

Introduction to **Disability Funding** in New Zealand



If you or someone you care for has a disability or is neurodivergent, you may be eligible for support from the government. This article covers information on two support options for you to consider:

- **Support from Disability Support Services (DSS)**
and
- **Financial support from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ)**

An Overview of Disability Support Options

Support services provided by DSS

Referral to NASC

If not eligible – consider other support
i.e. Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand

Needs Assessment

Service Coordination

Outcome

May include:

DSS-Funded Supports

For example:

- Respite
- Home and Community Support Services
- Choice in Community Living
- Enhanced Individualised Funding
- Supported Living
- Community Residential Support Services
- Behavioural Support
- Personal Budgets under Enabling Good Lives demonstrations

Or

Other information/referral to other services

Financial support provided by WINZ

Contact WINZ for application forms and eligibility

For example:

- Child Disability Allowance
- Disability Allowance
- Supported Living Payment
- Jobseeker Support
- Community Services Card

Learn to use your funded supports appropriately
(i.e. consider the Purchasing Rules)

Review and Reassessment with NASC

Support services funded by DSS

- The government funds disability support services for eligible people through DSS, established as part of the Ministry of Social Development in September 2024. Before this, the funding was provided through Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People.
- The **purpose** of DSS-funded disability support services **is to help disabled people and their families live a good life**, with ordinary life outcomes. This is achieved by providing extra support (including support for the wellbeing of the entire family) to help remove some of the barriers that disabled people might face.
- The funding allocated is **unique and specific to each person’s disability, their goals, and their support needs**.



Who is eligible?

DSS funds disability support services for people (generally under the age of 65) who have a physical, intellectual or sensory disability (or a combination of these) which, as noted on the DSS website:

- > is likely to continue for at least six months
- > needs ongoing support to live independently, to the extent that ongoing support is required

This includes:

- > some neurological conditions that result in permanent disabilities
- > some developmental disabilities in children and young people, such as Autism
- > physical, intellectual or sensory disability that co-exists with a health condition and/or injury

You can read more about the eligibility criteria here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/assessment-and-funding/how-to-access-support>

If you're not eligible for DSS support:

You may still be able to access support from other sources. For example, **Te Whatu Ora - Health New Zealand** funds **Carer Support** for full-time carers of eligible people living with long-term chronic health conditions, older people, and people with mental health (including, in some cases, ADHD) and addiction issues.


You can find more information about Te Whatu Ora Carer Support here:

<https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/our-health-system/claims-provider-payments-and-entitlements/carer-support-subsidy/>

The NASC

To find out if you are entitled to any government-funded disability support services, **the first step is to contact your local Needs Assessment Service Coordination organisation (NASC)**. NASCs work with eligible disabled people and their families to identify a disabled person's strengths, support needs and goals. They advise what services are available and allocate appropriate funding for supports and services. You will need a referral—you can either self-refer by contacting the NASC directly and filling out the referral form, or a professional (i.e. your doctor or specialist) can complete the referral form on your behalf.

- If your referral meets eligibility criteria for DDS-funded disability support services, the NASC will contact you to arrange a time to meet. This meeting is often called a 'needs assessment'.
- **The purpose of the needs assessment is for the NASC to learn more about the disabled person, their family, goals and what support they need to live a good life.**
- After the needs assessment the NASC will determine if you are entitled to any funded supports and services, based on the information you provided during the meeting. They may also consider if there are other services within the community that you can access. This part of the process is often referred to as 'service coordination'.
- The NASC will advise you in writing if any funded supports have been allocated to you, along with information about any other relevant services.
- Each region in New Zealand has its own NASC—many of them have different names. You can find the contact details for your local NASC (or NASC equivalent, as is the case with Mana Whaikaha in the Mid Central region) here: <https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/assessment-and-funding/needs-assessment-services>

A photograph showing a woman on the left looking towards a young child sitting in a stroller on the right. The child is smiling. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Further information on the NASC process and tips on how to prepare for a needs assessment can be found here:

<https://parent2parent.org.nz/resource-hub/3556/>

What support services are funded by DSS?

DSS funds a variety of disability support services that may be allocated by the NASC following your needs assessment.

Which of these support services are allocated (if any) and the amount allocated will be **unique to each disabled person and their family because each person has unique support needs, goals, and family situations**. Where you live in New Zealand will also have an impact on your allocation, as some types of support are only available in certain regions of New Zealand.

We have summarised some of the DSS-funded support services below. You can read more about support funded by DSS (as well as support funded by other government departments) here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/support-and-services>

Respite

Respite is a type of support designed to give the main carer of a disabled person a break from their caring responsibilities.

Respite options that may be allocated by the NASC include:

- > **Carer Support** – a subsidy that provides reimbursement for some of the costs of care and support for your child while you have a break.
- > **Individualised Funding** – a type of funding that enables you to purchase your own disability supports, for example, employing your own support workers to provide respite care. Users of Individualised Funding (IF) must work with an IF host organisation, who support you to understand and use IF appropriately.

Users of Carer Support and IF must follow the four Purchasing Rules each time they use their funding. You can read more about the Purchasing Rules on page 12 of this document.

You can read more about respite here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/carers/respice-advice-and-other-resources>

Home and Community Support Services

This is a type of support designed to provide assistance to disabled people living at home in relation to:

- > **Personal Care** – may include support with eating and drinking, bathroom needs, and getting dressed and undressed.

and/or

- > **Household Management** – may include support with household management or general household tasks such as cleaning, preparing meals and washing clothes. Funding in respect of Household Management is only available to those with a Community Services Card, or for a child aged 16 and under where the parents have a Community Services Card.

Funding in respect of Personal Care and Household Management may be allocated by the NASC in various ways. The NASC will discuss with you which is the most appropriate way for you to receive this support, for example:

- > **Through a service provider** who is contracted to come into your home to provide the support needed.
- > **As part of an IF package.** As previously explained, IF allows you to purchase your own disability supports. Users of IF must follow the Purchasing Rules and work with an IF Host organisation. You can read more about IF here: <https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/assessment-and-funding/individualised-funding>

You can read more about Home and Community Support Services here: <https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/support-and-services/housing-and-transport/living-at-home-and-in-a-community-residence/support-around-the-house>

Choice in Community Living

- > An alternative to Residential Care, this is for people with significant disabilities.
- > It gives the disabled person and their family more control over where they live, who they live with, and how they are supported.
- > Currently only available in **Auckland, Waikato, The Hutt, Otago** and **Southland** regions.

You can read more here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/support-and-services/housing-and-transport/living-at-home-and-in-a-community-residence/choice-in-community-living>

Enhanced Individualised Funding

- > A variation of IF, Enhanced Individualised Funding (EIF) is currently only available in the Bay of Plenty region.
- > Please contact your NASC for further information.

The Purchasing Rules must be followed when using Choice in Community Living and EIF.

Supported Living

- > Supported Living involves a support worker providing support to a disabled person living independently in their home and community.
- > This may include support with cooking, budgeting, shopping, community involvement or accessing agencies such as WINZ.
- > For those aged 17 or older.

You can read more here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/support-and-services/housing-and-transport/living-at-home-and-in-a-community-residence/supported-living>

Community Residential Support Services

- > This is a home-like setting in the community where disabled people can live and receive support from staff for up to 24 hours a day.
- > Staff can provide support with all aspects of daily life, including personal care, cooking, shopping, household tasks and getting out and about in the community.

You can read more here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/disabled-people/support-and-services/housing-and-transport/living-at-home-and-in-a-community-residence/community-residential-support-services>

Behavioural Support

- > Government-funded Behaviour Support services are provided by **Explore**.
- > The NASC may make a referral to Explore if they consider that a disabled person has distressed behaviour that requires specialist support.
- > The waiting list to access support from Explore can be long, so the NASC may also suggest other community services or resources that you can access in the meantime.

You can read more here: <https://explorewellbeing.org.nz/>

Personal Budgets under Enabling Good Lives demonstrations

- This is a type of funding that is only available in Mid Central, Christchurch and the Waikato—the regions where Enabling Good Lives (EGL) demonstrations are currently being run.
- Personal Budgets can be used by disabled people and their families to purchase their own disability supports. The Purchasing Rules must be followed when using Personal Budgets.
- The EGL demonstrations are a prototype of what the disability funding system might look like in the future, **based on the EGL framework**. The EGL framework, which is supported by 8 principles, was developed by the disabled community over a decade ago. The vision is to give disabled people and their families more flexibility and control over their own lives.
- In the Mid Central region, the EGL demonstration covers the entire region, for all eligible people. You will need to contact Mana Whaikaha (essentially the NASC equivalent for this region) to check your eligibility to access funded disability support.
- In Christchurch and the Waikato, the EGL demonstrations have been run on a much smaller scale, and only for individuals that meet certain criteria. Your NASC will be able to tell you more about these local EGL demonstrations, and whether they might be suitable for you, or you can contact your local EGL demonstration team.

You can read more about the Mid Central EGL demonstration here: <https://www.manawhaikaha.co.nz/> and the Christchurch and Waikato EGL demonstrations here: <https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/enabling-good-lives-sites/>

A helpful tip! Use the EGL framework as an advocacy tool

- ✓ Regardless of where you live in New Zealand and the type of disability support service you have been allocated, understanding the EGL vision and principles and referring to them in your discussions with disability service providers **can be an effective way of advocating for your rights and support needs.**
- ✓ Why? Because the government has stated its commitment to the EGL vision and principles. As a community, we can use the EGL framework to guide positive change in society towards the EGL vision, with the expectation that all disability service providers should be working towards the EGL principles.
- ✓ You can read more about the EGL framework here: <https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/>

The EGL principles are:

- Self-determination
- Beginning early
- Person-centred
- Ordinary life outcomes
- Mainstream first
- Mana enhancing
- Easy to use
- Relationship building



The Purchasing Rules

There are four Purchasing Rules that must be followed when using the following types of disability funding:

- Carer Support
- IF
- EIF
- Choice in Community Living
- Personal Budgets allocated under EGL demonstrations

The rules are:

Rule 1

It helps you live your life or makes your life better

Your funding was allocated to you for a specific purpose; the purchase must relate to the purpose of the funding.

Rule 2

It is a disability support

The purchase must be specific to your disability (i.e. if you didn't have the disability then the purchase wouldn't be needed).

Rule 3

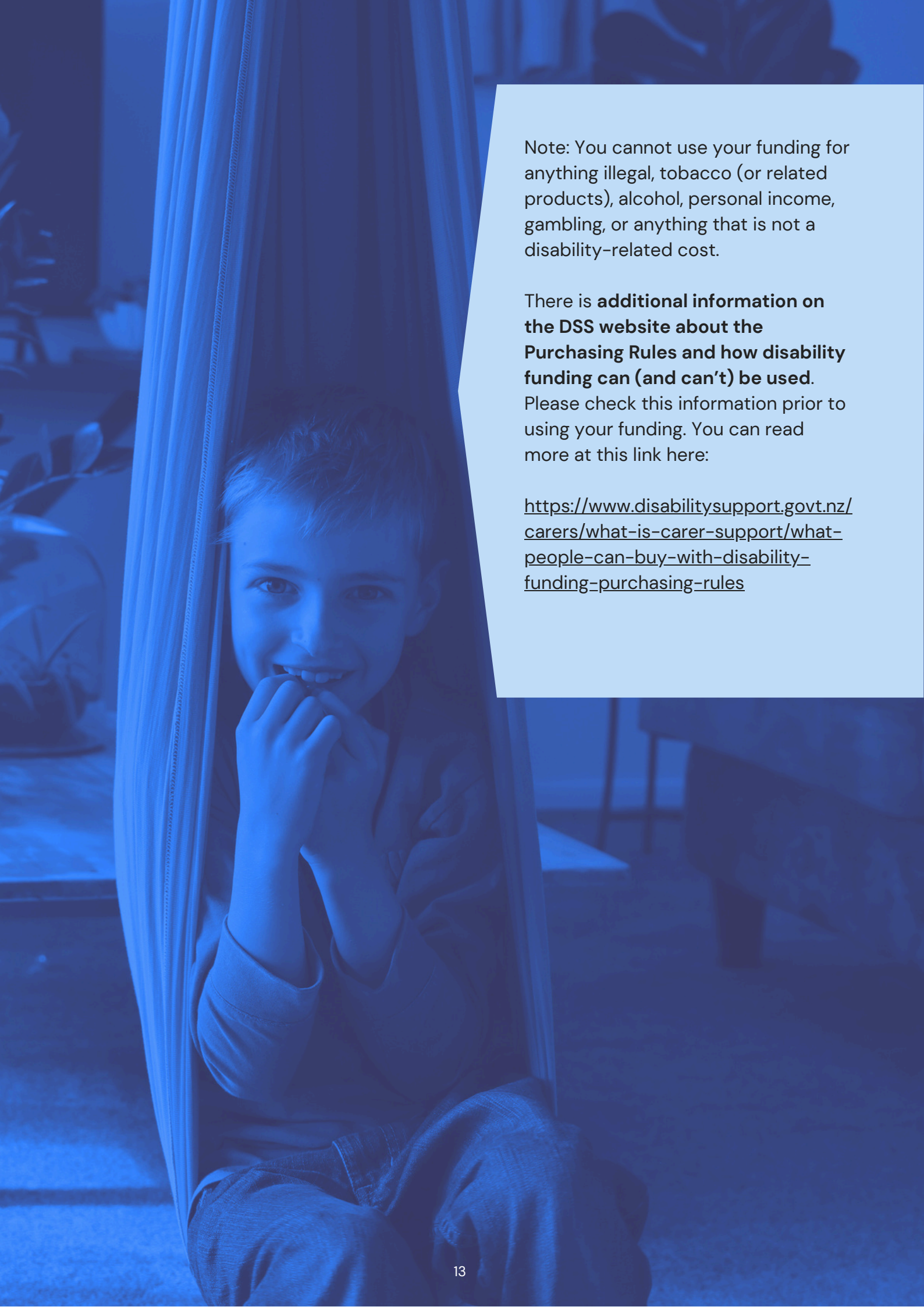
It is reasonable and cost effective

The purchase must fit within your budget and give a good outcome, without costing a lot of money (however, it doesn't necessarily need to be the cheapest option).

Rule 4

It is not subject to a limit or exclusion

The purchase must fit within your allocated funding. For example, it must be legal, not able to be funded elsewhere (for example, from other government funding), and if you're employing support workers it must fit within good employment practices.



Note: You cannot use your funding for anything illegal, tobacco (or related products), alcohol, personal income, gambling, or anything that is not a disability-related cost.

There is **additional information on the DSS website about the Purchasing Rules and how disability funding can (and can't) be used.** Please check this information prior to using your funding. You can read more at this link here:

<https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/carers/what-is-carer-support/what-people-can-buy-with-disability-funding-purchasing-rules>

Financial support provided by WINZ

You may be able to receive financial support through WINZ, depending on your needs and in some cases your family income. Some of the financial support options that can be accessed are summarised below.

Child Disability Allowance

- This is a non-taxable, fortnightly payment made to the main carer of a child under the age of 18 with a serious disability, who has been assessed as needing constant care and attention for 12 months or more.
- It is paid in recognition of the extra care and attention that the child needs.
- The allowance is a set amount per week for each child who qualifies—it doesn't depend on the carer's income or expenses. Please check the WINZ website to find out what the current allowance is.
- Carers cannot receive the Child Disability Allowance if the child is already receiving certain other benefits, such as the Supported Living Payment.
- To receive this payment, the child's carer will need to fill in the Child Disability Allowance application form and submit it to their local WINZ office, who will assess their eligibility. The child's doctor or specialist will need to complete and sign the medical certificate section of the form.
- You can find a copy of the application form, and further information on the eligibility criteria, here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/child-disability-allowance.html>

Disability Allowance

- This is a non-taxable payment for regular, ongoing costs incurred due to a person's disability. The disability must last for at least six months.
- There are certain types of costs that can be considered, and you will need to provide proof of those costs (such as receipts). Your doctor or specialist will also need to confirm that these costs are needed due to your disability.
- There is a maximum amount of Disability Allowance that can be paid out per week. How much you receive depends on your extra disability-related costs, and your and your partner's income. Please check the WINZ website to find out what the current maximum payment is.
- Parents of disabled children under the age of 18 can also apply for this allowance on their child's behalf if the child is financially dependent on them. Provided all eligibility criteria are met, parents of a disabled child can receive both the Child Disability Allowance and the Disability Allowance.
- You can find a copy of the application form, and further information on the eligibility criteria and the types of costs that may be considered, here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/disability-allowance.html>

Supported Living Payment

- This is a weekly payment for people aged 16 or older who have a significant health condition, injury or disability that restricts their ability to work.
- In some circumstances it is also available to full-time carers of people who have a significant health condition or disability—where that person would otherwise need hospital-level or residential-level care.
- The amount of the Supported Living Payment may depend on the income of the disabled person or the full-time carer (depending on who is applying for it) and the income of the applicant's partner.
- To find out more about the specific eligibility criteria and how to apply, please read more here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/supported-living-payment.html>

Jobseeker Support

- This is a weekly payment for people who are looking for work or have a health condition or disability that affects their ability to work.
- If a disabled person doesn't meet the criteria for the Supported Living Payment, Jobseeker Support may be an alternative option to consider—you can read more here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/jobseeker-support.html>

Other

- Every person's situation is different, and you may be entitled to other financial support from WINZ, including access to a Community Services Card. You can find further information here: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/index.html>

References:

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Upston, L. (2024, August 12). Improving the sustainability of Disability Support Services. https://www.disabilitysupport.govt.nz/assets/04_AUGUST-CABINET-Paper-Improving-the-sustainability-of-Disability-Support-Services-redactions-applied-FINAL.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 is reviewed regularly. If you have any questions please contact: SupportInformation@parent2parent.org.nz