

Guidance for people on Individualised Funding – managing my bubble and making sure I get the essential support I need

2 April 2020

During Alert Level 4, all New Zealanders are being asked to stay at home as much as possible, and to only have contact with others if it is essential.

We call this building and staying in your 'bubble'. The Ministry has written information about how to build and maintain a bubble here:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-information-disabled-people-and-their-family-and-whanau

The Ministry also has a video about building a bubble for disabled people and their whānau available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UnKPzFel2w&feature=emb_title

How do I know what essential supports I will need during Alert Level 4?

Essential supports are defined as:

"Any workers providing direct hands-on support that maintains a person's necessities of life, including physical wellbeing and safety"

If you are trying to reduce the number of support workers coming into your bubble, identify the essential supports you need.

Things to consider:

- What is most important for you to be able to do?
- What do you need every day?
- What you cannot do without?

If the Government chooses to extend Alert Level 4 would this change what you need?

Further information is available at:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-essential-services-health-and-disability-system

How can I reduce my number of support workers during Alert Level 4?

Once you have decided which support workers you want to provide support services during Alert Level 4, you need to get their agreement. This may include agreeing changes to hours or days worked within your allocated support hours. If some of your support workers are now working more hours you will get extra funding for this.

You will also need to talk to support workers you do not need to come to your home.

If you ask a support worker not to come to your home during Alert level 4 you have to pay the support worker special leave for the period of time they are not required. Keep a record of the special leave that you have paid. This record will be used by the Ministry of Health to renew your funding if you have spent it early because of extra costs during Alert Levels 3 and 4. Make sure you talk to your Individualised Funding (IF) Coach or Host.

The Ministry of Health funds paid special leave for periods:

- where Alert Level 4 is in place;
- where Alert Level 3 is in place and you are subject to local/cluster restrictions on activities, such as leaving the house;
- where a support worker is advised not to come to work due to their being considered at higher risk from COVID-19; and/or
- of self-isolation required by a health practitioner.

You can also find out more about making changes to your support worker hours at:

www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/changing-an-employees-work-arrangements/

If you want to continue to have a smaller number of support workers once Alert Level 4 is over then you must go through a proper employment process with your support workers. Make sure you also talk to your IF Coach or Host about this.

You can find out more about terminating an agreement at:

www.employment.govt.nz/ending-employment/

Here are some scenarios to help you.

Scenario 1 – I have two or more support workers, and I only want one of them to come and support me

Think about:

- What are my essential support needs – what is important to me?
- What do I need every day?
- What I cannot do without?

I want to change my supports during Alert Level 4

Once you have decided what your essential support needs are for Alert Level 4, you need to discuss these with your IF Host or Coach and support workers. Place your second support worker on paid special leave for the period of Alert Level 4 and, if you want to, change the hours of the support worker that you want to keep coming into your home.

Keep a record of how much and for how long you pay special leave. This record will help the Ministry of Health renew your funding if you have spent it early because of extra costs during Alert Levels 3 and 4.

Remember the Ministry of Health funds paid special leave for periods:

- where Alert Level 4 is in place;
- where Alert Level 3 is in place and you are subject to local/cluster restrictions on activities, such as leaving the house;
- where a support worker is advised not to come to work due to their being considered at higher risk from COVID-19; and/or
- of self-isolation required by a health practitioner.

You can also find out more about making changes to your support worker's hours at:

www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/changing-an-employees-work-arrangements/

I want to adjust my supports for as long as there is a COVID-19 outbreak in New Zealand

If you are considering longer term changes to your support services (for example, if you are considering entering 'hibernation'), paid special leave would not be available indefinitely to support the changes you wish to make.

You should talk with your IF Coach or Host about how you might approach making changes to your support services while Alert Levels continue. If the changes affect the employment of an existing support worker, you must follow a fair employment process with them.

Further advice on changing employee work conditions during COVID is available at:

www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/changing-an-employees-work-arrangements/

You can find out more about terminating an agreement at:

www.employment.govt.nz/ending-employment/

Scenario 2 – I don't want any of my usual supports to come and support me, and I want to pay someone else in my bubble to whom I am not related to support me

During this time, you may be restricting the people in your bubble to only those you live with or those you must maintain contact with anyway.

I want to change my supports just for Alert Level 4

If you are clear about what your essential support needs are and intend for changes just to last for Alert Level 4, you could place your support workers on paid special leave and employ someone within your bubble to provide your supports. Talk to your IF Coach or Host about setting up a Casual contracting arrangement for this.

Remember the Ministry of Health funds paid special leave for periods:

- where Alert Level 4 is in place;
- where Alert Level 3 is in place and you are subject to local/cluster restrictions on activities, such as leaving the house;

- where a support worker is advised not to come to work due to their being considered at higher risk from COVID-19; and/or
- of self-isolation required by a health practitioner.

Keep a record of how much and for how long you pay special leave. This record will help the Ministry of Health renew your funding if you have spent it early because of extra costs during Alert Level 4.

I want to change my supports while New Zealand is at Alert Level 1-4 for COVID-19

If you are considering longer term changes to your support services (for example, if you are considering entering 'hibernation'), paid special leave would not be available indefinitely to support the changes you wish to make.

You should talk with your IF Host or Coach about how you might approach making changes to your support services. If the changes affect the employment of an existing employee (support carer), you must follow a fair employment process with them.

Further advice on changing employee work conditions during COVID is available at:

www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/changing-an-employees-work-arrangements/

You can find out more about terminating an agreement at:

www.employment.govt.nz/ending-employment/

Scenario 3 - I don't want any of my usual support workers to come and support me, and I want to pay a family/whānau member who lives with me to support me

I want to employ my family/whānau member just during Alert Level 4

If you are clear about what your essential support needs are and intend for changes just to last for Alert Level 4, you could place your support carers on paid special leave and employ a family/whānau member to provide your support services. Talk to your IF Coach or Host about setting up a Casual contracting arrangement for this.

Remember the Ministry of Health funds paid special leave for periods:

- where Alert Level 4 is in place;
- where Alert Level 3 is in place and you are subject to local/cluster restrictions on activities, such as leaving the house;
- where a support worker is advised not to come to work due to their being considered at higher risk from COVID-19; and/or
- of self-isolation required by a health practitioner.

Keep a record of how much and for how long you pay special leave. This record will help the Ministry of Health renew your funding if you have spent it early because of extra costs during Alert Level 4.

I want to change my support workers and employ family/whānau members while New Zealand is at Alert Levels 1-4 for COVID-19.

If you are considering longer term changes to your support services paid special leave would not be available indefinitely to support the changes you wish to make.

You should talk with your provider about how you might approach making changes to your support services. Because the changes affect the employment of existing employees (support carers) you must follow a fair employment process with them.

Further advice on changing employee work conditions during COVID is available at:

www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/changing-an-employees-work-arrangements/

You can find out more about terminating an agreement at:

www.employment.govt.nz/ending-employment/

Scenario 4 - One of my support workers doesn't want to provide support services for me – what can I do?

If the support services are not essential

If the support worker is not providing essential support, then it might be sensible that the support worker is not coming to your home. In that case, the support worker should be placed on special leave.

Talk to your IF Host or Coach to let them know the changes you have made.

Remember the Ministry of Health funds paid special leave for periods:

- where Alert Level 4 is in place;
- where Alert Level 3 is in place and you are subject to local/cluster restrictions on activities, such as leaving the house;
- where a support worker is advised not to come to work due to their being considered at higher risk from COVID-19; and/or
- of self-isolation required by a health practitioner.

If the support services are essential

You can find out what essential support is here:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-essential-services-health-and-disability-system

If the support service is essential and the support worker does not want to provide the support service during Alert Level 4 and you agree that there is a risk, you should decide with the support worker on how the risk can be managed. Talk to your IF Coach or Host to let them know the changes you have agreed and what support services you now need.

If you cannot agree with your support worker about the risk they identify, talk to your IF Host about your Health and Safety obligations. Then, try to agree with your support worker on options such as using paid leave (including annual leave), or adjusting hours. When all leave entitlements are used the support worker will be paid special leave while Alert Level 4 is in place.

When Alert Level 4 ends, talk to your support worker about returning to work or a period of unpaid leave. If you cannot agree, talk to your IF Host as you may need to start a formal employment process with that support worker.

Keep a record of how much and for how long you pay special leave. This record will help the Ministry of Health renew your funding if you have spent it early because of extra costs during Alert Level 4.

Further advice on changing employee work conditions during COVID is available at:

www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/changing-an-employees-work-arrangements/

You can find out more about terminating an agreement at:

www.employment.govt.nz/ending-employment/

Scenario 5 - You have been placed in self-isolation by a health practitioner because you have COVID-19 or are suspected of having COVID-19 or someone in your bubble has been confirmed as having COVID-19

You need to talk to your IF Coach or Host about continuing to receive the essential support services you need and keeping you and your support workers safe.