

Changes and new funding for Equipment and Modification Services

March 2010

The value of applications received for equipment and housing modifications for disabled people of all ages increased by nearly 25% last year. Because of this rise in costs, and the level of funding available, many more people now have to wait to get the services they need. To try and reduce the length of time that people have to wait for their equipment and/or modifications the government will add an extra \$7 million to the Equipment and Modification Services' budget immediately and another \$20 million over the next two years.

However, even with this additional funding, the rising costs of equipment and modifications are not sustainable, so we need to look at how we can manage demand within the money that is available.

To do this, the Ministry has made some changes to the eligibility criteria for some services and has introduced changes to funding limits. It also plans to extend its competitive processes for buying disability equipment, including hearing aids, which will help bring overall costs down.

Why have the costs for equipment and modifications risen so much?

There are a number of reasons for this increase:

- more people are staying in their own home rather than moving into different types of residential care
- new and more expensive technology with advanced features are now available such as power wheelchairs with seats that can go up/down, electric ceiling hoists and hearing aids
- the costs associated with building and construction have increased significantly.

What are the changes?

- We have raised the threshold for funding **low cost equipment** from \$37.00 (inc. GST) to \$50.00 (inc. GST).
- **Housing access modifications** to allow people to get in/out of their home, including moving between floors, will not be funded in excess of \$15,000 (inc. GST). Note, this does not impact on applications for other types of housing modifications such as level access showers.
- We are introducing fairer, simpler eligibility criteria for the funding of hearing aids.
- We will also be looking to extend our competitive tendering processes, over and above what occurs now.

When will changes come into effect?

The changes to funding levels for hearing aids will take immediate effect from Wednesday 3 March 2010. This means that the new eligibility criteria will apply to all applications received on or after Wednesday 3 March 2010, for:

- either fully funded hearing aids (wholesale cost) or the hearing aids subsidy
- low cost equipment items
- access modifications to homes.

If you would like more information you can contact:

Accessible (if you live in the Auckland/Northland region):

- www.accessable.co.nz, info@accessable.co.nz, Phone 0508 001 002, Fax 09 620 1702.

Enable New Zealand (if you live south of the Auckland region):

- www.disabilityfunding.co.nz, enable@enable.co.nz, Phone 0800 17 1981, Phone 0800 553 300 (for information about hearing aids only), Fax 06 353 5876.

Changes to hearing aid eligibility

Groups of People	What used to be available	What have we moved to
1. Children and Young People		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschoolers • Children and young people up to the age of 21 when in primary, secondary or tertiary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can get fully funded hearing aids – no limit on type or cost 	Continue to get fully funded hearing aids – these will be purchased from a limited range, selected via competitive tender processes
2. Adults with Complex Needs aged 16 years and over		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults who have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ had severe long-term hearing loss since childhood, or ➢ had onset of sudden and severe hearing loss during adulthood, or ➢ a dual disability (such as deaf/blind or hearing loss and an intellectual disability) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All people 16 years and over - can get funded hearing aids if they are working, studying, doing voluntary work, caring for a dependent person or have a dual disability • People under 65 years - can get a subsidy of \$198 (inc. GST) if they are not working, studying, doing voluntary work or caring for a dependent person or have a dual disability – mainly beneficiaries • People 65 years and over- can get a subsidy of \$500 (inc. GST) if they are not working, studying, doing voluntary work or caring for a dependent person Note – Subsidies are available once every 5 years	Fully funded hearing aids (wholesale cost) for all adults in this group, even if they don't hold a Community Services Card Hearing aids will be purchased from a limited range, selected via competitive tender processes
3. All other Adults aged 16 years and over		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ working (greater than 30 hours per week), or ➢ studying full time (over 21 years), or ➢ doing voluntary work (greater than 20 hours per week), or ➢ caring for a dependent person full-time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can get fully funded hearing aids 	Fully funded hearing aids (wholesale cost) provided to people if they have a Community Services Card Hearing aid subsidy of \$500.00 (inc. GST) available for people who do not have a Community Services Card Note – Subsidies will be available once every 6 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ not working full time, or ➢ not studying full time, or ➢ not doing voluntary work (greater than 20 hours per week), or ➢ not caring for a dependent person full-time, ➢ and do not have complex needs as in 2 above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People under 65 years - can get a subsidy of \$198 (inc. GST) • People 65 years and over- can get a subsidy of \$500 (inc. GST) Note – Subsidies are available once every 5 years	Hearing aid subsidy of \$500.00 (inc. GST) available Note – Subsidies will be available once every 6 years

Funding for low cost equipment

Groups of People	What used to be available	What have we moved to
Disabled people of all ages, including people 65 years and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment under the value of \$37 (inc. GST) is not provided except for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Children under 16 years ➢ People who can demonstrate hardship ➢ People living in residential care • Examples: long-handled hair brush, knife with built up handle, sock aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment under the value of \$50 (inc. GST) will not be provided except for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Children under 16 years ➢ People who can demonstrate hardship ➢ People living in residential care • Information will be provided to help people purchase these low cost items themselves.

Funding for access modifications to homes

Groups of People	What used to be available	What have we moved to
Disabled people of all ages, including people 65 years and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing modifications to enable people to get in/out of their home and move between floors can be funded where there are no alternative solutions available. • No upper limit for access modifications (such as ramps, platform lifts, through floor lifts) applies. • All applications over \$7,900 (inc. GST) are subject to an Income and Asset test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A maximum limit of \$15,000 (inc. GST) for housing modifications to enable people to get in/out of their home or move between floors, where there are no alternative solutions available. • If access modifications cost more than \$15,000, this funding can be used as a contribution towards these if the application is approved. • Information will be provided to help people plan for their changing needs. • All applications over \$7,900 (inc. GST) will still be subject to an Income and Asset test. Note: the \$15,000 threshold does not apply to other housing modifications such as door-widening or bathroom modifications