

Community-Wise

Inland Revenue's community update

In the heart of it

Heartland service centres have been popping up in rural outlying areas all over the country during the past year.

Heartlands is an intergovernment agency initiative designed to bring the services of government departments directly to more remote towns. The service centres provide a one-stop shop for the community where information from government departments is available and representatives from the departments regularly visit.

"We want to make it easier for our customers to get the information they need and the centres are a great way of achieving that," says Geoff Oldham, National Advisor BusinessDirect.

"So far 11 centres have been opened and more are planned for this year. The centres have attracted community interest and support," says Geoff.

During the past eight months Inland Revenue has had 732 community enquiries through the centres. Most of the enquiries have been about family assistance, child support, tax entitlements and obligations.

"Demand for services is increasing as new centres open and we are planning for more hours to be available in 2002 and 2003."

If people would like to see an Inland Revenue representative, they are encouraged to make an appointment with the receptionist at the centre, who knows when we'll be visiting next."

Heartlands is currently operating in Dargaville, Kaikohe, Pukekohe, Wairoa, Murupara, Turangi, Hawera, Takaka, Kaikoura, Westport and Queenstown.



West Coast/Tasman MP Damien O'Connor officially opened the Takaka Heartlands office, based at the Golden Bay Community Workcentre Trust, in April. Our Nelson Child Support Community Liaison Officer Carol Wilson (second left), Social Policy Liaison Officer Margaret King and Maori Community Officer Dayveen Stephens also attended the opening.

Getting in contact

INFOexpress

Finding out information and requesting forms and pamphlets from us is as easy as 1 - 2 - 3.

INFOexpress is Inland Revenue's automated telephone service that provides an easy way for customers to order pamphlets, find out about monthly child support payments or request publications without having to contact our call centre or go into one of our offices.

The full range of Child Support publications are available through INFOexpress, for example the *Change of circumstances (IR 116)* and *Administration review (IR 172)* forms.

Before calling make sure you have your IRD number handy and the number of the publication you wish to request. The number is found on all publications and is usually "IR" followed by a three-digit number, for example *Community-Wise* is *IR 160*.

The publications you select will be mailed out to you within five working days.

Not only is INFOexpress convenient, but it's also easy to use. By simply calling **0800 257 777** and entering your IRD number, you'll be guided through the process by a pre-recorded message.

The first time you use INFOexpress you will be allocated a PIN number.

INFOexpress is available from 6 am to 12 midnight seven days a week.

Talking to us

The best way to contact us is by phone. The phone call is free and by calling **0800 221 221** customers can talk to one of our Child Support officers. This service is available from 8 am to 8 pm on weekdays or between 9 am and 1 pm on Saturdays.

We can answer most queries and record many changes over the phone. But if customers would like to see a Child Support officer personally, they can call us on **0800 221 221** to make an appointment. Appointments can be made on weekdays between 8 am and 4.30 pm.

Through our website

Our website has a range of up-to-date information and is a good starting point if customers have general queries about child support. Copies of our forms and brochures can also be found on the website at www.ird.govt.nz/childsupport

We're online

Online banking is an easy, convenient and secure way to make child support and tax payments.

All major banks in New Zealand (and some international banks) have an internet banking facility.

Customers need to ensure that they provide their IRD number, tax code and Inland Revenue's bank account when making a payment (see our website page on *Paying Parents/Making Payments* for these details). Payments can be scheduled up to six months before they are due. Employers of paying parents can also pay child support payments online.

Getting started is easy as there's no extra software to download. To access online banking customers need a computer with internet access. For more information see our website www.ird.govt.nz/childsupport/ or customers can visit their bank's website.

Inland Revenue
Te Tari Taake

Change of circumstances IR 116

- Use this form if you need to tell Inland Revenue Child Support about a change in your circumstances.
- Please answer every question.
- If you need help to complete this form, contact Child Support on 0800 221 221.
- Child support forms and other information are available on our website at: www.ird.govt.nz/childsupport/

- Your IRD number: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
- Your name:
 - Mr Mrs Miss Ms (Tick one)
 - Surname: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
 - First names: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
- Your home address:
 - Please tick if this is a new address:
 - Street address: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
 - Town or city: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
- Your contact phone number(s):
 - Day: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
 - Evening: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
 - Mobile: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

Please tick below to show the change you want to tell us about, and then fill in details on the relevant section of this form.

Custodians only

- I am now living with the person who is paying me child support. Go to panel 6
- The children I receive child support for are no longer in my care. Go to panel 7
- The children I receive child support for no longer qualify for child support. Go to panel 8
- I am no longer receiving a sole parent rate of benefit or an unsupported child benefit from Work and Income NZ. Go to panel 9
- Other. Go to panel 14

Paying parents only

- I am now living with a new partner and/or children. Go to panel 10
- I am no longer living with a partner and/or children. Go to panel 11
- The children I pay child support for are now in my care. Go to panel 12
- I am now receiving a benefit from Work and Income NZ. Go to panel 13
- Other. Go to panel 14

Improving customer service

Inland Revenue and the Ministry of Social Development have signed an interdepartment agreement, which outlines the commitment of both agencies to work together for the benefit for Child Support customers.

David Udy, Child Support National Manager, says the agreement aims to make it easier for Child Support customers to meet their obligations.

"This agreement highlights the level of cooperation that exists between us and the Ministry of Social Development. Both departments are committed to working together to improve the quality of service we offer our customers," says David.

"The agreement also paves the way for future cooperation and improvements in customer service, which will be included in both our work programmes over time."

An example of how the agreement will work in practice is that the Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income case managers will ensure custodial parents who apply for a benefit, also apply for child support.

Both departments will also use common terms when referring to child support information to reduce client confusion.

Inland Revenue Commissioner David Butler and Peter Hughes, Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development, signed the protocol earlier this year.



Inland Revenue Commissioner David Butler (seated left) and Ministry of Social Development Chief Executive Peter Hughes (seated right) at the signing of the new interdepartment agreement. Also pictured (standing from left) are: Geoff Oldham, Inland Revenue, Penny Wilson and Blair McKenzie, Ministry of Social Development, Dianne Walker, (Inland Revenue) and David Udy, Child Support National Manager.

Introducing Rata

Rata Nepe is the new Child Support Community Liaison Officer in Gisborne.

Rata has been in the role since March this year and has been busy establishing community contacts.

"I'm focussing on the two Heartland services in the Gisborne area, and looking at other ways that I can be out in the community helping people understand their child support entitlements and obligations," says Rata.

"I recently spoke at some seminars run by *Men for Change*. My talk was well received and the men took the opportunity to ask a range of questions."

If you would like to contact Rata, or arrange for her to come and speak to you please ring **0800 221 221** and ask for Rata Nepe.

Frequently asked questions

What is a living allowance?

A living allowance is an amount subtracted from a paying parent's taxable income before the amount of child support is calculated. The living allowance amount depends on the person's living situation.

What is the living allowance based on?

The living allowances Child Support uses are based on Work and Income benefit amounts. They change each year in line with benefit changes.

What are the living allowance amounts for this year?

For 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003 the living allowances are:

If you are:

Your living allowance would be:

- Single and do not have any children living with you \$11,994
- Married or de facto and do not have any children living with you \$16,233
- Have one child living with you \$22,916
- Have two children living with you \$25,360
- Have three children living with you \$27,804
- Have four or more children living with you \$30,248

What happens if a paying parent's living situation changes or our information is wrong on their assessment?

If a paying parent's living situation changes or we have the wrong living allowance details, they should call us immediately so we can change it.

Who to call?

If you would like to speak to one of our Community Liaison Officers (CLOs), or if you would like them to come and talk with you or your group, call us on freephone 0800 221 221 and ask for ...

CLOs ... who cover the following locations and surrounding areas

Lynley Ballentine	Invercargill
Peter Read	Dunedin
Pip McArtney	Christchurch
Carol Wilson	Nelson
Hannah Laurenson	Wellington
Paul Smith	Palmerston North
Jo Damen	Napier
Wendy King	New Plymouth
Diana van den Akker	Rotorua
Erica Nelson	Hamilton
Mary Clark	Gisborne
Denise Skinner	Tauranga
Lizz Jenkins	Manukau
Anne White	Takapuna
Jocelyn Pindred	Whangarei

Understanding Child Support

Child Support is launching a new publication later this year, 'Understanding Child Support'.

Prema Waghorn, Child Support National Advisor, says the new publication aims to provide new customers with all the information they need to know.

"We decided to produce one booklet after we carried out research into our current range of brochures. Customer feedback was certainly in favour of a one-stop shop publication.

"The booklet will be given to all new customers and will replace 13 brochures that we currently use."

Child Support is also producing a series of factsheets on individual topics that will be given to customers as required.

Customers, staff and stakeholders will be kept fully informed in the lead-up to the launch of the new publication.

The difference between Paid Parental Leave and the Parental Tax Credit

Paid Parental Leave

Paid Parental Leave is a government-funded payment for birth mothers, their partners and adoptive parents for up to 12 weeks, when they take parental leave from their job.

Paid Parental Leave is administered by the Department of Labour. Inland Revenue has been contracted as the payment agency. We will process the Paid Parental Leave applications and make the payments to parents.

The maximum amount a parent can receive is \$325 before tax per week for up to 12 weeks. Payments will be paid fortnightly.

To be eligible for Paid Parental Leave, expectant mothers and adoptive parents must first qualify for parental leave from their job under the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act (PLEPA) 1987. Parents are entitled to parental leave if they have worked for the same employer for more than 12 months and worked an average of 10 hours per week, including at least one hour every week or 40 hours every month and haven't taken parental leave for another child in the previous 12 months.

"Parents who are not entitled to Paid Parental Leave include those who are self-employed, not in paid employment or fail the eligibility criteria for parental leave. But they may be entitled to Family Assistance payments, like the Parental Tax Credit," says Mark Thomas, Project Manager Design and Monitoring.

Parental Tax Credit

"Inland Revenue administers the Parental Tax Credit, which is a special one-off payment of up to \$1,200. This is different to Paid Parental Leave. Parental Tax Credit is available to families with a newborn child and it can either be paid in four fortnightly payments or as a lump sum at the end of the tax year."

The amount of Parental Tax Credit depends on the family's type and amount of income and the number of days the baby is in a parent's care during its first eight weeks.

You can't receive both

Parents cannot receive both Paid Parental Leave and the Parental Tax Credit for the same child. When parents have decided which entitlement to receive, their decision is final and cannot be changed. Inland Revenue can help with the decision making process and discuss which one would be more beneficial for the parents.

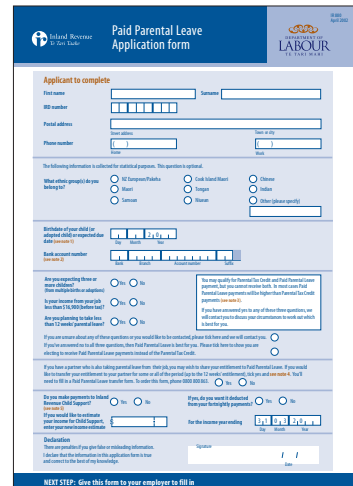
"For most people Paid Parental Leave payments will be more than the Parental Tax Credit, but there are situations where a parent may be better off getting the Parental Tax Credit," says Mark.

To find out more about this, phone Inland Revenue on **0800 377 777**.

Application forms for Paid Parental Leave are available from the Department of Labour's employment relations infoline **0800 800 863** or www.ers.dol.govt.nz/parentalleave/forms/index.html Applications forms (IR 880) are also available from Inland Revenue by phoning our INFOexpress line on **0800 257 773**. Please have your IRD number handy.

"Once the form has been completed, it should be sent to Inland Revenue who will process the form, confirm the amount of Paid Parental Leave payments and when the payments will commence," says Mark.

Parents who decide to apply for the Parental Tax Credit should fill in a *Family Assistance registration (FS 1)* form available by calling us on **0800 227 773** or www.ird.govt.nz Once the form has been completed it should be returned to Inland Revenue.



Fono prove successful

Our four Wellington-based Social Policy Liaison Officers (SPLOs) recently ran a series of fono (community meetings) promoting Family Assistance to local Pacific Island communities.

The fono were held in Lower Hutt, Porirua and Wellington in June. The aim was to raise awareness of Family Assistance, and encourage working families to contact us to find out if they are eligible for some financial assistance.

Steve Crump, National Advisor BusinessDirect, says the three fono highlight Inland Revenue's commitment to building relationships and links with local communities.

"We invited leaders from the local Pacific Island community to attend so they could help us take the Family Assistance message back to their communities," says Steve.

"The benefits of meeting these leaders face-to-face was invaluable. We were given the opportunity to outline our commitment to working with local communities, and to explain in detail who is eligible for Family Assistance.

"We were also able to introduce our four Wellington SPLOs, and outline their role. We also encouraged the community leaders to invite the SPLOS back to provide advice and assistance."

Around 75 people attended the three fono, which were facilitated by Fa'amatuaiono Tino Pereira.

Who to call?

If you would like one of our Social Policy Liaison Officers (SPLOs) to come and talk to a group or organisation that you are involved in regarding Family Assistance or Student Loans, call us on freephone 0800 227 773 and ask for...

SPLOs ...who cover the following locations (and surrounding areas)

Margaret Gunson	Whangarei
Shannon Brady	Takapuna
Charleen Vili, Denise Savea, Fatu Aiavao, Lisa James, Tala Burgess	Manukau
Helen Richards and Karin Luyten	Hamilton
Lorraine Morten	Tauranga
Colleen Lynch	Gisborne
Frances Mott	Napier
Jo Cameron	Rotorua
Jenny MacDonald	New Plymouth
Lyn Godfrey	Palmerston North
Marshall Te Tau, Vanessa Pierre, Penoa Tuigamala, Alisa Tonu'u	Wellington
Margaret King	Nelson
Juliette Henry	Greymouth
Robyn Francis	Christchurch
Debbie Gard	Timaru
Jenni Mattingly	Dunedin
Peter Murphy, Mary Rae	Invercargill

*Do you have children?
Are you working?*

We now have available a new poster promoting Family Assistance.

The poster has been developed to support our recent radio, newspaper and magazine advertising campaign encouraging parents to call us to find out if they qualify for Family Assistance.

To obtain copies of the poster, please call our freephone **0800 227 773** and ask for your local Social Policy Liaison Officer, who will get some copies to you. Or you can order the posters through INFOexpress on **0800 257 773** (IR 689 is an A4 size poster and IR 690 is A3). Please have your IRD number handy.



Frequently asked questions

How do I find out more about Family Assistance?

You can call us on freephone **0800 227 773** or, if you and/or your partner are in business, **0800 377 774**. Our hours are 8 am to 8 pm weekdays, and 9 am to 1 pm Saturdays.

We also have an automated freephone service on **0800 257 777** (available 24 hours, 7 days a week). You may call this number to work out whether you qualify for Family Assistance or to request an FS 1 registration form. Please have your IRD number handy when you call.

You can apply for Family Assistance at any time during the year.

When should I receive my Family Assistance payments from Inland Revenue rather than from Work and Income?

If you are on an income-tested benefit your Family Support is paid by Work and Income. However, if you are working, getting a partial benefit from Work and Income, and your income will be over \$20,000 a year, you should apply to Inland Revenue for payment (by filling in an FS 1 registration form).

How can I make sure I'm not paid too much Family Assistance?

You can be paid more Family Assistance than you are entitled to if you start to earn more income than you've estimated (for example, through overtime or bonus payments). So, to avoid a tax bill, contact us as soon as your income changes from your estimated amount. The same applies if one of your children leaves your care.

How can I estimate my income when my hours of work change each week?

If you are unsure of your income, your options are to:

- get Family Assistance in a lump sum at the end of the tax year, or
- get fortnightly payments based on an income estimate for the maximum hours that you would work. Then, if we find your actual income at the end of the tax year is less than this estimate, we pay you the additional amount that you are entitled to.

Pacific Island focus

Inland Revenue has four Social Policy Liaison Officers (SPLOs) who specifically service the Pacific Island Community.

Tala Burgess, based in Manukau, Vanessa Pierre, Alisa Tonu'u, and Penoa Tuigamala, Wellington based, work in the Pacific Island community ensuring they receive useful information about Family Assistance and student loans.

"We're no different to any other SPLO except that we focus on the Pacific Island community. We provide an advisory service and facilitate group presentations on Family Assistance and student loans," says Tala.

An important part of the role is to develop relationships and networks within the Pacific Island community.

They regularly work with church groups, Pacific Island health organisations, small Pacific Island community groups, pre-schools, budgeting services and other government agencies.

Fono (community meetings) are a great opportunity for the SPLOs to see what the community needs and to get Family Assistance and student loan information out into the community.

"Getting information about Family Assistance and the eligibility criteria out into the Pacific Island community is important," says Tala.

A series of fono focussing on Family Assistance were held in Wellington in June (see page six for more).



Manukau Social Policy Liaison Officer Tala Burgess.

What's happening

- July** Personal tax summary (PTS) advertising begins. This advertising states who must or should contact Inland Revenue to request a PTS as they may be entitled to a refund.
- 2 August** Child Support reassesses all salary and wage earners on their finalised income for the year ending 31 March 2002. This will effect approximately 75% of paying parents – those parents whose income has changed. A new assessment will be sent using the correct income.
- 2 August** The Child Support end-of-year square-up will be completed for those paying parents who estimated their income during the year 1 April 2001 to 31 March 2002. New assessments will be sent to those parents whose income differs from what they estimated.

What's up?

- 18 July** Child Support's CLO, Hannah Laurenson, will be holding a child support presentation at the Citizens Advice Bureau in Otaki.
10.30 am – 12 noon
- 23 – 26 July** We'll have information about student loans at the Careers Expo, Greenlane Expo Centre in Auckland.
Wednesday & Friday 9 am – 3 pm,
Tuesday & Thursday 9 am – 8 pm
- 14 – 15 August** Student loan information will be on display at the Careers Expo at the Queens Wharf Events Centre in Wellington.
- 13 – 15 September** Visit our stand at the Child and Parent Show at the Queens Wharf Event Centre, Wellington. Child Support and Family Assistance will be represented.
Open 10 am – 5 pm each day
- 5 – 6 October** We'll be at the Women's Lifestyle Expo at the WestpacTrust Centre in Christchurch. Child Support and Family Assistance will be represented.
Open 10 am – 5 pm each day

Shared care – what does it mean?

It is recognised that parents who may not live together can share the role of raising their child. However, shared care requirements differ for child support and Family Assistance.

Child support shared care requirements

A person who cares for a child for at least 40% of the nights of the child support year—146 nights—shares the care of that child with the main carer for child support calculation purposes.

There are some cases where the person cares for the child for slightly less than 146 nights of the year, but may meet special circumstances.

These include:

- providing extensive daytime care, or
- providing evening meals four to six nights a week, spending time with the child between the end of school and taking them to the carer after the evening meal.

In these circumstances, shared care will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If there is a recognised shared care arrangement, both parents can apply to Inland Revenue for child support from each other.

Family Assistance shared care requirements

For a shared care arrangement to be recognised by Family Assistance, parents must spend, on average, at least five days a fortnight—or 122 days a year—caring for their child.

Note: Parental Tax Credit is available only if parents share custody of their child for at least 19 of the first 56 days of the child's life.

To receive *Community-Wise*, please contact your local Community Liaison or Social Policy Liaison Officer.