritisation is subject to approval by the Manager, Sensitive Claims.
22. These claimants are typically identified at the time their claim is being lodged, during the triage process. Confirmation of serious ill health requires supporting documentation from a medical practitioner or professional.
23. Where there are multiple claims needing to be prioritised, claims from those in serious ill health will be allocated first within this category ahead of claims from those aged over 70.

Where a claim was previously lodged with another agency

24. In some cases, a claimant will lodge a claim with an agency that isn't the right agency to respond to the claim. In these cases, the Ministry will use the date on which the claim was lodged with that other agency for allocation purposes. For example, where a claim was lodged with MSD in October 2025, and in January 2026 the claim was (with the claimant's authorisation) directed to the Ministry, the Ministry will take the claim date as October 2025.

Case-by-case prioritisation

25. Claims from the same school may be grouped together to improve processing efficiencies.
26. Other issues may be raised by a claimant, their representative or the Ministry, at any time, which may warrant prioritisation of a claim. These are determined on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the Manager, Sensitive Claims.

Efficiencies in processing claims

27. While the overarching policy is to allocate claims in the order they were received, in some cases this will be balanced against the need for efficiency in processing claims or other practical issues. For example, if it is difficult to make contact with a claimant, they may have their place in the queue overtaken by another claimant.
28. Claims related to the same school may be clustered together as this is more efficient for research purposes. Similarly, claimants with the same lawyer may be clustered to increase efficiency.
29. The Sensitive Claims Leadership Team is responsible for regularly reviewing claims waiting in the queue, finding efficiencies, and deciding claim allocations.

Roles and responsibilities | Pūtake tūrangā

Role	Responsibilities / Accountabilities
Policy owner	Reviews and updates the policy in accordance with review timeframes
Manager, Sensitive Claims	Approves prioritisation of claims in accordance with this policy
Staff to whom this policy applies	Gives effect to this policy
Legal team	Provides advice as needed

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Related resources | Ko ngā rauemi

Resource title and link	Description
Sensitive Claims Business Process and Guidelines	Outlines steps in the sensitive claims process
Rapid Payments policy and Information Sheet	Rapid payment options - Ministry of Education (refer Key documents)
Prioritised Settlement payments Information Sheet	Rapid payment options - Ministry of Education (refer Key documents)

Administration

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