



Thank you for your email of 6 November 2018 requesting the following information:

1. *How many children are participating in ECE who have identified learning support challenges, by age and regional location?*
2. *What is the average level of funded support offered by the Ministry and the range of support offered (\$ and hours if possible please)?*
3. *Can I have a copy of any Ministry document that included proposals for increasing the level of Learning Support, including increasing the number of Learning Support Co-ordinators, for schools?*
4. *Finally, can you advise if the Ministry has any plans at all or had any discussions to increase the level of funded Learning Support, or the number of Education Support Workers, to respond to the needs of children with learning support challenges participating in ECE? Many thanks.*

Thank you also for your email of 15 November 2018 clarifying parts two and three of your request, as below.

- *ECE only*
- *The proposals were only recently announced by the Minister – an additional 600 positions I understand. So, the financial period related to the latest proposal and announcement would suffice. Your question suggests to me that there are different documents that propose an increase in learning support investment for each of ECE and schools – is that the case? Perhaps to simplify – proposals where “ECE is mentioned”?*

I apologise for the delay you experienced in receiving a response. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

We collect a range of early education participation data, including ethnicity (European/Pākehā, Māori, Pacific, Asian and other); school decile areas; age and gender; service type and attendance information. We do not, however, specifically collect early childhood education participation data on children with additional learning needs.

The Ministry's Early Intervention Service provides specialist support for children who have a developmental or learning delay, a disability, a behaviour difficulty, and/or communication difficulties that significantly affect their ability to participate and learn at home or in an early childhood setting. As at 22 November, 7799 children were receiving support from the Early Intervention Service. Of these, 6809 (87%) were enrolled in an early childhood education centre.

In response to part one of your request, this data has been broken down by age and regional location, and is attached as **Appendix One**.

In response to part two of your request, as you will be aware, the Ministry provides a range of interventions and services to pre-school aged children. This makes it a challenge to understand and report the total spend, intervention level spend and the average level of funded support offered to an individual or group. Services to young children include:

- the Ministry's Early Intervention Service,
- specialist early providers contracted to provide support for 0 to 5 year olds with high needs,
- First Signs delivered by Deaf Aotearoa supporting whānau children who are deaf or hard of hearing aged 0 to 5 years,
- Incredible Years Autism support for teachers and parents,
- the Oral Language and Literacy Initiative, and
- support for Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand (BLENNZ) and Resource Teachers: Deaf and Vision.

The Early Intervention Service is our most significant investment in learning support for pre-school aged children. In 2017/2018 we provided \$29.48 million to support 14,414 children. This means the average level of support for each child was \$2,045.

In response to part three of your request, three documents were found in scope of your request: *Briefing note Cabinet paper: Approval to consult on the Disability and Learning Support Action Plan (Cabinet paper annexed)*, *Cabinet paper: Approval to fund the first tranche of the learning support coordinator role through Budget 2019 (Cabinet paper annexed)* and *Allocation options for implementing the Learning Support Coordinator Roles*.

A brief summary of publicly available information from these documents and links to further reading on increasing the number of Learning Support Co-ordinators is provided in **Appendix Two**. I am withholding the remaining information in these documents under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act, to protect the confidentiality advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials. Some decisions are yet to be made and, therefore, are not ready to be made public.

In response to part four of your request, a summary of current Ministry plans is also provided in **Appendix Two**.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes OIA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



David Wales  
**Acting Deputy Secretary**  
**Sector Enablement and Support**

## Appendix One

The following table shows the number of children who were enrolled in an early childhood centre and who were receiving support from the Early Intervention Service by region, as at 22 November 2018.

Region	Number of children
Tai Tokerau	277
Auckland	2290
Waikato	577
Bay of Plenty/Wairariki	544
Hawkes Bay/Tairāwhiti	371
Taranaki/ Whanganui/Manawatu	563
Wellington	635
Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast	171
Canterbury/Chatham Islands	839
Otago/Southland	542
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6809</b>

The following table shows the number of children who were enrolled in an early childhood centre and who were receiving support from the Early Intervention Service by age, as at 22 November 2018.

Age as on 22 Nov 2018	Number of children
0	7
1	66
2	348
3	1745
4	3340
5	1252
6	45*
7	6*
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6809</b>

\*These children may still be attending ECE as at 22 November, or the cases counted may have been closed after the child had transitioned to primary school.

## **Appendix Two** – A summary of current Ministry plans to respond to needs of children with learning support challenges in early learning services

### **Learning Support**

Budget 2018 provided significant additional funding over the next four years to support early learning services. This information is already public. You can find this information at:

- <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/budget-boost-young-children-extra-learning-needs>
- <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/early-learning-services-get-first-across-board-funding-rate-increase-decade>

### **Disability and Learning Support Action Plan (Action Plan)**

Engagement on a draft Action Plan was carried out over late September and October 2018. Once approved, the Action Plan will be implemented over the next few years.

The draft Action Plan sets out the first steps towards improving learning support to ensure that every child and young person who needs it will get the right support at the right time.

The draft Action Plan builds on current work, such as the Learning Support Delivery Model. The Delivery Model is being phased in between now and the end of 2019, with the Ministry's regional offices working with groups of early learning services, schools, providers and communities to ensure children and young people get the right support at the right time.

### **Learning Support Coordinators**

The Government recently announced an investment of \$217 million over four years to establish the first tranche of 600 full-time equivalent Learning Support Coordinators in 2020. Employed directly by schools, the coordinators will work alongside teachers, parents and other professionals to make sure students get the right support at the right time. Funding for the new coordinators will be in addition to schools' existing operational and staff funding.

The Learning Support Coordinators are a key part of the draft Action Plan. A detailed job description for the Learning Support Coordinator role, together with how the first tranche will be allocated and the final number of coordinators, is still being worked through. Information about the coordinators and the Action Plan is available at:

<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/disability-and-learning/>

More information can also be found at:

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-workforce-game-changer-kids-learning-needs>