

Environmental Support Services - update following the Canterbury Earthquake

2 March 2011

The purpose of this update is to let people know about services available for disabled people from the Canterbury region who need new or replacement equipment, or other services and support because of a sensory impairment or communication difficulty.

Support for people who need equipment and modifications

Current situation - Staff working for **Enable New Zealand** in Christchurch are all safe and the site has now been cleared for re-entry, however still has no power or sewerage. Several staff from the Palmerston North site have volunteered to help with the clean up in the building and to restore services as quickly as possible.

Replacement equipment - equipment that is needed urgently for disabled people who have been relocated or for people who had to leave their equipment in a building when evacuated is now being delivered from the Christchurch store and from local suppliers. There are two ways that people can get temporary replacement equipment:

1. If people need equipment such as toilet commodes and over toilet frames, manual wheelchairs and walking aids) they should contact Enable New Zealand (Phone 0800 17 1995) directly to let them know the type of equipment which needs replacing. People will need to give Enable New Zealand their name, address and NHI number if they know it.
2. People who need replacement of equipment that is more customised or complex (such as power wheelchairs or specialised beds) will need to contact the local District Health Board for support from an Equipment and Modification Services (EMS) Assessor (an occupational therapist or physiotherapist) to apply for replacement of these items.

Information about replacement equipment is being managed by staff at Enable New Zealand and also staff at the various Disability Resource Centres around the country. Information about this is available through the following websites:

<http://www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/>

<http://www.weka.net.nz/>

Re-issue equipment – Enable New Zealand is trying to source a building that has a water supply and drainage so they can begin to bring recall equipment back in to be cleaned and sterilised for re-issue. Accessable has offered its support and is able to provide equipment from its store to use in the short-term.

Contacts – the phone lines into the building are not operational and all calls to the Christchurch site are being handled through Palmerston North Phone 0800 Enable (0800 362 253). Disabled people who have been relocated from Christchurch to Auckland or Northland can contact Accessable on 0508 00 1002 or 09 620 1706 to get help with equipment.

Housing modifications - Applications for housing modifications for people living in Christchurch will be on hold at the present time.

The Disability Services Accreditation Framework

The timeframe for EMS Assessors transitioning to the new accreditation framework has been extended to 1 June 2011 for assessors in the Canterbury region.

Support for people who have communication difficulties

Current situation - The Christchurch **TalkLink** team members are all safe. The office was damaged and is awaiting engineering inspection - early indications are that there is structural damage. Staff are working from their own homes – they are able to access the client database and most resources which are located on a server in Auckland.

Contact - the office phone has been diverted to the Auckland office and all staff have access to mobile phones and email to allow them to follow-up any queries from either disabled people, their family, whanau or support people. The TalkLink website <http://www.talklink.org.nz/> provides an update for contacts and queries can either be answered by email or phone.

Support - Staff are looking at preparing low tech resources to help their clients communicate about what has happened. They are also trying to contact clients who they feel may be at risk to see if there is anything they can do to support them.

Ongoing services - as TalkLink provides services across all of the South Island, staff are planning to continue with a planned trip to Dunedin next week and Invercargill/Central Otago the following week. New referrals will be accepted and staff will do their best to work through these.

Support for people who are Deaf or who have a hearing impairment

Applications for Children's Hearing Aids funding in the region

As **van Asch Deaf Education Centre** is currently closed, all applications for children's hearing aids can be sent directly to Enable New Zealand:

- o Email: chaf@enable.co.nz
- o Post: PO Box 4547, Palmerston North 4442, attention Enable Processing
- o Fax to 0800 171 996

This should include any hearing aids funding applications sent to Van Asch from 14 February 2011 onwards. The Ministry will let you know when the usual process of sending applications to Van Asch can be resumed.

Services and Support

A co-ordinated approach to support people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment has been undertaken by key services and support groups, including Deaf Aotearoa, National Foundation for the Deaf (NFD), the Southern Cochlear Implant Trust, van Asch School and the Hearing Association. Also participating at this stage are the New Zealand Relay service, manufacturers of hearing aids, the New Zealand Audiological Society and the Police. Daily meetings are being held at present.

National Foundation for the Deaf (NFD) has set up a website with daily updates advising people about services and support in Christchurch - <http://www.nfd.org.nz/ChristchurchServices>

Deaf Aotearoa's Christchurch office is likely to have sustained significant damage. Deaf Aotearoa is looking at venues to establish a base to work from and for the Deaf community to meet and use equipment (Skype, TTY, Videophones), charge their cell phones if they don't have power, pick up hearing aid batteries if they need and generally support each other.

Web2Text has been set up and updates will be sent several times a day to ensure that Deaf people have access to new information. Deaf Aotearoa has advised that if Deaf or Hearing

Impaired people need assistance they can contact Lachlan Keating on 021 540 172
lachlan.keating@deaf.org.nz

Considerable effort has been made by many people and organisations to have New Zealand Sign Language interpreters included on live television news briefings and updates – there is now confidence that there will be 2 briefings interpreted daily.

The **Hearing Association** is looking at developing an 0800 number to enable calls from the Hearing Impaired in Christchurch to be linked to Nelson Hearing Association.

Hearing Therapy Services in the Christchurch region are continuing to operate. People are advised to contact the following numbers regarding appointments:

03 366 5497

0800 008 011

Support for people who are blind, Deafblind or who have a severe visual impairment

Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (RNZFB) is providing support to blind, deafblind and partially sighted people affected by the Christchurch earthquake. So far, RNZFB has made contact with a large number of members in the area and a helpline has been set up to provide information and advice.

Contact - 0800 24 33 33 which is being manned from 8.00am-6.00pm and messages will be picked up after hours or go to the RNZFB for a daily update:

<http://www.rnzfb.org.nz/about/news-and-information/latest-news/>

RNZFB is providing essential orientation and mobility services, counselling and guide dog service support in the Christchurch area.