
COVID-19 Disability Sector Update: Disabled people and their whānau

As of 3:30pm, 15 February 2021

Kia ora koutou,

Following the confirmation yesterday of three community cases of COVID-19 in Auckland, the Prime Minister has announced that from 11.59pm Sunday 14 February, Auckland has moved to Alert Level 3 for a period of three days, until midnight Wednesday 17 February. The rest of New Zealand has moved to Alert Level 2 for the same period. This will be reviewed on a 24-hour basis.

While any community transmission of COVID-19 is worrying, we know this will be of great concern for disabled people, our whānau, friends and loved ones living with disability or supporting others who are disabled.

Advice about what Alert Levels 2 and 3 means the response for the disability sector remains the same as the last time we faced this challenge. We will keep you updated with any new advice relevant to you, and the Ministry of Health website will be updated frequently. The Unite Against COVID-19 website, [COVID19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) is also a great source of accurate information.

We know that this can be concerning for people, however, we have been here before and have stamped out COVID-19 before as well. If you are worried about your mental health and wellbeing, please check out these following links:

- [Advice for people who do not feel safe](#)
- [Looking after your wellbeing during COVID-19](#)

Crossing regions at Alert Level 3

Travel into, out of or through the Auckland region is restricted while the region is at Alert Level 3. These Alert Level boundaries are an important way to manage the risk of the virus spreading, so we keep our loved ones and communities safe.

Anyone wanting to travel between Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 regions needs to check whether they are eligible to travel.

You can find out **who is allowed to travel** into, out of or through an Alert Level 3 area here: [Regional travel | Unite against COVID-19](#)

If your reason for travelling is not permitted, you may need to apply for an exemption. **Before applying** you need to **consider** whether:

- your need to travel across an Alert Level boundary is for an **urgent, non-delayable reason**; or
- anyone else (who does not need to cross the Alert Level boundary) can attend the event or perform the activity you need to get to.

The Ministry of Health and MBIE have developed online registration systems to support requests for business, service and personal movement across an Alert Level boundary.

The requirement for evidence/documentation went into effect from 11:59pm on Sunday 14 February 2021.

- **For business travel permissions** – [apply through www.business.govt.nz](http://www.business.govt.nz)
- **Personal movement exemptions** – [apply through the Ministry of Health](#)

Operating Disability Support Services at Alert Level 3

- **Disability residential care** will continue as usual.
 - Any visitors will need to discuss arrangements with disability providers. Controlled visits with agreed and named family and whānau and close friends are allowed. A maximum of one visitor at any one time may visit the disabled person in their home.
- In **aged residential care**, only family visits for end of life / palliative care residents will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Family visits for residents in a **hospice** are allowed, but on a case-by-case basis, subject to public health direction and the hospice's assessment.
- Planned **respite services** will be suspended, but urgent respite care may be provided.
- Essential **personal care services**, such as toileting, washing and feeding, will be provided as usual.
- Some **home help**, such as house cleaning, may be available.
- **Non-essential services** such as community day activities, non-urgent equipment and housing assessments, supported living, child development services and behaviour support services will not offer face to face support. Remote / virtual support will be offered where possible.

For more details about Alert Level 3 see here: [Alert Level 3 Guidance for Disability Support Services | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

Operating Disability Support Services at Alert Level 2

- **Disability residential care** continues under all alert levels. All services will follow COVID-19 risk assessment and infection prevention control, physical distancing measures, and record people's details to enable contact tracing. PPE guidance will be followed.
- Extra consideration will be given to how at-risk resident's health will be protected.
- Level 2 also allows limited opening of facility-based respite services for disabled people. Facilities will contact disabled people and families and whānau to let them know how they will operate following Alert Level 2 rules. Flexibility for respite paid for under Individualised Funding and Carer Support remains under Alert Level 2.
- **Home based personal care services**, such as toileting, washing and feeding, and home help, such as cleaning, are available. Infection prevention and control measures will be adhered to for essential care services that require close physical contact. All equipment and modification services are available during Alert Level 2.
- **Non-essential Services** may deliver support but may provide services virtually, or in non-contact ways where possible.

For more details about Alert Level 2 see here: [Alert level-2 Guidance for Disability Support Services | Ministry of Health](#)

Contact tracing keeps us safe:

It is critical to keep track of where you've been and the COVID Tracer app is an easy way to do this. Please continue to **scan QR codes** wherever you go **and turn on Bluetooth tracing** in the dashboard of the NZ COVID Tracer app.

Scanning QR codes allow us to create a private record of the *places* we've been, while Bluetooth creates an anonymised **record of the people we've been near**. **Both are important** for contact tracing.

Keeping a digital diary can speed up contact tracing, which keeps us all safe. See how this works here: [How contact tracing keeps us safe cartoon | United against COVID-19](#)

More COVID-19 Health information and advice:

Alert Level 3 information can be found here: [Alert Level 3 | Unite against COVID-19](#)

Alert Level 2 information can be found here: [Alert Level 2 | Unite against COVID-19](#)

Keeping yourself safe and others from COVID-19 information can be found here: [Protect yourself and others from COVID-19 | Unite against COVID-19](#)

COVID-19 Tracer App information can be found here: [NZ COVID Tracer app | Unite against COVID-19](#)

Face masks/covering information and exemption information can be found here: [Wear a face covering | Unite against COVID-19](#)

For **disabled people and their whānau** can be found here: [COVID-19: Information for disabled people and their family and whānau | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

For **family, whanau, and āgia carers** can be found here: [COVID-19: Information for family, whānau, and āiga carers | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

For the deaf community can be found here: [COVID-19: Information and advice for the deaf community | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

Accessible information in alternate formats

Accessible information about COVID-19 in alternate formats is available on the Health website here: [in the Resources and tools](#) or on the COVID-19 website here: [Accessible information | Unite against COVID-19](#)

- [Easy Read](#)
- [New Zealand Sign Language](#)
- [Large print and Audio formats](#)
- Those who need content in braille should contact Blind Citizens NZ via admin@abcnz.org.nz, phone: 04 389 0033 or freephone: 0800 222 694.

We encourage you to support people who don't have internet access by either printing off and giving them the appropriate formats, or through directly sharing public information with them.

Contact us:

For queries about disability support services, contact your local NASC,

email us at: Disability@health.govt.nz.

[COVID-19: Disability support providers | Ministry of Health NZ](#)

Ngā Mihi

Adri.

Adri Isbister
Deputy Director General, Disability
Ministry of Health