



Policy: Wellbeing Service

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| Type: | Policy |
| Date approved: | 4 March 2026 |
| Approved: | Hautū, Te Pae Aronui |
| Owner: | Manager, Sensitive Claims |

Purpose | Ko te whāinga

1. This document describes the policy for the Wellbeing Service administered by the Sensitive Claims team. The Ministry offers this service to claimants seeking redress for alleged abuse and/or neglect under the Ministry's sensitive claims process.
2. This policy outlines the context, scope, criteria, and principles that guide the Wellbeing Service.
3. More information is available on the Ministry's sensitive claims webpage: [Wellbeing support service](#).

Consistent support offerings across State redress agencies planned for the future

4. On 9 May 2025 the Government announced a redress implementation plan to improve the redress system for survivors of abuse in State care.
5. Work is underway on a consistent wellbeing support workstream, which will see all redress agencies provide a consistent level of wellbeing support to eligible claimants.
6. The Ministry's Wellbeing Service will remain in place until the consistent wellbeing support offerings have been agreed and implemented.

Context | Te horopaki

Background to the Ministry's approach to wellbeing

7. The Ministry operates an alternative dispute resolution process to resolve claims of abuse and/or neglect in the state school system. To be eligible, claimants' allegations must relate to a state primary school (including intermediate) or a residential special school prior to 1989, or any state school that has closed.
8. Coming forward to lodge their experience can be distressing and, in recognition of this, the Ministry has historically offered claimants access to free counselling sessions since 2010.
9. The foundation of the Wellbeing Service arises from the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry – Abuse in Care (Royal Commission). The Royal Commission recommended an expansion of oranga, or wellbeing, services and support services for survivors and their whānau. The service further recognises that the Ministry has a lengthy wait-time for many of its claims to be processed and this wait-time may cause further distress to claimants.

10. Counselling continues to be provided as a critical part of the scheme, but the full Wellbeing Service can also provide claimants with a wide range of other short-term practical and immediate supports.

Scope | Ko te hōkaitanga

11. This policy applies to all requests to the Ministry's Wellbeing Service from eligible claimants in the sensitive claims process.
12. The eligibility criteria for the Wellbeing Service are outlined below.
13. The policy outlines who qualifies for support, what support can and cannot be provided, and the approval steps.

Policy principles | Ngā tikanga whakahaere

14. These principles underpin the policy:
 - The claimant and their whānau are at the centre of the service - the wellbeing supports are tailored to meet their specific needs.
 - The autonomy, dignity and self-determination of the claimant and their whānau is promoted.
 - The Ministry will be compassionate, agile, and responsive in delivering the Wellbeing Service.
 - The Ministry will build trust and credibility with the claimant and their whānau.
 - Expenditure of public funds must be justified, transparent and properly authorised.
 - Evaluation and analysis of the Wellbeing Service will inform its ongoing provision.
 - Confidentiality and privacy are respected throughout the process.

Policy | Kaupapa here

Eligibility criteria

15. The Wellbeing Service is voluntary and available to all claimants who have made an eligible claim to the Ministry under its sensitive claims process.
16. The claimant may be seeking redress through the Ministry's rapid payment, prioritised payment, or full claim review process.
17. Accessing the Wellbeing Service does not impact any financial redress that may be offered to the claimant to settle their claim.
18. To qualify for the Wellbeing Service, claimants need to meet the following criteria:
 - Have lodged an eligible sensitive claim
 - Currently reside in Aotearoa/New Zealand
 - Not be in prison
 - Not have already accessed the Wellbeing Service and received the total amount available for supports or services.
19. For claimants residing outside Aotearoa/New Zealand, access to counselling is still available, however other supports and services are not due to the complexities in providing this outside the country. To qualify for counselling only, overseas claimants need to meet the following criteria:
 - Have lodged an eligible sensitive claim
 - Not be in prison.

20. The Ministry can also provide partial access to counselling for claimants who are in prison. To access counselling, they must already have an existing counsellor they wish to work with or have the support of the prison to assist in locating a suitable counsellor. The Ministry's role in supporting counselling for claimants in prison is limited to funding counselling sessions. These may be paid for directly by the Ministry upon receipt of invoice from the counsellor.

Provision of the Wellbeing Service where a claim has been settled

21. In some cases, claims may be settled before the claimant is able to access their supports from the Wellbeing Service. Reasons for this may include capacity limitations within the Ministry or availability of counsellors or other services in the claimant's local community. Claimants who qualify for a rapid or prioritised payment are the most likely to experience this due to the short timeframes in which their claims may be settled. In these cases, the claimant and their whānau continue to be entitled to the Wellbeing Service after their claim is settled.

22. The Wellbeing Service is otherwise not available to past claimants who have settled claims.

Deceased claimants

23. Where the claimant is deceased and the Wellbeing Service has not already been accessed, the claimant's estate will qualify to receive the support or services.

Available support

24. The Wellbeing Service is flexible to meet the needs of the claimant and their whānau by providing practical support that will immediately benefit the claimant or their whānau. For this reason, the supports that can be provided are wide-ranging. Supports are approved by the Manager Sensitive Claims in accordance with this policy (refer to paragraphs 32-25 for the approvals process).

25. The Wellbeing Service begins from assessing the priority needs of the claimant and/or their whānau. This is the primary focus.

26. The Wellbeing Service is calculated on a maximum budget of \$3,000 per claimant. The cost per claimant may vary under or, in exceptional cases, over this amount depending on priority needs. Any requests for supports exceeding \$3,000 will be considered by the Manager Sensitive Claims and if supported, will require approval by the Hautū, Te Pou Taunaki. Factors taken into consideration include the severity of the need and whether the proposed supports provide a long-term and cost-effective solution.

27. An indicative, but not exhaustive, list of supports that may be approved (in whole or in part), depending on the claimant's needs, include the following:

- Counselling
- Healthcare services including doctor, dentist, rongoā, mirimiri, massage, yoga, hearing aids
- Gym membership
- Specialised services including cognitive therapy, equine therapy, dietitian, family or relationship therapy, music therapy, respite care and diagnostic services e.g. ADHD, dyslexia
- Childcare or access to educational or other support for children
- Referral to services including Housing, Work & Income, Iwi/Local/Community Social Services, Law Centre, budgeting support
- Equipment that supports job-seeking or study, e.g., computer, mobile phone, stationery, home-office set up

- Food, petrol, or clothing vouchers
- Transport costs including flights and accommodation if needed for survivor-centric events
- House maintenance goods or services such as lawn mower, house cleaning
- General goods and equipment such as bicycles, helmets, household furniture, kitchenware, linen, whiteware, sport or hobby equipment (e.g. gardening tools or fishing equipment)
- Birth certificates.

28. Requests that will not be funded include the following:

- Botox or cosmetic surgery
- Passports
- International travel
- Payment of fines e.g., traffic fines or car impoundment fees
- Alcohol, cigarettes or illicit drugs
- Car hire
- Legal fees
- Arrears of rental or utilities bills
- Any other goods and services that are considered inappropriate use of public funds or could bring the service into disrepute.

29. Requests that may be considered on a case-by-case basis, and in accordance with the policy principles and the availability of any other existing sources of immediate government support (e.g., from Work and Income), include the following:

- Home improvements such as lighting, fencing, septic tanks, water tanks
- Prescribed medicinal cannabis products.

30. The rationale for not funding certain supports is based on Ministry liability, effective and appropriate use of public funds, and/or the ability of the request to improve the immediate wellbeing of the claimant and their whānau. If in any doubt, the Senior Advisor Wellbeing will discuss the request with their manager and final approval may be sought from the Manager, Sensitive Claims.

31. Businesses providing the supports must be legitimate and provide the relevant bank account proof as required by the Ministry's accounts payable department. All pricing of services and goods approved is expected to be fair and reasonable for what is being provided.

Approval process and purchasing

32. Each eligible claimant who requests access to the Wellbeing Service will work with a Senior Advisor Wellbeing to complete a needs assessment and establish an 'action plan' or priority list of goods or services that will support their wellbeing.

33. The costed-out action plan undergoes a two-step approval process whereby it is firstly reviewed by a Principal Advisor and then approved by the Manager, Sensitive Claims before any items are ordered or purchased. This two-step process adds an additional layer of control and oversight to the decision-making, improves accountability and provides stronger risk management. Any supports that would raise the total costs for a claimant over \$3,000 require approval by Hautū, Te Pou Taunaki. The approval documentation is filed in the Ministry's case management system JIRA **and** the claimant's file in SharePoint for record-keeping purposes.

34. Goods and services delivered under the Wellbeing Service are purchased via either a P-card held by a responsible delegated staff member in accordance with Ministry's P-card policy or through the supplier directly invoicing the Ministry.

35. Confirmation of the claimant's address for delivery of goods is held on JIRA and is verified by the address on the supplier's invoice.

Service timeframes

36. The Wellbeing Service is intended to be a short-term, targeted support service to help address a claimant's immediate and priority wellbeing needs. Its scope is limited to temporary assistance rather than extended or on-going support.

37. Some supports may take longer than others to be delivered, for example, counselling, massage therapy or rongoā Māori could be ongoing for several months depending on the frequency of the service. The fully approved wellbeing action plan will record the number of sessions agreed for such services.

38. Once an action plan has been agreed with the claimant, substituting or adding further requests is not permitted. This ensures the service remains streamlined and efficient, with a clear focus on addressing the claimant's most urgent wellbeing needs. However, if any items in the wellbeing action plan are subsequently not approved (refer to paragraphs 32-25 for approvals process), alternative requests from the claimant may be considered.

Roles and responsibilities | Pūtake tūranga

| Role | Responsibilities / Accountabilities |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Policy owner | Reviews and updates the policy in accordance with review timeframes. |
| Hautū, Te Pou Taunaki | High-level oversight of the service including risks, issues, complaints that may be escalated. Approval of any supports exceeding \$3,000 cap. |
| Manager, Sensitive Claims | Approval of each wellbeing action plan and associated expenditure that details the purchases/costs for each claimant (as the Budget delegation holder). Oversight of the service including risks, issues, complaints. |
| Principal Advisor, Sensitive Claims | Day-to-day oversight of the Wellbeing Service. Reviews initial wellbeing action plans created by Senior Advisor, Wellbeing and recommends approval to the Manager, Sensitive Claims detailing the goods and services to be purchased. |
| Senior Advisor, Wellbeing | Works with claimants to plan, implement, and deliver the wellbeing service. Maintains records in SharePoint and Jira. |
| Senior Advisor, Triage | Provides information to claimants about the Wellbeing Service. Refers interested claimants to a member of the Wellbeing Service team. |
| Sensitive claims team | Give effect to this policy. |
| Legal team | Provide advice as needed. |

Related resources | Ko ngā rauemi

| Resource title and link | Description |
|--|---|
| Sensitive Claims Business Process and Guidelines | Outlines steps in the sensitive claims process. |
| Wellbeing needs assessment form | Used to engage with the claimant and establish a wellbeing action plan. |

Administration

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| Effective date | 4 March 2026 |
| Published date, e.g. on website (if applicable) | March 2026 |
| Version | One |
| Review due | March 2027 (or, as applicable, to align with implementation of consistent Crown redress wellbeing supports) |