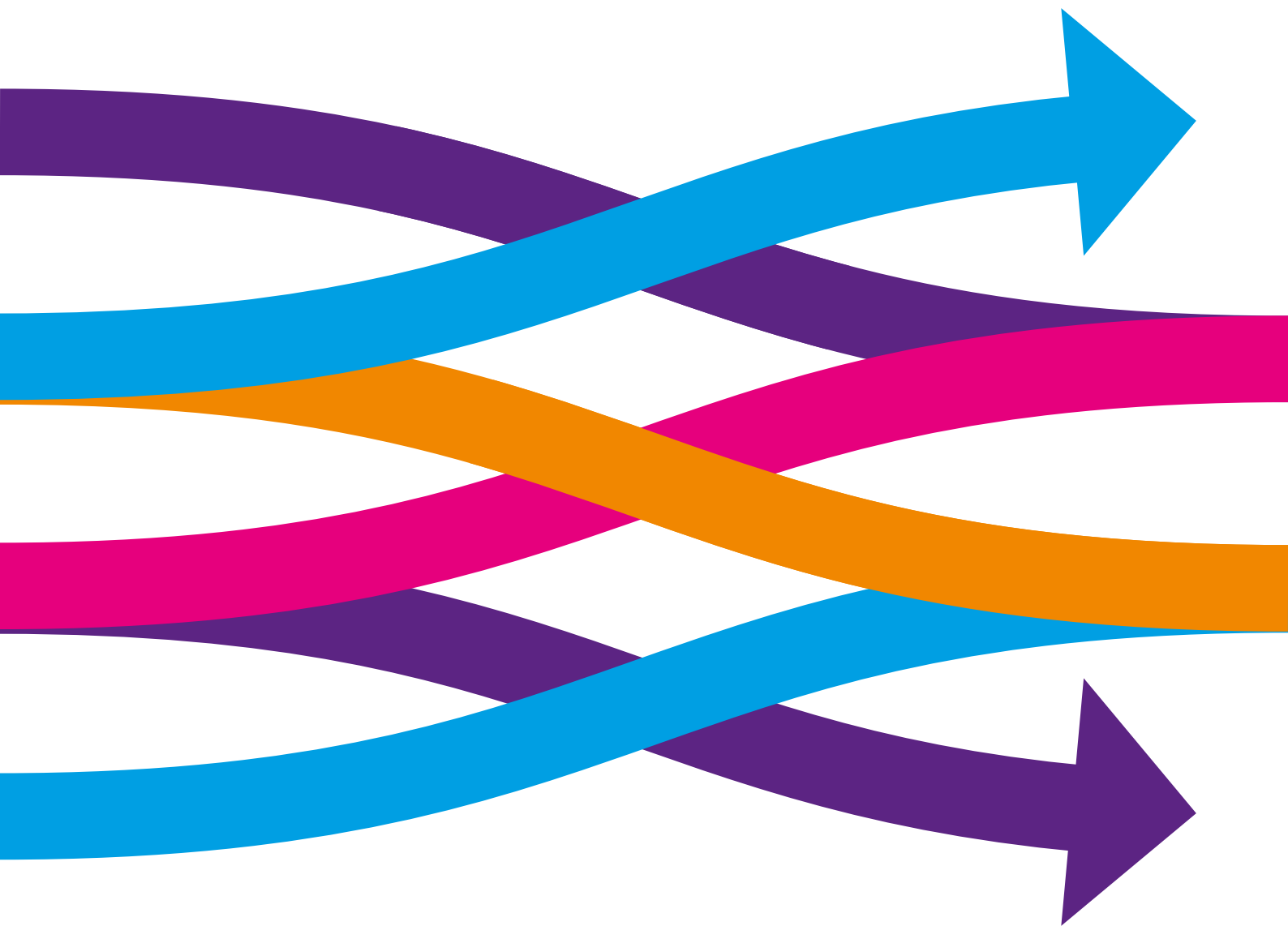


Learning Support Action Plan

2019–2025



Kōrero

Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou



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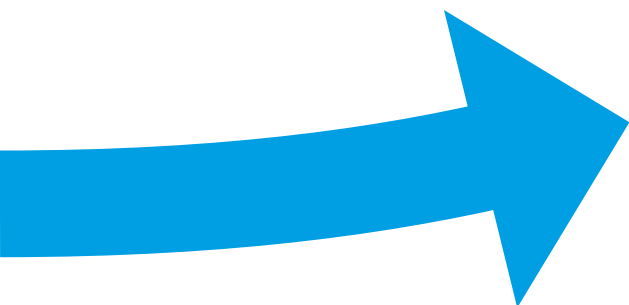
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Foreword from the Ministers

New Zealanders want an education system where all children and young people can take part in education and can learn and achieve, whatever their needs. We want to build the world's best education system for all New Zealanders and provide a range of different types of learning environments and settings to meet the needs of children and young people and their parents and whānau.

One in five children and young people need some kind of extra support for their learning. This might be because of disability, learning difficulties, disadvantage, physical or mental health or behaviour issues.

One in five children and young people need some kind of extra support for their learning. This might be because of disability, learning difficulties, disadvantage, physical or mental health or behaviour issues. The vast majority of these children and young people (99.5%) attend local schools and kura, and most of these children also attend early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo.

These children and young people are part of the natural diversity in every learning environment. We have a responsibility to ensure the education system meets their needs. Some children and young people have enduring needs that require ongoing support throughout their education, while others need shorter term, flexible support at particular times, such as at transition points.

This Government has a vision for an inclusive education system where every child feels a sense of belonging, is present, makes progress, where their wellbeing is safeguarded and promoted, where learning is a lifelong journey, and where children and young people with learning support needs get the right support at the right time. It is important that children and young people and their families and whānau have confidence that this will be achieved at whichever early childhood education service me ngā kōhanga reo, school or kura their child attends.

We are committed to ensuring that disabled children and young people receive the support they need to learn and achieve. We received feedback from a small number of respondents, mostly parents, that the word 'disability' suggests a focus on a child or young person's deficits. Accordingly, we have removed disability from the title of the plan but not from its intent. Support for those with disabilities is woven through the plan and the priority actions. While removing 'disability' from the title we acknowledge that many in the disability community do not view the term 'disability' as a deficit term, but an expression of identity and diversity.

We are also interested in working with others to identify the language we should use to describe the system we want to have in a way that encourages new approaches.



Outcome 1 of the New Zealand Disability Strategy is: “we get an excellent education and achieve our potential throughout our lives”. The Learning Support Action Plan (this Action Plan) will strengthen the education system’s support for this outcome, and enable us to progress our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons.

We are committed to ensuring the education system values mātauranga Māori alongside other knowledge and honours the Government’s commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for Māori. The system acknowledges the need to protect taonga such as Te Reo Māori and recognises its kaitiakitanga (guardianship) by iwi and Māori. Ensuring Te Ao Māori is reflected in the implementation of this Action Plan will be an important part of meeting these commitments.

In 2016, there was a select committee Inquiry into Identification and Support for Children and Young People with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autism Spectrum Disorders in Primary and Secondary Schools. We heard that there is an inconsistent and variable approach in the way schools are supporting students with learning support needs. The capability and capacity of teachers, teacher aides and other specialist support providers also varies widely between schools.

The select committee’s report highlighted the importance of raising teachers’ capability and identifying learning support needs earlier. It also called for an improved range of supports and services for neurodiverse children and young people with moderate needs who may be at risk of disengaging from education, and their parents and whānau.

In addition to the select committee inquiry, this Action Plan has been shaped by the tens of thousands of New Zealanders who took part in the Kōrero Mātauranga Education Conversation. We heard from children and young people, parents and whānau, iwi, Māori, Pacific peoples and people of many other ethnicities, along with disabled people and those with learning support needs. Teachers, kaiako, educators, leaders and education experts shared their experiences and ideas for the future.

This Government has a vision for an inclusive education system where every child feels a sense of belonging, is present, makes progress, where their wellbeing is safeguarded and promoted.

We are committed to ensuring the education system values mātauranga Māori alongside other knowledge and honours the Government's commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for Māori.

The Ministry of Education consulted on the draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan in 2018 and received further detailed feedback on the merits of the proposed actions and how to take them forward. This Action Plan sets out the improvements we want to make to learning support that, along with the Learning Support Delivery Model currently being implemented, delivers on the select committee inquiry's key recommendations.

There is a lot of work underway in the education system and in other sectors that will help address issues raised in the consultation. We have identified six strategic priorities that we consider will make the biggest difference over the next several years to strengthen learning support. They are:

1. introducing Learning Support Coordinators in schools and kura
2. screening to enable teachers and other educators to identify and respond to children's learning support needs earlier
3. strengthening early intervention
4. providing additional, more flexible supports for neurodiverse children and young people
5. increasing access to supports for gifted children and young people
6. improving education for children and young people at risk of disengaging from education.

This Action Plan also identifies other initiatives in education and across government that will improve how the education system supports children and young people to learn and responds to each learner's strengths, interests, needs, identities, languages and cultures.

This plan will continue to be reviewed and revised. Actions will be sequenced, with changes phased in gradually. There may be actions that are not mentioned here but emerge as we progress.

We are committed to leading the improvements needed for our education system to work for all our children and young people.

Kia ora, kia kaha, kia manawanui, huihui tātou katoa.



Hon Chris Hipkins



Hon Tracey Martin



Executive Summary

The need to better support disabled children and young people, and those with additional learning needs is widely accepted. There is a strong level of agreement across the education sector and key stakeholders about priorities for further improvement and investment.

Drivers for change

In 2016 a select committee inquiry made recommendations to improve identification and support for children and young people with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder. The purpose of the select committee inquiry was to determine how well the education system supports students with learning needs relating to dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism spectrum disorder in primary and secondary schools.

The select committee inquiry concluded that more work needs to be done to:

- » build teachers' capabilities to meet diverse learning needs
- » identify children and young people's learning support needs earlier
- » provide new, flexible supports and services for children and young people, and their parents and whānau, who are not eligible for existing services, whose needs are currently not well met, and/or who are at risk of disengaging from education.

We have had a range of consultation processes, and we consistently heard that people place a high priority on:

- » a dedicated learning support role in schools to ensure children get the support they need
- » earlier identification of learning support needs and earlier intervention, including for giftedness, dyslexia and dyspraxia
- » improved training and resourcing for teachers and other educators to allow them to respond to the needs of all children and young people
- » improvements to supports for children and young people with dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism spectrum disorder and other learning support needs who are not eligible for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme.

A summary of the analysis of the feedback provided to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) is attached as annex 1. A full analysis of the feedback is available at: <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/learning-support-action-plan>

Building on current changes and new investment

The Learning Support Action Plan (this Action Plan) brings together what the Ministry heard from a range of stakeholders and early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura. It also builds on the new Learning Support Delivery Model developed on the basis of feedback from parents, whānau, teachers and other educators and disability representatives in 2015 and 2016.

The Learning Support Delivery Model brings together early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura, and other government agencies and service providers to identify and respond to the learning support needs of the children and young people in their area. The model will be in place at varying levels of implementation across New Zealand by the end of 2019.

This Action Plan also builds on new services for young children and their families, brought in since 2017, and significant new investment in learning support, including \$283.8 million in new funding (over four years) announced in May 2018.



Wider changes to the education system that will improve learning support

The Government's Education Work Programme is making system-level changes that will address some of the issues raised in submissions and support the implementation of this Action Plan.

The key elements are Tomorrow's Schools; Curriculum, Progress and Achievement; Education Workforce Strategy; Early Learning Strategic Plan; National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Change Package; refresh of Ka Hikitia; the Action Plan for Pacific Education; and the Reform of Vocational Education. Each of these focuses on equity, considers issues from the perspectives of disabled children and young people and those with learning support needs, and has actively sought feedback from the disability sector.

The New Zealand Disability Strategy sets out how the Government will progress our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This Action Plan will help ensure that the system supports the education outcome (Outcome 1) of the Disability Strategy. This Action Plan will strengthen how the education system contributes to wider cross-government goals. These goals are set out in the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 to 2026¹, the Disability Action Plan 2019 to 2022, the work underway on the Disability Support System Transformation², Whāia Te Ao Mārama (the Māori Disability Action Plan)³ and Faiva Ora 2016 to 2021 (the National Pasifika Disability Plan).

The actions under each priority aim to ensure that all children and young people are present, participating, and progressing in their education, to safeguard and promote wellbeing for all, and ensure that their families and whānau can be actively involved in supporting their learning.

Earlier identification of learning support needs and easier, closer access to the supports will assist all learners to achieve their potential. The Learning Support Delivery Model connects clusters of schools and early childhood education services, and other agencies, to identify and work together to address all of the learning support needs within that community.

A number of the actions under each priority focus on building the confidence and capability of teachers and other educators, and the resources and guidance available to them to assist children and young people to learn. There is an emphasis on improving transitions across all education settings; early learning to primary, primary to intermediate and secondary, as well as for young people as they plan and prepare for their life beyond compulsory education.

-
- 1 As agreed by Cabinet, disabled people have provided a set of five indicators that intend to measure how effectively we are realising the education outcome in the New Zealand Disability Strategy. We will consider how we will measure these indicators as a contribution to understanding the progress being made from the perspective of children and young people and their families and whānau.
 - 2 The Disability Support System Transformation led by the Ministry of Health will ensure disabled people and their families and whānau have greater choice and control in their lives.
 - 3 This work led by the Ministry of Health supports tāngata whaikaha to achieve their aspirations and to reduce the barriers they face.

The Six Priorities of this Action Plan

Building on the significant changes already underway, this Action Plan includes six priorities to address the select committee inquiry's recommendations and subsequent feedback received by the Ministry.

Priority 1: Implementation of a new Learning Support Coordinator role in schools and kura

The first tranche of 600 full-time equivalent Learning Support Coordinators will be put in place from January 2020. The coordinators will work to build the learning support capability of teachers, identify and plan for the disability and learning support needs of children and young people in the school or kura, and lead school-wide and kura-wide engagement with parents and whānau. Learning Support Coordinators will be able to work together across schools in a cluster and connect to a range of specialist supports through the Learning Support Delivery Model.

We will work with the education and disability sectors, parents and whānau to ensure the role is successful and the necessary systems, guidance and processes are in place.

Priority 2: Strengthening screening and the early identification of learning support needs

Working with the education sector, Māori, Pacific peoples, and key stakeholders, the Ministry will develop evidence-based screening tools focused on the early identification of learning needs (not formal diagnosis of particular conditions).

We will progress a consistent measure at school entry and screening for dyslexia, dyspraxia, and for gifted children and young people. Early childhood measurement and teen health screening will be explored with the Ministry of Health.

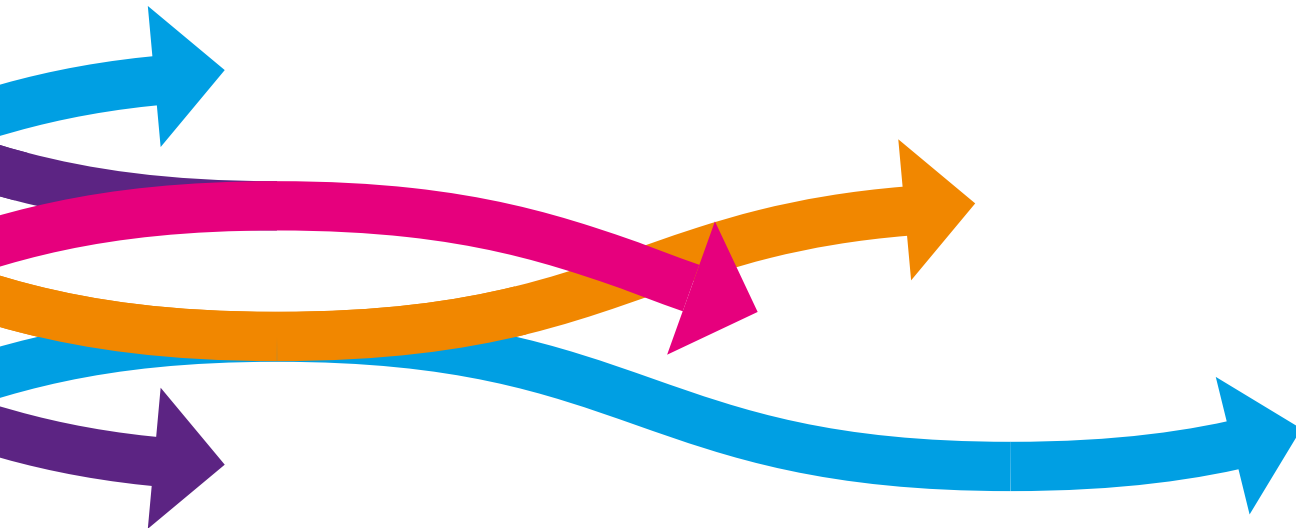
The screening tools will be culturally responsive, and incorporate Māori concepts such as tino rangatiratanga, whānau, mana whakapapa, mana tikanga, and mana tangata. We aim to produce the tools in Te Reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language.

Priority 3: Strengthening early intervention

We will identify the mix, volume and additional types of services that are needed to support children. This will include looking at what information and support families and whānau need, and will build on the new services introduced since 2017 for young children, the additional funding provided in 2018 and the roll out of the Learning Support Delivery Model.

The Ministry will work with other agencies to integrate and provide greater flexibility across the services and supports they deliver. The Ministry is currently working on this as part of Mana Whaikaha — the MidCentral Prototype for disability system transformation led by the Ministry of Health.

The Ministry is also working with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (TKRNT) to co-design and deliver an awareness campaign to ensure that kaiako, parents and whānau are aware of (and confident to access) learning support.



Priority 4: Flexible supports and services for neurodiverse children and young people

The select committee inquiry identified a need for an improved range of supports and services for neurodiverse children and young people, their parents and whānau, and teachers and other educators. This is particularly important for those with moderate needs.

We will work with a user group of educators and parents, including Māori whānau and Pacific parents, to identify tools and resources for educators and parents to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children and young people. We will also co-design a flexible range of specialist supports, building on existing supports and programmes.

Priority 5: Meeting the learning needs of gifted children and young people

It is important that the diversity of giftedness is recognised and supported. Giftedness does not mean that all learning is easy for these children and young people. With input from experts and stakeholders, including parents and whānau, we will increase access to learning opportunities for gifted children and young people, with an initial package of supports available during 2019.

Priority 6: Improving education for children and young people at risk of disengaging

Disengagement from education can have a long-term impact on the wellbeing and life outcomes of children and young people. We are working with the education sector, Māori, Pacific peoples, and other key stakeholders to co-design more adaptable, flexible supports to prevent disengagement of children and young people from education, improve supports for those that need them, and ensure better support is available to assist successful re-engagement.



Other initiatives to improve learning support

Other work that will support better education outcomes for those with disabilities and learning support needs include:

- » **Building knowledge on the right to enrol and receive an education:** We will work with education and disability sector groups, and parent groups, to build the knowledge and understanding of boards of trustees and school leaders regarding the rights of children and young people who are disabled or need learning support to enrol in and receive an education from their local school.
- » **Building teacher confidence and capability:** We will focus on teacher education and professional learning and development to improve teaching practice to support children and young people with learning support needs.
- » **Wellbeing:** We are building on existing programmes to improve supports that safeguard and promote wellbeing, bullying prevention and mental health. These supports will reflect a Māori world view of wellbeing⁴, and respond to the barriers to wellbeing experienced by Māori in the education system including stigma, discrimination and racism.
- » **Improved data and information sharing:** We will work to bring individual learners' information together in one place, allowing a view of the educational needs of children and young people at a school, community and national level. The design of data infrastructure will uphold the rights of all children and young people, families and whānau.
- » **Getting the network right:** There are opportunities to take a more strategic and planned approach to the overall network of education provision including learning support. That is, the range of types of education provision available to parents and whānau in each area and region, from classrooms in local schools, Māori-medium settings, to satellite units, special schools, residential schools, and at-risk and other learning support facilities.
- » **Transitions into school and pathways out of school:** We will identify and address gaps so that support and funding remain uninterrupted as children move from early childhood education into school. We will also work to ensure that young people with learning support needs and disabled young people in secondary school have appropriate supports to facilitate access to flexible and targeted pathways.

4 For example, Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust recommended the inclusion of an indigenous framework for understanding and supporting wellbeing. That framework includes pou tuawhā: which focuses on the wellbeing of our mokopuna and their whānau, expressed as ā-wairua (spiritual wellbeing), ā-whatumanawa (emotional wellbeing), ā-tinana (physical wellbeing), and ā-hinengaro (cognitive / intellectual wellbeing).

Working together to get these changes right

We will continue working, collaborating, and in some cases co-designing with teachers and other educators, Māori, parents and whānau, and the disability sector to achieve the priorities.

Working with Māori to ensure the system better supports equitable education outcomes for Māori will be vital. To do this, the system will need to:

- » ensure Māori have some agency over education for Māori
- » respond to Māori within the context of their whānau
- » take account of the diversity of Māori
- » respect and build on Māori children and young people's identity, culture and language, and
- » be free from racism, stigma and discrimination.

We will also continue to work, collaborate, and in some case co-design, with Pacific families, communities, teachers and other educators to ensure that the system better supports equitable education outcomes for Pacific children and young people.

The actions under each priority must be achieved within available funding, and sequenced and phased in over time. They will be evaluated through the Ministry's monitoring and evaluation strategy for learning support.

A one page summary of this Action Plan is provided on page 14.



Learning Support Action Plan



Drivers for change

This Action Plan brings together what we heard from stakeholders about improvements needed for learning support.

- » 2016 select committee Inquiry into Identification and Support for Students with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autism Spectrum Disorders
- » 2018 Kōrero Mātauranga Education Conversation
- » Oct 2018 public consultation on the draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan.

Building on current changes, and new investment

This Action Plan builds on:

- » the Learning Support Delivery Model developed on the basis of feedback from parents, whānau, teachers and other educators and disability representatives
- » new services for young children, their parents, whānau and teachers since 2017
- » \$283.8 million in new funding for learning support services (over four years) announced in May 2018.

Working together

- » Each of these priorities will involve further work.
- » Working with Māori to ensure the system will better support Māori learning will be vital.
- » Engaging, collaborating and, in some cases, co-designing with parents and whānau, teachers and other educators, and the disability sector will be essential to achieving these priorities.
- » The priorities must be achieved within available funding, and sequenced and phased in over time.

Priority 1: Learning Support Coordinators

1

Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs) will work together across a school cluster to ensure children and young people with learning support needs get the help they need. LSCs will work with teachers, school and kura leadership, and within the Learning Support Delivery Model to implement processes that help all children and young people progress, participate and make successful transitions.

Priority 2: Screening and early identification of learning support needs

2

Early identification and response to need has long-term benefits for children and young people. We need to be more systematic in how we identify a child's learning support needs, so they get assistance as quickly as possible. We will add a new set of screening tools to assess all children at certain stages, and work with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to ensure these are integrated into a coherent system of measurement with health checks and screening.

Priority 3: Strengthening early intervention

3

We will identify the volume, mix and additional types of services needed, including information and support for families and whānau, and build on services introduced since 2017. We will work with other agencies to integrate and provide more flexible supports eg with MoH on Mana Whaikaha, and with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust on an awareness campaign.

Priority 4: Flexible supports for neurodiverse children and young people

4

The focus in this priority is on building the understanding and capability of early learning services, schools and kura to teach and respond to neurodiverse children and young people to progress their learning at an appropriate depth and pace.

We will work with the education and disability sectors, parents, whānau, young people and experts to develop new tools and resources for teachers, design new supports for children and young people, and address gaps in specialist services. There will need to be room for innovation and flexibility in the types of support.

We will also have some specific work streams to provide for particular needs, eg dyslexia and autism spectrum disorder.

Priority 5: Meeting the learning needs of gifted children and young people

5

We are working with sector experts to design a group of flexible supports for gifted children and young people. This work will address a current gap in support and provide new tools for teachers and other educators, whānau and their children.

Priority 6: Improving education for children and young people at risk of disengaging

6

We want to prevent disengagement at any stage of a child or young person's educational journey, improve at-risk education provision for those who need it, and ensure better support is available to help children and young people re-engage in learning. Strengthening screening and the early identification of learning support needs will help identify learning difficulties that may lead to disengagement. Providing early additional support will address the needs of children and young people with behavioural needs.

2019–2025

We will...	Timing
Design and implement the first tranche in schools and kura.	Apr '19-Dec '21
Monitor/evaluate the implementation of the first tranche of LSCs. Design and implement the second tranche [subject to funding].	Jan '20-Dec '25

We will...	Timing
Develop evidence-based screening tools reflecting Māori concepts and focused on learning needs (rather than diagnosis) [subject to funding]:	
» screening for dyslexia, dyspraxia and gifted	Jul '19-Dec '25
» a consistent set of tools at school entry.	Jul '19-Dec '25
Explore (through MoH initiatives) early childhood measurement (around age three) and teen health screening [subject to funding].	From '20

We will...	Timing
Reduce waiting times for existing early interventions.	Jul '19-Dec '25
Improve early intervention for young children and their whānau.	Jan '19-Dec '25
Improve alignment with MoH, MSD, Oranga Tamariki and other agencies.	Jan '19-Dec '20

We will...	Timing
Create a comprehensive set of tools and resources to help parents, teachers and other educators to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children and young people.	Jul '19-Dec '21
Strengthen specialist supports for children and young people with ongoing needs who don't qualify for the highest level of support and resourcing [subject to funding].	May '20-Dec '22
Design improvements with the Resource Teacher:Literacy service. Implement agreed improvements [subject to funding].	Jun '20-Jun '22

We will...	Timing
Increase access to supports for gifted children and young people by implementing an initial package of support.	Jan-Dec '19
Implement an extended package of support for gifted children and young people.	Nov '19-Dec '20

We will...	Timing
Review options, drawing on good practice in NZ and overseas.	Feb-Jul '19
Co-design a more adaptable, flexible system of at-risk provision that better meets individual needs and is integrated with schools.	Feb-Oct '19
Implement new provision, including negotiating new contracts for service provision [subject to funding].	Jul '20-Jan '21
Review the stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsion guidelines.	Feb-Jul '20

The wider changes that improve learning support

This Action Plan identifies aspects of the Government's Education Work Programme working on system-level changes that will also address issues including, Tomorrow's Schools; Curriculum, Progress and Achievement; Education Workforce Strategy; National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA); Early Learning Strategic Plan; refresh of Ka Hikitia; Action Plan for Pacific Education; and Reform of Vocational Education.

Building knowledge on the right to enrol and receive an education

Ensure all trustees and school leaders build knowledge and understanding of the rights of all children and young people to enrol in and receive an education from their local school.

Building teacher confidence and capability

A greater focus on teacher professional learning will improve teaching practice for children and young people with disabilities and learning support needs.

Wellbeing

Feedback from stakeholders confirms the need for more support to provide positive learning environments that promote children and young people's wellbeing and resilience.

Improved data and information sharing

Bringing individual learners' information together in one place to allow an aggregated view of the educational needs of all children and young people.

Getting the network right

Taking a more strategic and community-based approach to identifying needs and sharing resources across schools, kura, specialist and residential schools, satellite units and learning support facilities.

Transitions and pathways out of school

Identify and close any gaps so that support and funding remain uninterrupted.



Where are we now?

New Zealand has an education system that has come a long way in reducing barriers to learning. Most (99.5%) disabled children and young people and those with learning support needs attend a local school. There are many examples of early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura demonstrating inclusive practices to meet the needs of all their learners.

The need for learning support does not fall equally across our population. Māori are more likely than non-Māori to experience some barriers to learning (hearing loss for example) and may also face obstacles to accessing support for their learning including cultural bias and discrimination.

There is strong agreement about priorities for further improvement

The need to better support disabled children and young people and those with learning support needs is widely accepted, and there is strong agreement across the education sector and key stakeholders about priorities for further improvement and investment.

In 2016 a select committee inquiry made recommendations to improve identification of and support for children and young people with dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism spectrum disorders. The purpose of the select committee inquiry was to determine how well the education system supports students with neurodiverse learning needs relating to dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism spectrum disorder in primary and secondary schools.

The select committee inquiry concluded that more work needs to be done to:

- » build teachers' capability to meet diverse learning needs
- » identify children and young people's learning support needs earlier
- » provide new, flexible supports and services for children and young people, and their parents and whānau, who are not eligible for existing services, whose needs are currently not well met, and/or who are at risk of disengaging from education.

These priorities were confirmed in feedback to the Government's 2018 Kōrero Mātauranga Education Conversation about what New Zealanders expect and want from the education system now and for the future. Submitters highlighted the need for better guidance and training for educators (from early learning onwards), identifying the need for learning support earlier, much simpler and more transparent access to support, and greater involvement of parents and whānau.

Consultation confirmed the issues that need to be addressed

This Action Plan was strongly informed by the recommendations made by all Government parties to the select committee inquiry.

Through consultation over the past few years, we have heard about the desire for disabled children and young people and those with diverse ways of learning to be recognised, accepted and valued as part of our society and learning environments. There were calls for the education system to do more to reduce discrimination and unconscious bias, and foster and uphold these learners' rights, strengths, interests, identities, languages and cultures.

Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of building teacher capability. Teachers are responsible for supporting the needs and abilities of all learners. Therefore a focus is needed on their training, development and ongoing support. Many submitters also provided feedback on how the Action Plan could be extended to further address discrimination against disabled children and young people and those with learning support needs, including Māori and Pacific children, within the education system.

There have also been strong calls for:

- » a child-centered system that focuses on the strengths and potential of children and young people and respects the knowledge and expertise of parents and whānau
- » effective learning support for Māori learners and their whānau, and in Māori-medium settings
- » the need for better support located within early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura for children and young people, their parents, teachers and other educators
- » earlier intervention to address needs, including communication needs.

The need to better support disabled children and young people and those with additional learning needs is widely accepted and there is strong agreement across the education sector and key stakeholders about priorities for further improvement and investment.

A summary of the analysis of the feedback provided to the Ministry is attached as Annex 1. A full analysis of the feedback can be found here:
<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/learning-support-action-plan>

A new approach means improvements in the delivery of specialist services are underway

Since 2015, the Ministry has been working to reduce fragmentation in the delivery of learning support. A new Learning Support Delivery Model has been designed covering early learning services, schools and kura. It draws on best practice overseas as well as other New Zealand models that highlight the value of flexibility and responsiveness to the priorities of a local community.

The Learning Support Delivery Model provides an accessible, flexible, child-centred and connected approach to learning support and wider social, disability support and health services. By focusing on being responsive to local needs, it aims to ensure Māori and Pacific children and young people receive the support they need.

The Learning Support Delivery Model has been implemented in Bay of Plenty, Taupo, Whakatane and West Auckland since 2017 with promising results and is now being rolled out across New Zealand. It will be in place at varying stages of implementation by the end of 2019.

The Learning Support Delivery Model is locally-driven, and tailored around the needs of children and young people, their whānau, and community. The Learning Support Delivery Model provides greater flexibility to create innovative support that responds to individual needs. It includes family and whānau connection points, data-sharing, and bringing together local education and service providers to work collaboratively to identify needs and set priorities across learning communities. This includes providers and agencies in other sectors such as the health and disability sectors.

The Ministry's regional teams and the Resource Teacher Services are working with schools to implement the Learning Support Delivery Model in a way that is relevant to their cluster of schools and the needs of their children and young people.

The Government plans to further strengthen the Learning Support Delivery Model through a new in-school Learning Support Coordinator role and other actions set out in this Action Plan (see Part Two).



...and significant new investment has been made

In May 2018, the Government announced \$283.8 million in new funding for learning support services over four years.

Budget 2018 included:

- » early intervention support for an additional 1,900 young children each year
- » funding boosts for sensory schools and New Zealand Sign Language initiatives
- » a progressive rise in the teacher aide funding rate
- » an expansion of Te Kahu Toi, Intensive Wraparound Service to additional eligible children and young people
- » an increase in the number of children and young people receiving English for Speakers of Other Languages funding
- » the largest increase in funding for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme in more than a decade.

This investment adds to the services the Ministry has brought in since 2017 providing earlier support for the development of oral language and positive behaviour in young children, and support for their parents, whānau and teachers and other educators.

... and there are system level changes happening that will address some of the issues raised

There are aspects of the Government's Education Work Programme working on system-level changes that will address some of the issues raised in submissions and support the implementation of this Action Plan. The key ones are:

- » Tomorrow's Schools
- » Curriculum, Progress and Achievement
- » Education Workforce Strategy
- » National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA)
- » Early Learning Strategic Plan
- » Refresh of Ka Hikitia
- » Action Plan for Pacific Education
- » Reform of Vocational Education.

Tomorrow's Schools

The Tomorrow's Schools review is proposing fundamental changes to how accountability works in the education system, with a focus on ensuring the system promotes equity and excellence for all children and young people. The draft report of the Independent Taskforce included some specific recommendations about learning support, and also dealt with some fundamental issues. For example, inconsistencies across the system, the rights of children and young people to an education, and how accountability should be apportioned.

As decisions are made as a result of the review, we will need to consider how this Action Plan will adapt to any changes that arise.

Since 2015, the Ministry has been working to reduce fragmentation in the delivery of learning support. A new Learning Support Delivery Model has been designed covering early learning services, schools and kura.



Curriculum, Progress and Achievement (CPA)

We want to ensure that all children and young people make progress in the breadth of learning that is important for lifelong wellbeing, and that they experience a rich and engaging curriculum that is relevant to their local contexts. For children and young people with learning support needs, the system needs to support and recognise their progress and achievement throughout their education years.

Assessing and reporting on progress, not just achievement, takes into account the starting point of each child and young person and varied definitions of what success looks like. A focus on progress helps teachers and other educators provide the right learning opportunities and support at the right time. It also helps parents and whānau understand what progress their child is making and how they can support their learning.

A Ministerial Advisory Group is providing advice on what may be needed to strengthen the focus on progress across *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Education Workforce Strategy

The Ministry is developing a long-term Education Workforce Strategy in partnership with the education sector.

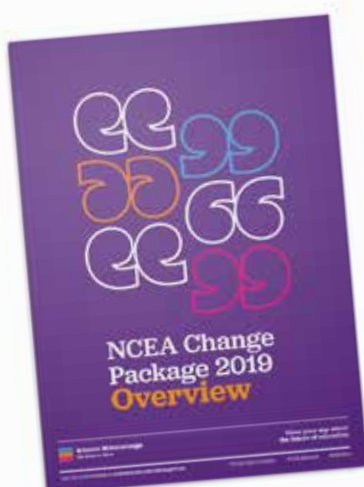
The Strategy will be comprehensive, including the workforce across early learning services, primary and secondary education, the learning support workforce, both Māori-medium and English-medium, and with a focus on Māori language learning in all settings.

It will identify the mix of professionals and paraprofessionals (including teacher aides) needed to support disabled children and young people and those with learning support needs, and will identify the ongoing professional learning and development these professionals and paraprofessionals will need. It will also consider the leadership, administrative, and technology support that will be required.

National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA)

In 2018, the Minister of Education launched a national conversation on the future of NCEA. As part of this, New Zealanders were asked to share their views and experiences of NCEA. Feedback highlighted that some disabled children and young people and those with learning support needs are not getting the support they need to succeed within the current assessment model. For example, some assessment standards are difficult to complete if you have a physical disability. Other feedback stated that access to Special Assessment Conditions (modifications to assessments to make them more inclusive and accessible) is often inequitable and unnecessarily laborious.

On 12 May 2019, the Government announced the NCEA Change Package, strengthening NCEA for all young people. Changes to make NCEA more accessible include the following:





- » Design achievement standards and associated resources that are accessible and inclusive so that everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve, and the need to apply for Special Assessment Conditions is reduced.
- » Make some existing special assessment conditions such as large-text papers available for anyone, where possible.
- » Simplify the application and evaluation process for Special Assessment Conditions.

During 2019, the Ministry will work with key stakeholders on the detailed design of these changes, and to understand the implementation implications.

Early Learning Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan will set the direction and vision for early learning for the next 10 years. It will set out a planned approach to develop and strengthen the early learning sector to meet the needs of all children and their families and whānau.

A reference group that includes sector stakeholders and academic experts, and a Ministerial Advisory Group worked together to develop the draft Early Learning Strategic Plan. Consultation on the draft plan has closed and a final version is being developed.





Ka Hikitia

Ka Hikitia is being refreshed as part of the Education Work Programme. This is an opportunity to strengthen the education system's performance in supporting equitable education outcomes for Māori. Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori will require an education system that:

- » ensures Māori have authority and agency in education for Māori
- » responds to Māori learners in the context of their whānau
- » responds to the diversity of the Māori population
- » takes account of the importance of identity, language and culture to Māori learners and
- » is free from racism, discrimination and stigma.

The strategy will be informed by ongoing discussions with Māori children and young people, whānau, hapu, Māori education experts and others within the education system. Ka Hikitia will inform, and be informed by, other components of the Education Work Programme.

Action Plan for Pacific Education

The Action Plan for Pacific Education is being refreshed in 2019. This will focus on and support a whole-system response to ensure that Pacific learners and their families are valued and supported to realise their education aspirations. The voice gathered through the series of Pacific fono in 2018, together with the wider Kōrero Mātauranga Education Conversation, will inform the development of the next Action Plan for Pacific Education.

“Wellbeing is a priority and should be addressed with urgency as a priority area. We need a holistic, universal approach that proactively builds wellbeing through explicit teaching as children’s social and emotional capabilities and needs develop. Wellbeing should be a clear focus and expectation of inclusive education”

— submission from a Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour

Reform of Vocational Education

The Government is proposing to reform Vocational Education. The vision is for a strong, unified vocational education system that is sustainable and fit for the future of work, delivering what learners, employers and communities need to be successful. The proposed new vocational education system would be designed to be responsive to the needs of all learners. Consultation on the proposals for change have closed and the feedback received is being considered.

We need government agencies to work together more effectively

We want to improve the alignment of services across agencies for disabled children and young people and those needing learning support, and their families and whānau. This will mean identifying opportunities to remove barriers and create greater flexibility across services and supports funded by different agencies.

The Ministry is already working as part of Mana Whaikaha to make it easier for disabled children and their families and whānau to access and use education and health supports. This is part of the disability system transformation being led by the Ministry of Health.

The Ministry is also involved in the cross-agency implementation of the Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan. This Plan is being implemented over three years from 2016-2019 and has four priority areas: prevention, early identification, support and evidence.

As part of this, the Ministry developed resources for teachers to improve knowledge and awareness of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and its effect on learning. These resources include a range of strategies that teachers can use to help support students with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

The Ministry is actively involved in the cross-government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy which will commit the Government to actions to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people, including those who are disabled or have learning support needs. This includes government-wide approaches to address child and youth mental wellbeing, discrimination and bullying.

The Strategy will take account of children and young people's views and work to build a greater sense of belonging and connectedness to culture, schools and communities. It will also reflect the recommendations of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction. Actions will include work in health, school, recreation, and community settings, as well as more support for families and whānau.





Strategic priorities for 2019-2025

The six strategic priorities for learning support have been identified as the changes that will make the biggest difference over the next several years to strengthen the provision of learning support, alongside the wider education system and cross-government work outlined in this Action Plan.

They are strongly informed by the recommendations made by all Government parties to the select committee Inquiry into Identification and Support for Children and Young People with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autism Spectrum Disorders in Primary and Secondary Schools in 2016.

These priorities are expected to have widespread benefits for children, young people and their families, whānau and teachers and other educators, while also making some specific improvements for those whose needs have not been well met in the past. This includes children and young people with moderate needs who are neurodiverse, gifted, and those at risk of disengaging from education.

Māori learners and their whānau need to be recognised as an indivisible whole, along with the importance of language, identity and culture for Māori children and young people. Improvements need to include involving whānau in planning and decision making for their child's learning and support, and providing information to assist whānau to support their child.

The aim is for all early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, Pacific early learning services, schools, and kura to be welcoming, strengths-based learning environments that demonstrate adaptive teaching and learning approaches, where diverse learning styles are celebrated alongside language, identity and culture, and where children and young people are able to get the right support at the right time to support their learning.



The six Action Plan priorities are to:

1. strengthen in-school support for disabled children and young people and those with learning support needs through the introduction of the first tranche of Learning Support Coordinators
2. develop new screening tools to strengthen the early identification of learning support needs
3. strengthen early intervention by improving the type, mix and volume of services available
4. progressively design and implement a flexible set of services and supports for neurodiverse children and young people who don't qualify for the highest level of support and resourcing
5. better meet the learning needs of gifted children and young people through increased access to learning opportunities
6. improve education for children and young people at risk of disengaging through new supports to prevent disengagement, improved provision for those who need it, and making better support available to assist successful re-engagement.

A one page summary of this Action Plan is provided on page 14.

Priority 1

Learning Support Coordinators

In November 2018 the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern, announced Government funding of \$217 million (over four years) to establish the first tranche of around 600 full-time equivalent Learning Support Coordinators (LSC) from 2020. The introduction of the LSC role responds to the recommendations made by the select committee inquiry.

Planning for the second and further tranches will be worked through once schools and kura have had time to implement the first tranche of coordinators. The first tranche of LSCs will enable testing and refinement of the role before it is rolled out more widely. It will also allow for a clearer picture of medium-term workforce needs.

What is the Learning Support Coordinator role?

LSCs are an in-school role that will work to build the learning support capability of teachers and kaiako, and to identify and plan for the learning support needs of the children and young people in the school or kura. A LSC may be shared across small schools.

The LSCs will work closely with the Ministry's Learning Support Facilitators through the Learning Support Delivery Model to connect with a range of specialist supports and services, such as the Resource Teacher Services, and those provided by other agencies and community organisations. LSCs will also work with Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) as part of a school or kura team where SENCO roles are retained.

The LSC role will focus on five areas associated with learning support needs by:

1. supporting students in schools and kura
2. working with teachers and kaiako in schools and kura
3. leading school-wide and kura-wide engagement and communication with parents and whānau, and ensuring the voice of parents, whānau, and children and young people is understood when the school or kura is making decisions about learning support
4. working with other LSCs across the cluster or Kāhui Ako and connecting with the Learning Support Facilitator and a range of supports through the Learning Support Delivery Model
5. working with the school or kura leadership team to ensure all students, including gifted students, receive the appropriate support to enhance their learning and progress.

LSCs will also develop systems and processes that enable seamless support and transitions for children and young people with learning support needs from early learning services into school, between year levels, into secondary schools and into further education, training or work.

The LSC roles will be funded in addition to schools' current funding entitlements.

Why is the Learning Support Coordinator role important and what will it achieve for children and young people?

Currently, there is not a formal, fully-funded learning support role within schools and kura, although some schools and kura choose to use their own resources to fund SENCOs.

The LSC role will work with school and kura leadership to design and implement systems and processes that help all children and young people learn and make progress, participate and make successful transitions. This will include how to effectively involve family and whānau in their child's education, and ensuring that Māori or Pacific children's support needs are understood and responded to effectively.

“I fully support the need for Learning Support Coordinators in every school. This is a specialist role and a time consuming one.”

– a submission from a parent

Children and young people will benefit from classroom teachers who have access to the guidance and the professional learning and development (PLD) they need. They will also benefit from teachers and other educators, families and whānau who are supported to engage with each other on learning support issues.

As part of the Learning Support Delivery Model, LSCs will connect with other LSCs across clusters of schools, kura and early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo to identify and respond to the learning support needs within that community. This enables a focus on children and young people who do not qualify for the highest levels of support such as the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme, including those for whom school-based, adaptive and strengths-based teaching practices will make the most difference.

Key actions and timing

We will...	Timing
Introduce new Learning Support Coordinator roles in schools and kura.	
» Design first tranche, including decisions on allocation priorities, the final role description, competencies and implementation approach for the role, recruitment, systems and processes, induction and training support for schools and kura.	April to December 2019
» Implement first tranche in schools and kura.	From January 2020
» Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the first tranche of LSCs. Design and implement further tranches [<i>subject to funding</i>].	January 2020 to 2025

Priority 2

Screening and early identification of learning support needs

We want to provide the necessary support to all children and young people who need it, at the time it will be most effective. To do this we need to be more systematic in how we identify a child's learning support needs, so they get assistance as quickly as possible. Support should start with teachers and other educators adapting what happens in the classroom before turning to increasingly targeted and specialist interventions. The intent is to find out which children and young people may benefit from further investigation into their learning needs, rather than diagnosis of particular conditions.

The Ministry will work with the Ministry of Health to ensure that new screening tools for learning support needs are integrated into a coherent system of measurement with health checks and screenings.

What new screening tools will be developed?

It is important that learning needs continue to be identified by parents, whānau, and caregivers who are the experts about that child and know them best, and the teachers and other educators close to the child or young person. We will add a new set of screening tools in education to assess children at certain stages. The tools the Ministry will investigate further are:

- » universal health checks at age 3, including for autism spectrum disorder
- » a consistent set of tools at school entry
- » screening for dyslexia and dyspraxia and identifying gifted children
- » standard health and wellbeing checks when children move from primary to secondary school.

The Ministry will start by identifying existing tools to help with the identification of dyslexia and make these available to coincide with the roll-out of the first tranche of Learning Support Coordinators. Working with a small group of schools and kura, the Ministry will also research, develop and co-design a consistent measurement at school entry. The Ministry will consider how to involve the children and young people themselves, as well as their parents and whānau. We aim to produce the screening and assessment tools in Te Reo Māori and in New Zealand Sign Language.

Why is this priority important for children and young people and their families and whānau?

The evidence is clear about the long-term benefits to children's learning and wellbeing that come from early identification of and response to need. In addition to ensuring that children and young people receive the support they need as early as possible, screening can help parents, whānau, teachers and other educators understand the needs of children and young people. This will reduce the impact on learning and, for some children and young people, the need for more intensive intervention later on. It will also help to ensure that needs that develop later are identified and support provided. The provision of screening will make access more equitable because the cost of screening for learning needs will not fall to parents and whānau.

The data collected from screening will also help us to plan for what types of support will be needed and where, to help ensure that the right services are in place when and where they are needed.

Considerations for the development and implementation of screening tools

Details about who will undertake the screening checks, the scope of the screening, the age range when screening happens, the methods to be used and the resources required, will need to be worked through. The Ministry will consider whether the screening should encompass more learning needs than those listed in the draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan, for example, screening for foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or various sensory processing disorders.

“Given that we do not know the scale of needs across all the learning support areas, we endorse this approach of having better tools for universal assessments to first identify areas for referral, so we can measure the scale of need.”

— submission from the Office of the Children’s Commissioner

The screening checks will need to be practical and relatively easy to use. They also need to not be intrusive for children and their families and whānau, or burdensome for teachers and other educators.

The tools will be free from cultural bias, and consider the child in the context of their whānau or family. They will reflect Te Ao Māori perspectives on giftedness including, for example rangatiratanga/leadership, language and oratory, tikanga and culture amongst other domains of excellence.

These tools need to actively support earlier and better identification of learning support needs in those groups of learners where other factors (for example, cultural, socio-economic) can impact on early identification and action.

The development of screening tools will take place alongside the other priorities in this Action Plan, which will build the range of supports and services available to children and young people, and their families, whānau, teachers and other educators, and their seamless delivery through the Learning Support Delivery Model.

Key actions and timing

We will...	Timing
Develop evidence-based screening tools reflecting Māori concepts and focused on learning needs (rather than diagnosis):	
<i>Screening for dyslexia, dyspraxia and giftedness</i>	
» Identify existing tools to help with the identification of dyslexia and make available to coincide with the roll-out of first tranche of Learning Support Coordinators.	July 2019 – December 2020
» Staged roll-out across all schools and kura [subject to funding].	From 2021
<i>A consistent set of tools to establish a baseline at school entry</i>	
» Research, initial development and testing (with a small group of schools and kura receiving the first tranche of LSCs).	July 2019 to December 2020
» Stage roll-out across all schools and kura [subject to funding].	From 2021
<i>Actions for early childhood measurement and teen health screening</i>	
Explore (through Ministry of Health initiatives) early childhood measurement (around age 3) and teen health screening: amending existing tools, design of service response, and implementation [subject to funding].	From 2020 Roll out to be confirmed

Priority 3

Strengthening early intervention

Having a good start in life has a huge impact on later educational achievement and has long-term health, social and wellbeing impacts. This includes having a child's needs identified early and families and whānau being able to access the support needed as quickly as possible. Early intervention supports and services are for children from birth until they start school, and consider the child in the context of their families and whānau.

Evidence shows that early intervention is most effective when all the supports a child needs are family centred and meaningfully embedded into the daily life of the child, family and early learning service.

What is this priority about?

To have an impact, screening needs to be backed up with providing children with the support they need. We will identify what additional types, mix and volume of services are needed to provide timely interventions to children and identify any improvements that can be made or new supports that might be needed. This will include looking at what information and support families and whānau need. It will build on the new services introduced since 2017 for young children⁵, the additional funding for early intervention services in Budget 2018 and the roll out of the Learning Support Delivery Model.

We will work with other agencies to more closely integrate and provide greater flexibility across the services and supports funded by other ministries. The Ministry is currently working on this as part of Mana Whaikaha — the MidCentral Prototype for disability system transformation led by the Ministry of Health.

We are working with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (TKRNT) to co-design and deliver an awareness campaign to ensure that kaiako, parents and whānau are aware of (and confident to access) learning support (particularly for behaviour, speech and language/communication and autism spectrum disorder). TKRNT and the Ministry will work together to build the capability of staff, whānau and kaiako to respond to the needs of children.

While we are working on strengthening early intervention services, we will also be working to reduce the waiting times for existing services.

Why is this priority important and how will it help children?

Evidence shows that well-designed, high-quality early childhood intervention services can have both short-term and long-term benefits to children as well as their families and whānau. This includes benefits to wellbeing, health, language development, social development, engagement and participation at school, and learning and achievement.

Considerations for strengthening early intervention

Ensuring that families and whānau are included, involved, and supported is vital to the success of early intervention. Whānau and family are the key decision makers for their child. This includes ensuring parents and whānau are empowered to seek appropriate advice and support, and are at the table when collaborative decisions are made. For example, families and whānau work with the early childhood educator, learning support specialists, and other agencies to ensure the child and whānau get the support they need.

5 Investing for social wellbeing initiatives (Oral Language and Literacy, Expanding Behaviour Service, and Incredible Years Autism) provided more support, earlier, for children aged 0-8 years through a mix of universal, targeted and individualised support.

“Early intervention so children with learning disabilities are identified when they are young and get the support they need to develop confidence and thrive.”

— parent of primary and secondary students

We also need to consider whether the existing range of supports reflects the full range of children’s needs, or whether there are additional, condition specific, interventions needed.

Key actions and timing

We will...	Timing
<p>Reduce waiting times for existing early interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Research best practice on waiting times, set new targets and develop a multi-year plan for meeting the new targets. » Progressively implement multi-year plan. 	<p>July to December 2019</p> <p>January 2020 to December 2025</p>
<p>Improve early intervention for young children and their whānau/family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Co-design and deliver with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust an awareness campaign to ensure that kaiako, parents and whānau are aware of (and confident to access) learning support. » Co-design with Te Kohanga Reo National Trust capability building resources and professional learning and development for staff, whānau and kaiako to support children with learning support needs. » Identify what additional types, mix and volume of services are needed to provide timely interventions to children and identify and implement any improvements that can be made or new services that might be needed [<i>subject to funding</i>]. » Improve alignment with Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development, Oranga Tamariki and other agency supports, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › working with Ministry of Health to develop a more seamless, flexible and coordinated approach to providing disability services and support through the disability system transformation prototype in MidCentral DHB (Mana Whaikaha) › identifying other priority changes to improve seamless delivery of supports and services. 	<p>January to December 2019</p> <p>From 2020</p> <p>January 2019 to December 2020</p>

Priority 4

Flexible supports for neurodiverse children and young people

Neurodiversity is a broad term that includes (but is not limited to) dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, autism spectrum disorder, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, trauma related disorders, and auditory or visual processing disorders. It is a challenging concept because it encompasses a range of needs across a broad spectrum of degree and intensity, and can be complicated further where children and young people are 'twice-exceptional' (by having more than one condition), making it difficult to understand and respond to their needs. Neurodiverse children and young people often absorb and process information in a different way than others do, meaning that a typical classroom environment and approach to teaching can make it difficult to learn.

The focus in this priority is on building the understanding and capability of early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura to teach and respond to neurodiverse children and young people in an adaptive way to progress their learning at an appropriate depth and pace.

Many neurodiverse children and young people do not qualify for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme, but need teachers and other educators with increased capability, as well as targeted or specialist support to have their needs addressed in the classroom. This focus is needed because many in this group have previously not had their learning needs identified or identified early enough to affect the approach teachers and other educators take or to allow them to access the right supports.

What is this priority about?

The select committee Inquiry into Identification and Support for Children and Young People with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autism Spectrum Disorders in Primary and Secondary Schools called for an improved range of supports and services for neurodiverse children and young people, and their parents and whānau, whose needs are not currently well met, and who may be at risk of disengaging from education.

Evidence from New Zealand and overseas suggests that improved learning and wellbeing outcomes for all children and young people, including those with diverse strengths and needs, occurs best when:

- » there is quality teaching and learning in early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura where all learners are welcome and their learning and wellbeing is planned for and implemented in responsive and adaptive ways (universal support)
- » education settings draw on the diversity of their children and young people as a resource to improve their practice of teaching, working in partnership with family and whānau
- » early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura are able to identify expected progress in learning and recognise when a child or young person may require supplementary or specialist support
- » education providers are able to access the expertise and programmes available as needed.

The Ministry will work with the education and disability sectors, parents, whānau, Māori, young people and experts, as funding allows, to develop new tools and resources for teachers and other educators, design new supports for children and young people, and address gaps in specialist services.

Many of the supports needed across different kinds of neurodiversity will have similarities. However, there will need to be room for innovation and flexibility in the types of support that are available to children and young people to reflect their individual needs. The Ministry will also have some specific work streams to provide for particular needs: for example dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (through the cross-agency Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan).

“Children and young people with disabilities and additional needs are part of the vast and diverse human experience. These children and young people are part of our ‘normal’.”

— feedback from the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

The work relating to dyslexia will include providing consistent and up-to-date information about dyslexia, building the capability of teachers and other educators to respond to the needs of children and young people with dyslexia, and providing better access to specialist support where this is needed.

The work relating to autism spectrum disorder may include:

- » focusing on the particular wellbeing needs of children and young people with autism spectrum disorder
- » exploring innovative ways to support their strengths and mitigate their challenges in education settings, and identifying different responses to mild, moderate and high-level needs
- » building teachers’ understanding of their needs and preferred ways of learning.

The Ministry will ensure that the Education Workforce Strategy considers how initial teacher education and professional learning and development can strengthen teachers’ skills and competencies to support the progress, participation and achievement of neurodiverse learners. Given the importance of teaching approaches, this work links closely with the initiatives discussed in Part 3 on building teacher capability.

Why is this priority important and how will it help neurodiverse children and young people?

For neurodiverse children and young people, making progress requires teachers and other educators who understand their needs, the supports that work for them and how they learn best. Neurodiverse children and young people are much more likely to need flexible ongoing support, rather than a specific, shorter term, intensive intervention. We are responding to feedback that the system needs to provide a more flexible range of supports for children and young people with low to moderate needs who don’t qualify for the highest level of support and resourcing, including the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme.

Ensuring that neurodiverse children and young people receive the support they need early, and throughout their education, is aimed at reducing the long-term impacts that can negatively affect wellbeing. These impacts include being excluded from school, youth offending, mental health problems and struggling with transitions between education levels and settings.

Considerations for the development and implementation of services and supports for neurodiverse children and young people

The key consideration is to ensure that the variability in neurodiverse learners is adequately reflected in the flexibility of the supports provided. In particular, it is important children and young people with low to moderate needs have those needs met in the classroom and other learning environments.

Adaptive teaching is the basis for providing support to neurodiverse children and young people. Teachers and other educators will be able to draw on Learning Support Coordinators (where these are in place) for support and access to specialised professional learning and development, and will be able to draw on other specialist expertise when needed.

Key actions and timing

We will...	Timing
<p>Create a comprehensive set of tools and resources that teachers and other educators, and parents and whānau can use to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children and young people (building on what we already have).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Update existing materials: resources on dyslexia, guidance on teaching neurodiverse children and young people, positive behaviour guidance. » Work with the education sector, learning support professionals and parents to identify the full range of tools and resources needed, and priorities for developing new tools. » Build a comprehensive set of resources [<i>subject to funding</i>]. 	<p>July 2019 to July 2020</p> <p>September 2019 to March 2020</p> <p>July 2020 to December 2021</p>
<p>Strengthen specialist supports for children and young people with ongoing needs who don't qualify for the highest level of support and resourcing, including the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Co-design with a user group (including young people, parents, Māori and teachers and other educators) a flexible range of specialist supports, building on existing supports and programmes [<i>subject to funding</i>]. » Progressively implement new specialist supports and programmes [<i>subject to funding</i>]. 	<p>May to December 2020</p> <p>July 2020 to December 2022</p>
<p>Specialist teacher support for teachers of children and young people with dyslexia or ongoing literacy needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Design improvements with the Resource Teacher: Literacy Service to better support teachers of children and young people with literacy difficulties, including dyslexia. » Implement agreed improvements with the Resource Teacher: Literacy Service [<i>subject to funding</i>]. » Review supports for children and young people with the highest levels of need, including the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme, to ensure they are meeting needs of children and young people, and delivering the intended outcome. » Implement changes from review [<i>subject to funding</i>]. 	<p>June to December 2020</p> <p>July 2021 to June 2022</p> <p>January 2021 to December 2022</p> <p>January 2023 to December 2025</p>

Priority 5

Meeting the learning needs of gifted children and young people

Being a gifted learner can be challenging, and the definition and understanding of giftedness itself is complex and covers a range of different types of ability. Based on other countries, it is estimated that up to 40,000 learners in our education system may be gifted or have exceptional abilities.

Many gifted children and young people develop at different rates to their peers and their emotional, intellectual and physical development can vary. This can increase feelings of being different or not fitting in. Some gifted children and young people have anxiety and depression, or may be bored, angry and isolated. As a result, they may experience social and emotional issues, their wellbeing can be undermined and they may be at risk of disengaging from education.

It is important that the diversity of giftedness is recognised and supported. Being gifted does not mean that all learning is easy for these children and young people.

Definitions of giftedness can vary within and between cultures. For example, Māori concepts of giftedness include collective and community qualities and are grounded in kaupapa Māori. This needs to be addressed to ensure that groups of gifted learners are not missing out due to cultural bias.

What is this priority about?

The Ministry is working with sector experts to design a group of flexible supports for gifted children and young people.

This work will address a current gap in support and provide new tools for teachers and other educators, and family and whānau and their children. It includes developing tools and gathering information on the best ways to identify giftedness and analyse specialist support needs, drawing on expertise and evidence of what works to develop culturally appropriate and better support, tools, training and resources.

Why is this priority important and how will it help gifted children and young people?

If their needs are not recognised and supported, gifted children may not progress to their potential, which may have impacts on their identity, and social and emotional wellbeing. We want to ensure gifted children and young people have access to a range of learning that challenges them and helps them to succeed.

We propose creating more learning opportunities for gifted children and young people, providing more support for educators, family and whānau, and enhancing the learning and wellbeing of these learners.

As well as having their needs met in class, gifted learners value opportunities to engage with their gifted peers. We will improve access to One Day School and online learning modules, as well as creating and promoting events and establishing awards for gifted children and young people.

Considerations for the development and implementation of services and supports for gifted children and young people

Once recognised, exceptional ability needs to be nurtured and grown; and this needs to be balanced with other aspects of learning, including social and emotional learning.

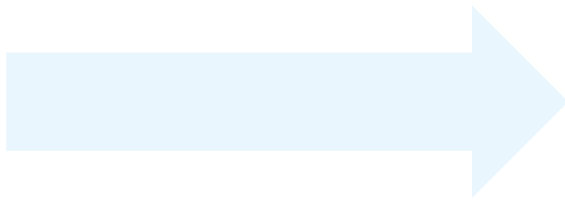
Exceptional ability and giftedness have distinct cultural components that the education system needs to be able to support. For Māori and Pacific people, identity, language and culture are core to understanding and responding to giftedness.

“They need to be ‘seen’ for who they are, what their unique learning approach is as well as their needs and strengths are. Once you are supported to learn the way that suits you, you can tackle a lot!”

— parent of a gifted student

Key actions and timing

We will...	Timing
Increase access to supports for gifted children and young people:	
» Implement an initial package of support for gifted children and young people:	
› expand online learning modules	Complete (January 2019)
› partially fund access to One Day Schools	Complete (January 2019)
› provide and promote out of school experiences and extension events for children and young people who are gifted	Underway (since May 2019)
› establish awards for gifted children and young people	First round complete (April). Second round opens August
› continue to work with the gifted education expert group to monitor and evaluate the gifted learner package of supports.	November to December 2019
Increase access to supports for gifted children and young people:	
» Implement an extended package of support for gifted children and young people:	
› establish study awards to allow gifted learners to undertake extension study and projects	November 2019 to December 2020
› establish study awards to build teacher capability in gifted education	From July 2019
› extend current supports to early childhood education services (including the transition into primary school)	From January 2020
› increase access to One Day Schools or similar and mentored online learning opportunities where One Day Schools cannot be accessed	From January 2020
› continue to work with the gifted education expert group to monitor and evaluate the gifted learner package of supports.	Ongoing



Improving education for children and young people at risk of disengaging

'At-risk' children and young people includes those at high risk of disengaging or who have disengaged from education. This often results from being exposed to multiple risk factors. These generally fall into four categories: adverse educational settings including cultural bias and discrimination, adverse social and family environments, social and/or economic shock, and individual issues. Individual issues include behaviour, mental health, unrecognised learning disorders, physical health, and disability.

For many Māori learners, the active fostering and recognition of identity, culture and language is a critical contributor to engagement and learning.

This work will be informed by the outcomes of the Alternative Education hui (held on 22 February 2019) and the wider Kōrero Mātauranga Education Conversation.

What is this priority about?

There are significant long-term impacts for children and young people who are disengaged from their education. These young people are more likely to be socially isolated, susceptible to mental health problems, or have reduced cognitive functioning.

We want to prevent disengagement at any stage of a child or young person's educational journey, improve at-risk education provision (for example, alternative education and activity centres) for those who need it, and ensure better support is available to help children and young people re-engage in learning.

Strengthening screening and the early identification of learning support needs will help identify learning difficulties that may lead to disengagement. Providing early support will address the needs of children and young people with high and complex behavioural needs.

Why is this priority important and how will it help children and young people at risk of disengaging?

All children and young people, no matter their risk factors, have the right to the same opportunities to meet their potential as their peers. By identifying and responding to learning needs earlier, as outlined in other parts of this Action Plan, we will begin to prevent the challenges some children and young people face at school that can lead to disengagement.

However, some children and young people may still need support to re-engage in their learning or remain engaged. The Ministry will develop ways to improve education for children and young people at risk of disengaging through additional support across the whole education system. The Ministry will also look at ways of improving attendance services and review the stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions guidelines.

Considerations for the development and implementation of services and supports for children and young people at risk of disengaging

We know it's important to focus on wellbeing and include flexible education pathways and curriculum options, behaviour support, communication support, more support for transitions, and early warning systems. Practical issues such as transport also need to be considered.

It is important that development and implementation of services for this priority group responds to the needs and aspirations of Māori and Pacific children and young people, and their families and whānau, as they continue to experience inequitable education outcomes. The Ministry will need to effectively include and involve families and whānau to support those at-risk children and young people.

“If you actually befriend that young person, you get more of a sense of how they learn and stuff. Everyone is different. If they [adults] actually know you, they notice when something happens. They sit and talk with you to see what is wrong.”

— alternative education student

Development of the supports for Māori children and young people will need to include Māori expertise in the design and development of options, and the design and delivery of programmes that reflect how vital identity, language and culture are to the wellbeing and outcomes for Māori.

Key actions and timing

We will...	Timing
Improve the provision of education for children and young people at risk of disengaging from education.	
» Review options, drawing on leading practice overseas and in New Zealand.	February to July 2019
» Co-design with teachers and other educators, disengaged young people, Māori, Pacific peoples, families and whānau, and communities, a more adaptable, flexible system of at risk provision that better meets individual needs and is integrated with schools.	February to October 2019
» Implement new provision, including negotiating new contracts for service provision [subject to funding].	July 2020 to January 2021
Review the stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions guidelines.	February to July 2020

Implementing the six priorities

Each of these priorities will involve further policy work, engagement with the education and disability sectors, parents and whānau, collaboration, and in some cases, co-design. The priorities need to be designed as a coherent package that shifts the system towards early identification of and response to need. The priorities must be achieved within available funding and sequenced and phased in over time. They will be evaluated as part of the Ministry's learning support monitoring and evaluation strategy.

The Ministry will work with a range of stakeholders in various aspects of this work. Working with Māori to ensure the system better supports equitable education outcomes for Māori will be vital. Responding to Māori within the context of their whānau, and respecting and building on Māori learners' identity, culture and language, are fundamental to this work.





Supporting initiatives

This section sets out other work that supports the priority improvements to learning support. Feedback on the draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan highlighted other initiatives that will have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the priority actions.

Building knowledge on the right to enrol and receive an education

We will work with education, disability sector and parent groups to ensure that all boards of trustees and school leaders build knowledge and understanding of the rights of all children and young people to enrol in and receive an education from their local school.

Building teacher confidence and capability

We want to provide the support, training and tools needed by leaders, teachers and other educators across all education settings so they can better recognise the needs of all children and young people and feel more confident and capable in responding to them.

Our Code, Our Standards: Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession set out what it means to be a teacher in Aotearoa, New Zealand and apply to every teacher regardless of teaching environment. They require all teachers to meet the needs of Māori, and ethnically and linguistically diverse children and young people, and those who are disabled or have learning support needs.

A greater focus on teacher professional learning to improve inclusive teaching practice will support not only children and young people with learning support needs, but will promote a more inclusive education system for all. A confident and capable workforce could also be expected to reduce the demand for specialist interventions overall; particularly for children and young people with low to moderate needs where the most effective intervention is adaptive teaching.

The Ministry will work closely with the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand to ensure a coherent approach that will have the most impact for teachers and leaders.

We will explore and remove the barriers to professional development and further training for Māori-medium teachers, kaiako and other educators. Current requirements and arrangements for access to professional development and specialist qualifications are not working well for some Māori teachers, kaiako and other educators, and as result there are shortages in these areas.

The Ministry will consider the need for more learning support specialists and specialist teachers who understand and are able to draw on a Māori world view to support learning, and boost workforce capacity in Te Reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language. The Ministry will also explore options to improve the capability of teacher aides.

“Everything is a priority, but currently it is schools who are bearing the brunt of having to identify, tentatively diagnose, seek support for and then cater for the diverse learner and currently there is very little support for teachers for this.”

— submission from a parent and member of a board of trustees

Wellbeing

Feedback has highlighted that early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, schools and kura need more support to provide positive learning environments that promote children and young people’s wellbeing and resilience. The Ministry is building on existing wellbeing programmes, such as the Positive Behaviour for Learning suite of programmes, to deliver a cohesive, cross-agency continuum of supports addressing wellbeing, bullying prevention and mental health. These supports will reflect a Māori world view of wellbeing, and respond to the barriers to wellbeing experienced by Māori in the education system.

Improved data and information sharing

The Ministry does not currently collect data on children and young people with learning support needs. The absence of a central data system makes it impossible to gauge the true scale of demand for learning support and undermines policy planning and data-informed decision making. We need a way to bring individual learners’ information together in one place and that allows an aggregated view of the educational needs of all children and young people.

“We will not get better outcomes for children and young people with learning support needs until we have better initial teacher education and professional development for teachers.”

— submission from VIPs (Very Important Parents)

Currently, children and young people who require learning support have their details collected by multiple providers and agencies, leading to duplication and access issues. Schools are frustrated with the complicated process of accessing information about a new child's learning needs and have indicated a need for a data-sharing system that will allow a student's information to move with them from early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo to school, school to school, and kura to kura.

We need to know which children and young people need support, what kind, where, and when. We need to know what support has been provided, and what works and what doesn't. This knowledge will enable the Ministry to provide equitable learning support across the country, and to measure the outcomes of the provision of learning support.

There is widespread support for a national repository of data relating to learning support. Many people are particularly keen to see the data disaggregated by need, so that the relevant agencies know where to focus their attention in terms of specific learning needs.

The next step is to define access and sharing agreements so rights to privacy are protected, and data is used in a manner which ensures children and their family and whānau get the right supports at the right time. The Ministry is aware of concerns about stigma and labelling and will manage this risk carefully.

The insights gleaned from the first two early stage roll-outs of the Student Information Sharing Initiative (Te Rito), planned for delivery in 2019, will inform the Ministry's design of a data infrastructure that upholds the rights of all learners.

Since for some Māori, personal and whānau information is taonga, Māori will be closely involved in the design process and decision making about how their data is used to support educational outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi.

“As a teacher, all too often, there is none or very little information coming from the previous school, yet all too often these children have a significant need in learning & behaviour.”

— submission from a teacher

Getting the network right

There are opportunities to take a more strategic and planned approach to the overall network of education provision including learning support; that is the range of options and supports available in each area and region. This would involve taking a more community-based approach to identifying needs and sharing resources across schools, kura, special and residential schools, satellite units and at-risk and learning support facilities; and making sure a range of options and settings to meet the needs of children and young people are available for parents and whānau wherever possible.

In 2019 and 2020, the Ministry will develop a strategy and implementation plan to integrate learning support within the National Education Growth Plan and network planning practices.

Sensory schools, including deaf education supports and services, are an important component of the national network. We plan to continue to support New Zealand Sign Language in families with a deaf child, in schools and among teachers and other educators. Over time, we aim to expand immersion hubs so this is an option for more deaf children in more areas.

As part of our plan to strengthen the national network, the Ministry will review the supports available to children and young people with the highest level of learning support needs (including the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and the School High Health Needs Fund).

Transitions into school and pathways out of school

Feedback has highlighted that transitions can be particularly difficult for children and young people with learning support needs. We want to more effectively support learners to make successful transitions and reduce the stress these changes can create for families and whānau if transitions are not well supported. This includes crossing between learning settings (for example, early learning services to school) and between year levels. Particular groups of children and young people, such as those with an autism spectrum disorder, may need specific types of support. Learning Support Coordinators will have a role in supporting these transitions.

Any breaks in specialist services or supports between early learning services and primary school adds pressure to what is already a difficult transition for children and their families and whānau. We want to address any gaps so that support and funding remain uninterrupted. The Ministry is also looking into how information about a child or young person can travel with them to support smoother and more informed transitions.

The Ministry wants to ensure that young people in secondary school with learning support needs have access to the same kinds of support as their peers when it comes to transitioning to further education, training, or employment. This support might include: creating individualised pathways to further study and employment, providing information and role modelling, career planning and work experience and fostering connections between schools and employers.

The Ministry wants to shape flexible and targeted pathways which will enable Māori and Pacific children and young people with learning support needs to achieve their full potential.

“We note the importance of the transition periods in children and young people’s lives – the transition from early learning to school, from primary to intermediate, to secondary school, and out of the schooling system into young adulthood.”

— submission from Barnardos

Annex 1:

Summary of Analysis of Engagement Feedback

In September 2018, the draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan (the draft Action Plan) was released for consultation. Its vision is a strengthened system of learning support which values every child and young person with learning support needs and actively supports their achievement, progress, and wellbeing.

Through a nationwide consultation process on the draft Action Plan, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) collected quantitative and qualitative feedback from 893 survey responses and submissions. The Analysis of Feedback report presents the major themes and issues to emerge from that data, and groups them in accordance with the priority areas outlined in the draft Action Plan.

The following is a summary of the feedback received.

Overarching themes

The majority of respondents reacted positively to the concept of the draft Action Plan, recognising it as a step toward a more inclusive education system for New Zealand. Many also suggested how the draft Action Plan could further address issues of systemic discrimination against students with disabilities and/or learning support needs within the education system.

Concerns about discriminatory and anti-inclusive attitudes towards children and young people with learning support needs were often overlapping. Specifically, respondents highlighted shortcomings in the current system at meeting the learning needs of Māori and Pacific students. There was a perception that the draft Action Plan — and the education system more generally — has yet to demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori learners in particular. People wanted greater access to Māori-medium supports and screening tools, and saw the draft Action Plan as an opportunity for the Ministry to apply a Te Ao Māori world view to disability. There was a desire to see the draft Action Plan go beyond tokenistic gestures of inclusion.

People also identified a lack of Māori specialists and support workers in the learning support workforce, requesting more funding to upskill Māori kaiako stating that mokopuna who learn from teachers with an inherent understanding of mātauranga Māori enjoy enhanced outcomes when they learn.

Respondents also spoke about the difficulties faced by Deaf students and English language learners in local schooling.

Priority 1: Improve the way children and young people are assessed for learning needs⁶

Assessment and screening was one of the most commonly addressed topics in the feedback. Most people supported the idea of universal screening, and viewed early assessment as a vital preventative measure. However, they had questions about the quality and extent of post-assessment support, and held differing views about the age at which children should be screened for specific learning needs.

⁶ The draft Action Plan had four priorities

Priority 2: Strengthening the range of supports for children and young people with additional learning needs

The proposed Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) role was highly regarded. It was identified as the second-highest priority area in the quantitative survey results, and around 35% of respondents commented on the new positions. People were eager to see the role become a reality in schools and kura, but they queried how the new positions would be funded and allocated. Some identified the need for an LSC-type role within early learning.

A more flexible and targeted support system was the number one priority area identified by those responding to the Ministry's quantitative draft Action Plan survey. A large group requested that, to better support students with mild to moderate needs, the Ministry needed either to expand its criteria for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS), or to establish an alternative programme.

Early intervention was another topic that many focused on. Respondents valued early intervention in preventing negative outcomes for students with learning support needs. The general consensus was 'the earlier, the better', and many people thought that this Action Plan should include improved provision for learning support in early learning settings.

Dispute resolution, although not a leading concern, was viewed as an important aspect of a well-functioning and equitable education system.

Those who addressed learning support needs in relation to the at-risk population stressed the importance of alternative education, activity centres, and the attendance service for supporting at-risk students.

Transitions in relation to both provision for at-risk students and early learning were discussed. The perceived funding gap between early learning and primary school was a major concern for parents and educators alike, as was the perceived lack of support for students with learning support needs who were transitioning from secondary school to higher education, training, or work. There were numerous substantive recommendations on how this Action Plan could facilitate better transition support.

People were eager to see closer collaboration between families, whānau, teachers, support staff, specialist services, and other relevant agencies under the strengthened learning support system. The proposed alignment of Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education supports was positively received by most, with many urging the Ministry to engage in even wider cross-sector collaboration (particularly with Oranga Tamariki).

Priority 3: Improving the way the education system responds

Both the learning support and general teaching workforces were seen as integral to the realisation of this Action Plan's proposals. Nearly half of those responding to the survey had something to say about the workforce. They expressed concern that current staff shortages were a threat to achieving the high aims of the draft Action Plan, and hundreds wanted better training — both Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and ongoing Professional Learning and Development (PLD) — for the general teaching workforce on specific learning needs.

Teachers and parents also conveyed a need for more accessible information on specific learning needs.

Priority 4: Ensuring that learning support is resourced for increased support and service delivery

Concerns about funding permeated the feedback on the draft Action Plan. Twenty-nine percent of respondents spoke about current issues with learning support funding, in relation to waiting lists for specialist services and access to resources such as assistive technology. The system of capped funding was criticised by many stakeholder groups, who believe that learning support funding should be automatically adjusted for population growth.

A number gave feedback on how the Ministry might improve its learning support network. This reflected the need for a balance between mainstream schools, special schools, and satellite units. Whilst some viewed segregated schools as fundamentally anti-inclusive, others argued that students with learning support needs must at least have the option of receiving education in specialised settings.

At the most general level, there was a drive for a fully-integrated, accessible network of learning support to give each and every student the best possible chance to succeed.

Cross-cutting components

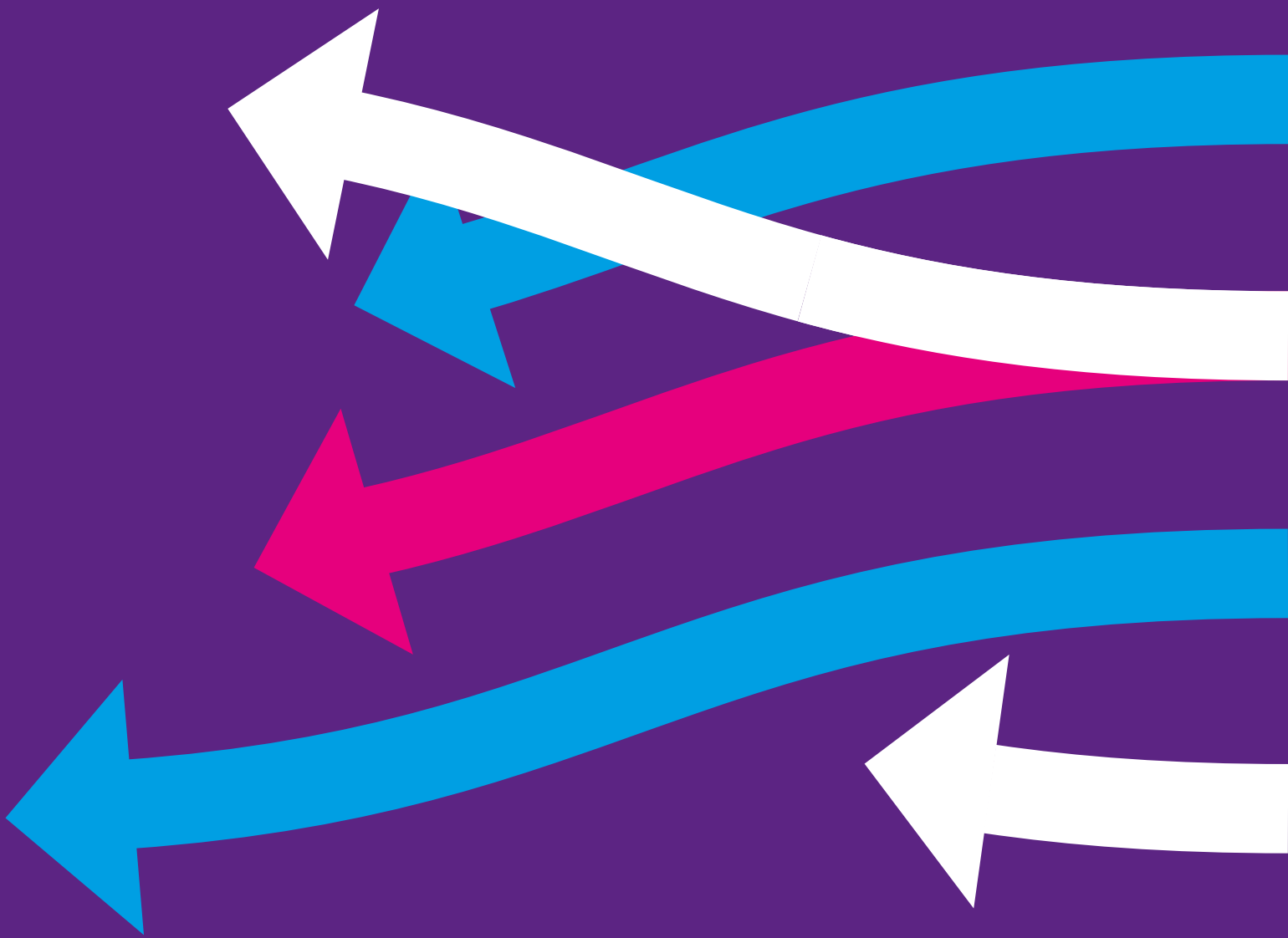
Some commented on the Ministry including the learning support workforce in its Education Workforce Strategy. For early learning services and schools to be able to meet the needs of all learners, many felt more training and resourcing for the learning support workforce was non-negotiable.

People were enthusiastic about the new Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, with many confirming the need to improve support in schools for mental health and bullying prevention. There was a desire to see a holistic approach to wellbeing within learning support, perhaps informed by a Te Ao Māori world view.

The full Summary of Analysis of Engagement Feedback can be found here:

<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/learning-support-action-plan>





Kōrero

Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou

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