

Changes to funding for Equipment and Modification Services - March 2010

Questions & Answers

About extra funding

1. How much extra funding will be available this year (2009/10)?

\$7m

2. How much extra funding will be available after this year?

\$20m over the next two years

3. What will the extra funding be used for?

To reduce waiting times for people who need equipment and modifications.

4. How will the extra funding be allocated?

People with the most urgent safety needs will receive funding first.

5. Who decides what the priorities are for getting funding?

The Ministry of Health has set criteria for funding. The person and their specialised assessor decide on how these criteria are met and submit an application for funding. The assessor and their team leader (or supervisor) give each application a priority rating for funding based on any safety risks to the person and their carers. People with the most urgent safety needs will receive funding first.

6. How will this affect the waitlist for equipment and modifications?

The waiting list will reduce, however people with less urgent needs will still need to wait until funding is available.

About Hearing Aids

1. Who will be able to get fully funded hearing aids (this means funding for the wholesale cost of the recommended hearing aids)?

- Preschoolers, children and young people up to 21 when they are in school or tertiary education
- People 16 years and over with severe long-term loss, sudden onset severe loss or dual disability
- People 16 years and over who require a hearing aid to work, study, do volunteer work, safely undertake their role as the primary carer for a dependent **and** have a Community Services Card

2. What about everyone else?

All other people who need a hearing aid (if they do not qualify for assistance from War Pensions Section of the Ministry of Defence or are entitled to funding under the Accident Insurance Act 1998 through the Accident Compensation Corporation) will get a hearing aid subsidy of \$500 (including GST) per hearing aid.

3. How often can I get a fully funded hearing aid?

If you are still eligible for a fully funded hearing aid, you can get a new one when your old hearing aid can no longer be adjusted to meet your needs. You will need to have an assessment with an audiologist who is a member of the New Zealand Audiological Society. Your audiologist will be able to advise you of your options.

4. How often can I get the subsidy?

You can get the subsidy once every **six** years if your needs change and your old hearing aid can no longer be adjusted to meet your needs. If you need two hearing aids you can get one subsidy for each hearing aid within the **six** year period. You cannot get a new subsidy within the **six** year period. This applies even if you got your subsidy before March 2010.

5. What happens if I have already applied for the hearing aid subsidy of \$198.00 and I now see that I can get \$500.00 per hearing aid?

If you are still waiting to purchase your hearing aid(s), and your application for the subsidy has not been paid by Enable New Zealand by 3 March 2010, you will get the subsidy at the increased rate of \$500.00.

If you have already paid for your hearing aid(s), you will not be able to get any higher payment level.

6. What happens if I have already applied for the hearing aid subsidy of \$198.00 and I now see that I can get a fully funded hearing aid(s)

If you are waiting for payment of the subsidy by Enable New Zealand and will now be eligible for a fully funded hearing aid, you can ask your audiologist to withdraw your application and resubmit the application for a fully funded aid(s) - this can only happen if you have not already purchased your hearing aids. You may need to wait for the hearing aid(s) as there is usually a waiting time for these to be funded.

7. Is there a limit to the cost of the hearing aid?

Funding is provided for the most cost effective hearing aid(s) to meet your needs.

You can use your subsidy towards the cost of the hearing aid(s) recommended by your audiologist.

8. What kind of hearing aids can I get?

You can get the hearing aid(s) that is recommended by your audiologist. This must be the most cost effective hearing aid(s) to meet your needs.

9. Why doesn't everyone get fully funded hearing aids?

The Ministry cannot afford to fully fund hearing aids for all people who need them.

10. How do I get a hearing aid?

Your hearing must be assessed by a qualified Audiologist who is a member of the New Zealand Audiological Society. Both you and the Audiologist must fill out an application form. The Audiologist will send the application form to the Ministry's contracted provider for these services (Enable New Zealand or Accessable).

You will need to pay for any assessment costs and other fees such as a fitting fee that your audiologist may require – this applies regardless of where you live in New Zealand.

11. Is funding for hearing aids asset tested?

No. However the level of funding is higher for people on low incomes who meet specific criteria.

12. What if my hearing aid costs more than \$500?

If your hearing aid costs more than \$500, the subsidy will be deducted from the total cost of your hearing aid. You will need to pay the balance of this cost. Your audiologist will tell you about the different types and prices of hearing aids that will work for you.

13. When will the changes start from?

The new eligibility criteria will apply to all applications received by Enable New Zealand and Accessable, from Wednesday 3 March 2010

The old eligibility criteria will continue to apply to applications received by Enable New Zealand or Accessable before Wednesday 3 March 2010 – this includes applications that are currently on the waiting list for funding.

14. My hearing aids were fully funded and I can now get repairs funded. Will I still be able to get any necessary repairs?

Yes, you will be able to get your repairs paid for until your existing hearing aid(s) can no longer be repaired in a cost effective way. People who can still get fully funded hearing aids will be able to get any necessary repairs paid for.

15. Where can I get more information?

If you live in Auckland or Northland you can get more information by contacting Accessable on 0508 001 002.

If you live anywhere else in New Zealand you can get more information by contacting Enable New Zealand on 0800 553300 (for information about hearing aids only – for all other enquiries, phone 0800 17 1981).

Funding for low-cost equipment

1. What are the changes?

Equipment under the value of \$50 (including GST) will no longer be funded by the Ministry of Health. This threshold has increased from \$37(including GST).

2. Why are the changes being made?

Demand for services is higher than the available resources. Additionally many of these low cost items are now readily available in retail stores.

3. When will it come into effect?

The new eligibility criteria will apply to all applications received by Enable New Zealand and Accessable, from Wednesday 3 March 2010.

The old eligibility criteria will continue to apply to applications received by Enable New Zealand or Accessable before Wednesday 3 March 2010 – this includes applications that are currently on the waiting list for funding.

4. Who will this affect?

Disabled people of all ages including people 65 years and over.

5. What sort of things are considered low cost items

Any item costing \$50 (including GST) or less. Some examples are cutlery, special can openers, reachers and sock aids.

6. What happens if I need but can't afford the low-cost item?

Equipment under the value of \$50 (including GST) will be provided for children 15 years of age and under, for people who can demonstrate hardship e.g. are receiving a Special Benefit, with written support from Work and Income New Zealand, and people living in residential care.

Funding for modifications to get into and between levels of your home

1. What are the changes?

A maximum limit of \$15,000 (including GST) for housing modifications that allow people to get in/out of their home, including moving between floors, will now apply.

Previously there was no upper limit.

2. Why is there now a limit?

The rising cost of housing modifications is not sustainable. The Ministry can no longer support high cost solutions to provide access to multi level homes or homes with very difficult access. People will need to plan for their (or their family member's) needs – this should include thinking about moving to a more suitable home.

3. When will it come into effect?

The new eligibility criteria will apply to all applications received by Enable New Zealand and Accessable, from Wednesday 3 March 2010.

The old eligibility criteria will continue to apply to applications received by Enable New Zealand or Accessable before Wednesday 3 March 2010 – this includes applications that are currently on the waiting list for funding.

4. Who will this affect?

Disabled people of all ages, including people 65 years and over.

5. What if the modifications cost more than \$15,000 (including GST)?

You will need to pay any additional costs.

As all applications for Ministry of Health funding towards housing modifications costing over \$7,900 (including GST) are Income and Asset tested, you may also need to contribute to costs over the \$7,900 threshold.

6. Has the Income and Asset Test changed?

No. This test is part of the current funding process. You can get more information about income and asset testing from the Work and Income New Zealand website

www.workandincome.govt.nz.