

Introduction to Carer Support for Disabled People

Care Matters

Learning & Wellbeing

**Carer Support is a subsidy
that helps full-time carers
take a break from caring
responsibilities.**

This article provides information on Carer Support for disabled people who are supported by Disability Support Services. For information about Carer Support funded through Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora, please refer to: <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/our-health-system/claims-provider-payments-and-entitlements/carers-support-subsidy/>

What is Carer Support?

Carer Support is a subsidy available to the full-time carer of a disabled person. The carer can use it to help with:

- > the cost of paying a support carer to look after the disabled person while they take a break; or
- > purchases that help the carer to take a break, such as specific activities for the disabled person.

You are considered a full-time carer if you provide more than 4 hours a day of unpaid care to a disabled person. You can read more about how to access Carer Support here: <https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/carers/what-is-carer-support>

Some examples of how carers have used their Carer Support include:

- > **Paying a friend or family member to look after the disabled person while they take a break.**
- > **Expenses that are a necessary part of supporting the disabled person while the carer takes a break.**
- > **One-off purchases such as an iPad, noise-cancelling headphones, a weighted blanket, or sensory toys for the disabled person to use while the carer takes a break.**

Under the new Purchasing Rules announced by Disability Support Services in March 2024, all other purchases have been excluded from Carer Support. This is set to change from 1 April 2026, as Disability Support Services intend to remove these Purchasing Rules and reinstate flexible funding. (Please note that the changes start from 1 February 2026 for people new to DSS.) This means disabled people and their families will have more flexibility in using Carer Support. While more purchases will likely be available, bear in mind that some purchases will still require pre-approval. These include international travel and one-off purchases above a certain limit. Keep an eye on the Disability Support website to stay up to date with these changes as they come into effect. You can find examples of how other families have used their Carer Support here: [How to access Carer Support | Disability Support Services](#)

How to access Carer Support?

Step 1: Contact your local NASC

- > To find out if you are eligible for Carer Support, contact your local Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) Organisation.
- > The NASC will conduct a needs assessment to explore the disabled person's support needs and allocate any **disability support services (including Carer Support) to which the individual and their family may be entitled.**
- > As of 1 April 2026, needs assessments will be standardised across New Zealand to ensure consistency for everyone. NASCs will develop a personal plan with the disabled person that focuses on what the person wants and needs, addresses barriers linked to the person's disability, and sets out a clear purpose for the funding. Family and carers will be included in these assessments to provide a clear picture of what is needed.
- > For more information about NASCs, including the referral process, what is involved in a needs assessment and the contact details for your local NASC, please read more here: [An Introduction to the NASC](#)

Step 2: Understand your Carer Support allocation

- > If you are entitled to Carer Support, the NASC will allocate you a number of days. The number of days will depend on your needs and the needs of the disabled person you care for.
- > Carer Support days are generally allocated for 12 months and can be thought of as a budget for the whole year.
- > Each Carer Support day is worth \$80, and each half-day is worth \$40. For example, if you are allocated 28 days of Carer Support per year, then your total budget for the year is \$2,240 (28 x \$80).
- > Under the changes to flexible funding that will take effect on 1 April 2026, disabled people will be allocated a budget, which will determine how much they can spend during a specific period.
- > Creating a simple budget or spreadsheet to track your intended use of Carer Support for the year ahead may be helpful.
- > Carer Support can only be used in the period to which it relates. This means that any unused Carer Support at the end of the allocation period cannot be carried over to be used in the following period. Likewise, your Carer Support allocation for the next period cannot be used to cover costs in the previous period.

Note: There may be tax implications for the support carer receiving Carer Support payments, depending on your individual circumstances. You may wish to contact the Inland Revenue Department for advice or, if you receive a benefit, Work and Income New Zealand. More information is available here: <https://www.ird.govt.nz/income-tax/income-tax-for-individuals/types-of-individual-income/carer-support-payments>

Step 3: Familiarise yourself with the Purchasing Rules

In March 2024, Disability Support Services revised the Purchasing Rules that describe how Carer Support can be used. These rules will remain in place from now until 1 April 2026. (Please note that the changes start from 1 February 2026 for people new to DSS.) After 1 April 2026, people will have more flexibility and choice in funding use. Check the Disability Support website for further updates and details: <https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/carers/nechanges-to-disability-support-services-information-for-carers-w-page>

The rules are:

1

It helps people live their life or makes their life better—Carer Support is allocated based on the goals and needs of the disabled person. Carer Support must be used for the specific purpose assigned during the needs assessment process.

2

It is disability support—The purchase must be needed because the person is disabled. It should be in addition to goods and services that every citizen has to pay for.

3

It is reasonable and cost-effective—The purchase must fit within the disabled person's budget and give a good outcome without costing a lot of money (however, it doesn't necessarily need to be the cheapest option).

4

It is not subject to a limit or exclusion—The purchase must be legal, and not able to be funded elsewhere (for example, from other government funding).

Note: Carer Support cannot be used for anything illegal, tobacco (or related products), alcohol, personal income, gambling, or anything that is not a disability-related cost. You can read more about the Purchasing Rules here: [Purchasing-rules-24-April-20241.docx](#)

Step 4: Use your Carer Support

- > **If you are using Carer Support towards the cost of paying a support carer:**

 - You can either pay the carer yourself and seek reimbursement from your Carer Support budget, or when filling in the claim form, you can request that the support carer be paid directly.
- > **If you are using Carer Support to make a purchase:**

 - You will need to keep the receipt from your purchase and submit it with the claim form for reimbursement. Remember to consider the Purchasing Rules when using Carer Support for purchases.
 - Note: Families who use Carer Support for purchases have advised that you can fill in the claim form and submit a quote for the item you wish to purchase. You can buy it once the claim has been processed and the amount deposited in your bank account. This approach may be helpful if you do not have the funds to purchase an item upfront, or if you are unsure if your claim will fall within the Purchasing Rules. A photo/screen shot of an item's price is usually acceptable as a quote, rather than requesting a formal quote from a shop or business.

“I've used Carer Support for items that keep my daughter entertained, such as craft supplies and an iPad. For the iPad, I submitted the claim form with a screenshot of the price and then purchased it when the funds were paid out. The less expensive items I tend to purchase directly myself though, and then submit the receipts for reimbursement. The only downside I've found is that occasionally when the processing team is really busy, the claims can take up to 3 weeks to be processed.”

Step 5: Submit the claim form

- To access your funding, you need to fill in and submit a claim form to the Carer Support team at Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora each time you use it during the allocation period. You can send this via email or by post. You can access the claims form here: [CS-Claim-Form-Updated-v2.pdf](#)
- Ensure that the form is completed correctly, signed and dated, the information is legible, the client number is included and all necessary supporting documentation is attached (i.e. receipt, quote, or bank account number if claiming for the first time).
- Claim forms must be submitted within 90 days of the date of care/date the purchase was made.
- Claim forms (and supporting documentation) for reimbursement/payment can be emailed or posted to Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora, Private bag 1942, Dunedin 9054. If submitting your claim form by email, it is helpful to include the client name and client number in the subject line.

Further information on how to fill in the claim form can be found here: [How to access Carer Support | Disability Support Services](#). Note that these forms are no longer being sent out to clients by post but can still be downloaded and printed.

Carer Support Claim Form

Please complete all relevant sections of this form

Full-time carer details
Name, address and email address of full-time carer
Name: _____
Address: _____
Email address: _____

Client number: _____
Name of client: _____

Support carer (SC) details
Full name _____
Date of birth _____
SC relationship _____
Physical address _____
Email address _____
Deduction code _____

Date(s) of service (dd/mm/yy)	Hour(s) if applicable	Tick claim period	
		Half day*	Full day*

Total days claimed _____
Daily rate _____

If the support carer is registered for GST, then a tax invoice must be attached to this claim form.

GST – if any – (tax invoice attached)	
Total claimed (days x rate)	\$ _____
Amount already paid to support carer #	\$ _____

* Half day = up to 8 hours

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora
Private Bag 1942, Dunedin 9054 0800 855 066

FreePost Authority Number 4036

Ministry of Health
Private Bag 1942
Dunedin 9054

Step 6: The Carer Support team at Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora will process your claim

- Claims usually take at least ten working days to be processed.
- If there are any issues with your claim and it cannot be processed, the Carer Support team will contact you. Reasons for a claim not being processed may include a non-legible claim form, missing information from your claim form, insufficient allocation of your Carer Support budget remaining, or the Purchasing Rules not being met.
- If your claim has been declined due to a non-legible form or missing information, you will be asked to resubmit your claim form/send in the outstanding information.
- If your claim has been declined due to the Purchasing Rules not being met, and you disagree with this, you can follow this up further if you wish. Contact the Carer Support team and ask them to reconsider their decision and their process for resolving these types of issues. For example, it might involve you explaining (either through a phone discussion or written correspondence) why you believe your claim falls within the Purchasing Rules.
- The next step might involve discussions with a manager or supervisor if the issue remains unresolved.

Please note that while changes to the Purchasing Rules are set to come into effect on 1 April 2026, and will be rolled out to new Carer Support recipients from February 2026, the Purchasing Rules introduced in March 2024 remain in place at this time. Once the new guidelines are in place, you should be able to use your Carer Support more flexibly. It is not clear exactly what this will look like yet, but Disability Support Services have said that people who get flexible funding will be provided a budget to manage within.

Step 7: Payment

- > If your claim is approved, the amount claimed will be deposited into your bank account (or deposited into the support carer's bank account, if you have used a support carer and requested that they be paid directly).

Step 8: Annual review by the NASC

The NASC will generally review your funding allocation every 12 months and, if still appropriate, roll your allocation over for an additional 12 months. As of 1 April 2026, your allocation will be based on the amount you spent between June 2023 and June 2025.

- You have the right to request a review of your funding allocation at any time, so if your circumstances change and you would like to request additional or different support, please contact the NASC to request a review. You do not have to wait for the annual review or formal reassessment to raise any issues.

Please note that reassessments will be paused (unless urgent) from February 2026 until October 2026 to give NASCs time to implement the changes as the new rules around flexible funding are rolled out from 1 April 2026.

Questions

- > If you have any questions about eligibility for Carer Support, or the number of Carer Support days allocated each year, please contact your local NASC.
- > If you have any questions about your Carer Support claim, please contact the Carer Support team at Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora by phone 0800 855 066 or by email at carer_support@health.govt.nz

For general support or to learn more

- > Keep an eye on the Disability Support website for information/updates on Carer Support: [How to access Carer Support | Disability Support Services](#)
- > Talk to other parents or caregivers you know who also use Carer Support. While every family situation and funding allocation is unique, sharing ideas and tips with others can sometimes be helpful. If you don't know other carers who use Carer Support, please contact Parent to Parent for suggestions on how to connect with others.
- > If you use Facebook, consider joining iFUNZ – Individualised Funding Users NZ: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ifunz>. This is a private, non-affiliated group for users of person-directed disability funding types in NZ, including Carer Support. Another Facebook group to consider is Carer Support – New Zealand: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1162632334466092>. As with all Facebook groups, you can post anonymously to protect your privacy, and you can leave the group at any time if you find it isn't for you.
- > You may find it useful to follow Carers NZ on Facebook. Carers NZ is a not-for-profit organisation supporting carers and associated organisations. They provide information and advice to carers, advocate for their interests at a national level and participate in government working groups. They post updates from time to time on Carer Support: <https://www.facebook.com/CarersNZ>

References

Disability Support Services. *Assessment and Funding: Assessment and funding* | [Disability Support Services](#)

Disability Support Services. *How to Access Support: How to access support* | [Disability Support Services](#)

Disability Support Services. *What People Can Buy with Disability Funding: Purchasing Rules*. [Purchasing-rules-24-April-20241.pdf](#)

Disclaimer:

The information in this document is for general information purposes only and is not intended as a thorough and complete guide to an individual's specific situation.

Reasonable care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information in this document, which will be reviewed regularly. If you have any questions, please contact:
SupportInformation@parent2parent.org.nz



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