

MSD COVID-19 Welfare Response

1 December 2021

What is happening?

The Government is replacing the COVID-19 Alert Level system with the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF), also known as the Traffic Light System.

Under the CPF people with COVID-19 will self-isolate in the community, with support where appropriate.

We know many New Zealanders will be able to manage their situation themselves and may just need some information and know who to call if they need help. Others will require a variety of supports to meet their individual or whānau needs particularly where those needs are complex.

The Ministry of Social Development is leading the coordination of the welfare approach, working closely with key agencies across the health, housing education, economic and other sectors, and with iwi/Māori.

This is designed to support New Zealand's health response to minimise the spread of COVID-19 and protect New Zealanders while they and their whānau self-isolate.

The Regional Public Service Commissioners are leading the regional alignment and coordination of the public service contribution to the CPF, including the welfare approach.

While most people who test positive for COVID-19 and their immediate household will be able to get food delivered by friends or family, some people and whānau will need help including those with more complex circumstances.

We also recognise that while some people are able to work from home and are less likely to lose their jobs if they have to self-isolate, others are much more financially vulnerable if they have to stay home.

Help will be available for those who need welfare support whether it's food and groceries, or other issues.

How the welfare response will work:

MSD Regional Commissioners are working locally with other partners to plan and coordinate the welfare system response for people who are self-isolating within their region.

This involves partnering with iwi, community providers and leaders, councils and government agencies.

COVID-19 will affect some communities more than others due to lower vaccination rates, poor service infrastructure, and differences in health and wellbeing access and outcomes. Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities and the disability sector will be actively engaged with to make sure people can be supported to self-isolate.

Leading and delivering the response at a regional level ensures the welfare response is tailored to local needs. It will also ensure it is aligned with the other locally led approaches of health, housing, education and economic supports.

MSD will be supporting the regional response. This includes running a dedicated 0800 COVID-19 welfare support helpline for people who have to self-isolate. Other agencies, councils and providers will also play key roles, based what a region has decided will work best for their area.

The response will build on existing relationships, infrastructure and services that agencies and providers have to come up with locally led solutions that will be culturally appropriate and meaningful to those who need help while they self-isolate.

Coordinating the response at a regional level ensures the welfare response is tailored to local needs, and people are linked with trusted local providers who know their community and best suit their needs.

The 0800 number and referral process start on Friday 3 December when New Zealand moves to the COVID-19 Protection Framework – the Traffic Light System.

When someone tests positive or is told they have to self-isolate

When the Ministry of Health is notified of a positive COVID-19 case or directs someone to self-isolate, an initial assessment will be made to identify whether the person or their whānau needs welfare support, and can isolate at home or need to be moved to a more suitable isolation facility. Options include managed isolation (MIQ) and supported isolation (SIQ) facilities. Ministry of Health will assess what is the best option for a person and their whānau.

Most people will be able to manage at home with the support of friends and family, and they'll have the COVID Welfare Line 0800 number to call if this changes.

Information about welfare needs will be passed quickly (with permission) to MSD, and triaged.

People with high welfare needs will be connected with a provider to help them get the support they need. If they already have an existing provider, we expect that provider will continue to support them through self-isolation. If not, they will be quickly linked with a local provider that may be known to them or best suit their needs.

Many providers offer both health and social services, which will help to provide a connected wraparound service for their clients.

People with lower welfare needs will be contacted by MSD staff who will get them the support they need, or escalate it to a provider who can.

We anticipate the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme will continue to be available to employers to help them pay staff who need to self-isolate because of COVID-19.

This approach allows New Zealand to manage large numbers of people self-isolating, most of who will need no, or very little welfare support, while also using existing relationships and structures to give people who need the tailored support they need to self-isolate.