FAQs

**Why has the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) been set up?**

The welfare system is complex, and touches the lives of many New Zealanders. It is important to receive a broad range of views and fresh ideas on current welfare issues, and to develop options to ensure our welfare system remains fit-for-purpose. Establishing a group of experts will help achieve this.

**Why were the Group members chosen?**

These people are from all walks of life and bring a diverse range of expertise and experience to this work. Importantly, some members also bring lived experience of receiving a benefit, or being in a beneficiary household.

**What has the Group been asked to do?**

The WEAG will deliver a report to the Government on how to deliver a social welfare system that ensures people have an adequate income and standard of living, are treated with and can live in dignity and are able to participate meaningfully in their communities.

The Group is tasked with developing recommendations and providing advice on practical options for change right across most of the welfare system. This will include looking at specific matters such as:

* Amendments to the legislative purpose and principles of the Social Security Act
* Changes to obligations and associated sanctions
* High level recommendations for improvements to Working for Families

and on some areas that are much broader:

* How any amendments to the purpose and principles in the Act could be implemented system-wide
* Advice on other changes needed to ensure the system achieves the Government’s vision for the Welfare system
* Recommendations for areas where the interface between the welfare system and other systems needs to be improved.

**Are there any areas the WEAG won’t be looking at?**

The WEAG will not be considering New Zealand Superannuation, the Veteran’s Pension and War Pensions, and the Student Support System.

**Will the WEAG be looking at the culture of Work and Income, and how clients are treated in sites?**

The WEAG will be very interested in the new service culture work already underway within MSD, and will provide Ministers with their own independent views and advice on its progress.

**Will the WEAG’s recommendations be binding?**

No, however the Government has stated its intentions are to take the WEAG’s advice and recommendations and use them to inform any changes they make to the welfare system.

**When will we see the WEAG’s advice and recommendations?**

The WEAG will deliver its advice in a report to Ministers by February 2019.

Cabinet will make decisions on the Government’s response in March 2018.

**How can we share thoughts and views with the WEAG?**

It is likely the WEAG will carry out some engagement with people and organisations either contributing to the welfare system or with a deep interest in it. The details around this are not yet finalised, however once plans are in place the public will be advised.

**Why have you set up another group/committee?**

The welfare system is large and complex. A group of experts will help us take a much closer look at how we can improve the system to meet the needs of New Zealanders.

**How is this Group different to other previous welfare groups?**

The WEAG has a broad-ranging mandate to deliver advice across the welfare system – from the purpose of the system through to specific changes. It is focused on improving the lives of people who engage with the system every day, rather than achieving a narrow set of goals. It also represents a wide range of views and experiences from the community – especially including the voices of people with direct experience of the welfare system.