

# Draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan

Text only version

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**Every child and young person has the right to education.**

**1 in 5 children and young people need some kind of extra support for their learning.**

**Inclusive education is about making sure all children can take part in education, learn and achieve whatever their needs or differences. Learning support refers to the additional support some children and young people need to engage and achieve in education.**

**The draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan aims to develop an inclusive education system where children and young people with additional learning needs, including disabilities, are welcome. Where their achievement, progress, wellbeing and participation is valued and supported.**

**We are not there yet. Children and young people with disabilities and learning support needs, their parents, caregivers, families and whānau and the disability and education sectors have shared their concerns about the effectiveness of the education system. These concerns are reflected in the participation and achievement rates for children and young people with disabilities and learning support needs.**

# The draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan

The draft Action Plan has been developed in response to feedback from parents and whānau and the disability and education sectors, and informed by the 2015 Learning Support Update and the Select Committee Inquiry into the identification and support for students with the significant challenges of dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism spectrum disorders in primary and secondary schools.

The goal of the Action Plan is to drive progress towards an inclusive education system where children and young people with additional learning needs, including disabilities, are welcome and where their achievement, progress, wellbeing and participation is valued and supported. It aims to build on current work, including the Learning Support Delivery Model and the Ministry of Health-led Disability System Transformation.

The draft Action Plan is designed to take a system-level view of needs and priorities. It suggests a number of priorities for the next few years. We need to strike a balance between strengthening in-school support and increasing service delivery within available resourcing.

Actions will need to be phased or sequenced over time. Each action is indicative and subject to the results of consultation, further policy work and funding decisions. Any new actions are subject to Government decisions on funding before being implemented.

All actions will be culturally responsive and designed to recognise the specific cultural needs and context for Māori and Pacific children and young people and their whānau.

The Action Plan will also connect with other Education Work Programme priorities such as the Tomorrow's Schools Review, NCEA Review, early Learning Strategy, Māori and Pacific education strategies, and the cross-government Child Wellbeing Strategy.

# Priority areas

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*There are four main priority areas.*

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## 1. Improving the way children and young people are assessed for learning needs.

We want to be able to identify all children's needs more quickly and respond earlier.

### Tools for assessment of needs

We propose to do this by working across government departments including the Ministry of Health to develop a suite of measures and tools in both English and Te Reo Māori that work together to identify and assess children's needs at different points in their schooling. This could include:

- Universal health checks at age 3
- Consistently measuring children's needs when they first enter school
- Screen for dyslexia and dyspraxia between the ages of 6 and 8
- Screen for giftedness between the ages of 6 and 8
- Standard health and wellbeing checks when children move from primary to secondary school.

### Central data collection

We propose to develop a central data collection process and system that will allow levels of appropriate access to all schools to better serve the needs of students across the country. This central data collection will also provide the Government with the ability to identify needs to initiate research, allow resource provision planning and future workforce planning.

We will be leveraging off the work that has been progressing through the Integrated Education Data ([iEd](#)) programme, and in particular the Student Information Sharing Initiative ([SIS](#)) project which is part of that work.

## 2. Strengthening the range of support for children and young people with disabilities and additional learning needs.

We want to fill the current service gaps in the system so there are graduated responses that better meet the needs of all learners, including at-risk children and young people.

We propose to do this by:

1. **Establishing a Learning Support Coordinator** (currently known as Special Education Needs Coordinator or SENCO), based in schools, to support schools to build the capability and knowledge base of teachers and be the primary point of contact for parents and whānau
2. Providing a **more flexible co-designed package support** for children and young people who are not eligible for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS), including neurodiverse learners
3. Investing more in **early intervention** services across both health and education.
4. Implementing a **dispute resolution** process so that parents, whānau and schools have a next step if there are issues
5. **Improving support for at-risk young people** so that all students are going to school, or on to training or employment
6. **Transitions:** Identifying additional support so that young people with learning support needs can access secondary/tertiary programmes, careers advice and transition to further education.

7. Work with the Ministry of Health to **align support and services from both health and education** for disabled children aged between birth and 8 years old (as part of the Ministry of Health-led MidCentral prototype for Disability System Transformation).

**Note:** we will consider potential differences in service delivery needs and mechanisms for rural vs urban settings.

### 3. Improving how we respond to neurodiverse and gifted learners

We want children and young people who are neurodiverse (including those with autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia and dyspraxia) and/or gifted to achieve their full potential.

We propose to do this by:

1. **Improving teacher capability:** supporting teachers to recognise and respond to their needs, including exploring options for initial teacher training (ITE) and professional learning and development (PLD).
2. Providing **more information** about teaching and learning for neurodiverse students, and explore the potential for new tools
3. Work with experts in the sector to provide **flexible targeted support** to meet the specific challenges gifted and neurodiverse students experience in secondary school.

### 4. Learning support has the resources to increase support and services.

We want to be able to make sure there are enough resources to meet identified needs and the flexibility to do this in the right way.

We propose to do this by:

1. Responding to cost pressures across specific supports such as Residential Special Schools, Early Intervention, and Te Kahu Tōi/Intensive Wraparound Service, New Zealand Sign Language and Deaf education
2. Clarifying the role of special and residential schools, satellite units and other facilities within inclusive communities of provision.

It's important we get the balance right between better coordination of services, supporting teachers, support in the classroom, and one-to-one services.

# The Disability and Learning Support Action Plan's connections to wider education system initiatives

## Education workforce

We want early learning services and schools to have the workforce they need to meet the needs of all learners.

**Proposed action:** We plan to include the learning support workforce in the Education Workforce Strategy which will consider current teacher training, professional learning and development, and career progression in learning support.

## Wellbeing and resilience

We want all learning environments to access the support they need to promote student wellbeing, so that children and young people can fully engage in learning.

**Proposed actions:** We plan to:

- work across government agencies to build stronger and more cohesive, cross agency support for wellbeing, mental health issues and bullying prevention
- make sure providing for the needs of children and young people with disabilities and learning support needs is included in the cross-government Child Wellbeing Strategy.

## Data and evaluation

We want to have quality information so we can make more informed decisions across the system and improve support for all children and young people.

**Proposed action:** We plan to:

- develop data sharing protocols so that data gathered about disability and learning support needs can be safely shared across agencies and providers whilst maintaining the privacy of individuals.

# Building on the learning support delivery model

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*The Disability and Learning Support Action Plan will build on the new Learning Support Delivery Model.*

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A new Learning Support Delivery Model is currently being implemented and will be fully in place by the end of 2019. We are proposing to build on this positive direction with a new role: Learning Support Coordinator.

This role will:

- be the primary point of contact for parents and whānau, and support them to work in partnership with the school
- support the school or kura to build the capability and knowledge base of teachers
- make connections for transitions from early learning services.

## The learning support delivery model

A new Learning Support Delivery Model is currently being implemented and will be fully in place by the end of 2019. It has been developed in response to feedback from parents and whānau and disability and education sector groups.

The new Learning Support Delivery model was developed in response to feedback from parents and whānau, and groups in the disability and education sector. It draws on international best practice, including from approaches in Finland, Australia, USA, Scotland, England and Singapore.

The new model has six key elements:

- a known contact point for family and whānau – someone they know they can go to for information and support.
- a single plan that provides joined up support to meet each child or young person's needs
- schools, kura, early learning services and ngā kōhanga reo working together with specialists, iwi and providers to identify what their community needs and set priorities
- more flexibility to create tailored support that is innovative and responsive
- facilitation to bring together local education and service providers to work collaboratively
- sharing data so that services can work together to support individual students and get a clear picture of local needs and resources across a community.

## Learning Support Facilitator

This is a function currently funded by the Ministry of Education and carried out by existing staff as part of the learning support delivery model.

The Learning Support Facilitator works with educators who understand the needs of their learning community and those who deliver services to identify need across the community, share data and make decisions on how the local resources will be used.

The function currently:

- is a formal contact and connection point to disability and learning support services available across education and other government agencies and could work closely with the proposed Learning Support Coordinator role
- supports the coordination of professional learning and development
- establishes ways to ensure the collective decision-making process reflects the needs and views of parents and whānau
- identifies patterns of need in a cluster or Community of Learning; support coordinated professional learning and development; and work alongside agencies such as the District Health Board, New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Health

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*A new role*

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We want to build on this approach by introducing a school-based learning support coordinator role. This role will work closely with the Learning Support Facilitator.

### **Learning Support Coordinators**

The Learning Support Coordinator (previously known as a Special Needs Coordinator or SENCO) will require a funding decision before it can be confirmed or implemented.

This role will:

- be the primary contact for parents and whānau and support them to work with their school.
- support the school or kura to build capability and knowledge amongst teachers. Specialist qualifications may be gained over time, but will not be required at the start.
- connect with early learning services to smooth the move from early learning to primary school.

We are consulting on the development of a job description that takes account of school settings in urban and in rural environments.