

Equipment and Modification Services

Upcoming changes to the Prioritisation Tool and the process to request equipment

5 December 2018

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) Disability Support Services is facing increasing demand for Equipment and Modification Services (EMS). There has been a 21% increase in EMS expenditure over the last five years and for 2018/19 expenditure is already tracking 20% above last year's spend. At this pace, the full EMS budget will be fully utilised within the next quarter of this financial year.

The increase in demand for EMS is due to both the increase in the number of people requesting equipment and the rising costs of the technology solutions available. As technology improves to assist disabled people to live independent, everyday lives, so do peoples' expectations of what will be funded.

The Ministry can no longer sustain this growth in expenditure and action is having to be taken to ensure we can live within our means.

In September, the Ministry sent a communication to every therapist to increase awareness of these financial challenges and encouraging them to prescribe equipment solutions carefully. More action will need to be taken in the coming months to address the current overspend.

Outcome of the Prioritisation Tool

The EMS Prioritisation Tool was developed and implemented nationally in 2014 to prioritise access to complex equipment and modifications for disabled people with the highest level of need and the greatest ability to benefit.

The Prioritisation Tool removed the necessity for waitlists and disabled people were given surety about receiving equipment and modification solutions.

It became apparent early on that the Tool was not assisting us to remain within budget. More people are having funding approved, despite the threshold being adjusted twice to date. Over 97% of people who are currently assessed through the Prioritisation Tool have funding approved – this has increased from 85% when it was first introduced. There is now effectively no prioritisation occurring resulting in a significant increase in spend.

Changes to the Prioritisation Tool and process to request equipment

Changes are being made to support the prescribing of procured equipment and reissued stock, to meet only **essential** disability related needs.

The Prioritisation Tool has a national data collection function which holds demographic information on disability type and the equipment and modifications that the Ministry funds. The Ministry intends to keep this functionality of the Tool in order to provide valuable information about changes in spending.

What are the upcoming changes?

- The Impact on Life (IoL) Questionnaire and Assessor Evaluation section will no longer need to be completed in the Prioritisation Tool. This will be replaced with a Rationale Form in order to request items from Band 2 and 3 List equipment and non-list equipment, housing modifications and vehicle purchase and modifications
- Band 1, 2 and 3 Equipment Lists will be changed with items added and some removed
- Some Band 2 List equipment will no longer be available for trial and will be provided as a direct issue
- Same form, fit and function reissue equipment will be issued first without discussion with the EMS Assessor
- The Consultation with an EMS Advisor process will not be required when requesting Band 2 List equipment. However, you may still use this process if you wish to discuss a solution with an EMS Advisor and when you require advice about eligibility or access criteria
- No changes will be made to the indicators for Mandatory Consultation with an EMS Advisor for non-Band 2 equipment and modifications.

Further communication notices will be sent with the implementation date and detail on the process changes. You can expect more changes in the coming months to help ensure spend remains within the available budget.



Phil Wysocki
Manager
Service Access
Disability Support Services