

Education Report: Special Education Update

Executive Summary

1. This paper summarises the findings of the Special Education update (the update) recently undertaken by the Ministry of Education (the Ministry). It proposes a significant programme of work to ensure the education system fully supports the progress and achievement of *all* children and young people, including those who need additional learning support.
2. The current system of additional learning support has evolved over time and is now comprised of several major, separate sources of expertise arranged around multiple sources of funding established to address particular forms of need.
3. The system ensures that children and young people with the highest needs can receive the required support. However the system does not provide sufficient certainty and continuity of support for others and the multiple sources of expertise and funding have become silos that limit the adaptability of the system.
4. The fragmented state of the system has also meant that the Ministry does not have sufficient system wide oversight of the total investment and this limits its ability to ensure that the system is fully responsive to changes in demand and developing evidence of what works best.
5. Detailed analysis undertaken for the update has resulted in a more complete picture of the system wide funding arrangements for additional learning support. This analysis shows that \$586 million was invested in additional learning support during 2014 across the whole education system.
6. This paper describes the problems that the update has identified in the current system of additional learning support and proposes a programme of work to address these. In particular the paper proposes:
 - a) A new approach to how additional learning support is organised to remove the fragmentation and inflexibility of the current system and,
 - b) Improved stewardship by the Ministry of the system wide investment to ensure that decisions about that investment are informed by a thorough understanding of how effectively the current system is working.
7. Since work on the update began in early 2015, the establishment of Communities of Schools has made considerable progress. Therefore alignment with Communities of Schools/Learning is a key feature of the proposed new system of additional learning support.

Recommended Actions

We recommend that you:

- a) **Note** that the Ministry is commencing a substantial programme of work to deliver the improvements described in this paper. Trialling the key features of the new system of additional learning support will begin immediately.
- b) **Note** that the Ministry will report to you again in July 2016.
- c) **Note** that this work programme will be supported by ongoing engagement with leaders in the education and disability sectors as well as parents, whānau, educators and other professionals to ensure that the improvements implemented are consistent with their expectations.

NOTED/APPROVED



Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support

Encls



Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education

13/10/15

Education Report: Special Education Update 2015

Purpose of Report

1. This paper summarises the findings of the Special Education update (the update) recently undertaken by the Ministry of Education (the Ministry). It outlines a significant programme of work to ensure the education system fully supports the progress and achievement of all children and young people, including those who need additional learning support.

Background

2. The current system of additional learning support has evolved over time and is now comprised of several major, separate sources of expertise arranged around multiple sources of funding established to address particular forms of need.
3. The system ensures that children and young people with the highest needs can receive the support they need. However the system does not provide sufficient certainty and continuity of support for others and the multiple sources of expertise and funding have become silos that limit the adaptability of the system.
4. The fragmented state of the system also means that the Ministry does not have sufficient system wide oversight of the total investment and this limits its ability to ensure that the system is fully responsive to changes in demand and developing evidence of what works best.
5. This paper describes the problems that the update has identified with the current system of additional learning support and proposes a programme of work to address these.

Engagement about the update

6. National and local level engagement with educators, parents and whānau, the Ministries of Health and Social Development and many representative bodies from the education and disability sectors has been a key component of the update.
7. We held a series of engagement forums in April and May of this year. The opportunity for input was extended and 33 additional forums were held in August and September. 157 forums were held in total and over 3,600 people participated in this process. Provisional analysis of feedback from the initial round of engagement forums has informed this paper.
8. The Ministry will continue to involve the education and disability sectors and its partner agencies at a local and national level as progress is made on the programme of work resulting from the update.

The current system of additional learning support

9. Each year almost \$600 million is invested in the education system to provide additional learning support. One third of this funds a range of additional learning support provided by the Ministry, including professional contracts to other providers and two thirds is utilised by schools and early childhood facilities, including special schools. How the funds are deployed and the current system of additional learning support is illustrated in Appendix A and B.
10. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 children and young people receive some form of additional learning support each year. In 2014 ninety five percent were enrolled in regular schools and early childhood centres. Around 4,000 students attend special schools including residential schools, regional health schools and vision or deaf education centres.
11. Children and young people who need additional learning support come from a diverse range of backgrounds and are present in schools of every decile. For example, students in the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (i.e. those with the highest level of needs) are equally likely to come from a Decile 10 school as a Decile 1 school.
12. Many children and young people have learning support needs arising from physical and/or intellectual disability. This includes for example, children and young people with high health needs, those in hospitals, the vision and hearing impaired and mobility impaired. Other children have learning disabilities arising from disorders such as autism spectrum disorders, and for others delayed language development will impact on their learning and wellbeing.
13. Some children and young people who need additional learning support are also of concern to agencies such as Children and Young Persons and their Families. However the great majority of children and young people supported by the Ministry and other education professionals simply require the right additional learning support to progress and achieve in their education and the biggest contribution the Ministry can make is supporting them within the education system.
14. Personnel employed in a variety of roles represent the largest component (\$436 million or 73% in 2014) of the investment in additional learning support:
 - a) 900 Resource Teachers for Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) are employed by schools to provide advice and guidance to educators in primary and secondary schools and from time to time, work with individual students. The RTLB service is funded through \$86 million administered by the Ministry of Education.
 - b) A similar number of personnel, speech language therapists, educational psychologists and others are employed by the Ministry to work with individual children and advise and guide educators in early childhood education and schools. In 2014 this comprised \$100 million of the investment in personnel.
 - c) About \$80 million is invested in Teacher's Aides employed by schools and Education Support Workers employed by the Ministry to work in early childhood education.

- d) The remaining investment in personnel is comprised of various forms of additional personnel in special schools and for ORS students in fund holder schools.
- 15. The current system of additional learning support has developed over time in response to concerns about particular areas of need. As a result the system is now comprised of multiple, discrete sources of expertise and funding with limited continuity between these. The components of this system are illustrated in Appendix B.
- 16. Under the current system children and young people with the highest levels of need receive intensive support and may be educated in special schools or in the mainstream education system supported by the appropriate expertise.
- 17. However the continued establishment of specialised sources of expertise (and funding) has resulted in a system that is compartmentalised, fragmented and inflexible. Engagement undertaken for the update shows that parents, whānau and educators are frustrated by the complexity and compartmentalised nature of how services are organised and the resulting uncertainty about what support will be provided for the children and young people they are concerned about.
- 18. The problems caused by the current system are described in more detail below.

The current state of service delivery

- 19. The update has identified the following issues with how additional learning support is currently organised and delivered.
- 20. The system of additional learning support is inflexible. Many areas of the investment in additional learning support are targeted to specific types of need and artificially restricted by age group. However, demand is changing and the range of support available has not kept pace. Currently two areas of need are of particular concern:
 - a. Children are increasingly participating in early childhood education and this is driving increased demand for additional learning support in this age group. The international evidence also suggests that early identification and response can in some cases reduce or preclude the need for increased support in later years. While some sources of expertise are currently dedicated to early childhood it is thought that more could be achieved through greater investment of expertise in this area.
 - b. Early childhood facilities and schools are faced with increasing numbers of students who present with moderately severe needs which are challenging for their educators, parents and whānau but not severe enough to attract intensive support from sources such as the Ongoing Resource Scheme (ORS). The government committed \$23.3 million over four years for additional in - class support in the 2015 budget and this will help. However using the level of support provided by the ORS as an initial indication, some students with less severe but nevertheless significant need may not be getting sufficient support from the current system.

21. The system is fragmented and compartmentalised. Resource Teachers for Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) and the Ministry's professional staff (around 2,000 staff in combined total) comprise the majority of the expertise invested in additional learning support. Special schools provide outreach services in many areas. However each of these services function separately with minimal coordination between them. While there are instances of effective collaboration, collective planning and deployment of resources is not expected of them.
22. The Ministry's services are too compartmentalised. The Ministry provides multiple specific forms of additional learning support at varying levels of intensity for different age groups. This has given rise to multiple application processes and a lack of continuity as the child transitions from early childhood education to primary school and onwards.
23. This compounds the fragmentation leading to a lack of clarity for educators, parents and whānau, and duplication of processes.
24. Not enough emphasis is placed on educators, parents and whānau as the primary providers of teaching and learning. In the past, the Ministry's Special Education team has focused on providing additional learning support to individual children. However international evidence indicates that the best results are achieved through advising, guiding and training educators, parents and whānau to provide that support. While advice and guidance for educators is a priority for the RTLB service, there is no nationally consistent, unified approach across the education system.
25. Some children and young people who need additional learning support are unlikely to progress beyond level one of the curriculum due to the nature of their learning disability. However these children still make progress with the right support. Currently the progress and achievement of these children is not monitored and reported to Boards of Trustees and parents. The Ministry has begun working with schools to address this.

Interagency collaboration

26. The aim of the education sector is to support the progress and achievement of all children and young people. This intersects with the responsibilities of other agencies when welfare and health concerns impact on individual children and young people.
27. For these children and young people, collaboration between the child's educators, the Ministry and health and welfare agencies and parents and whānau is essential to their health, wellbeing and their educational outcomes. Feedback received during engagement about the update confirms that interagency collaboration needs to improve and this is particularly evident to the parents, whānau and educators of children and young people with high health or welfare needs.

Teacher capability and confidence

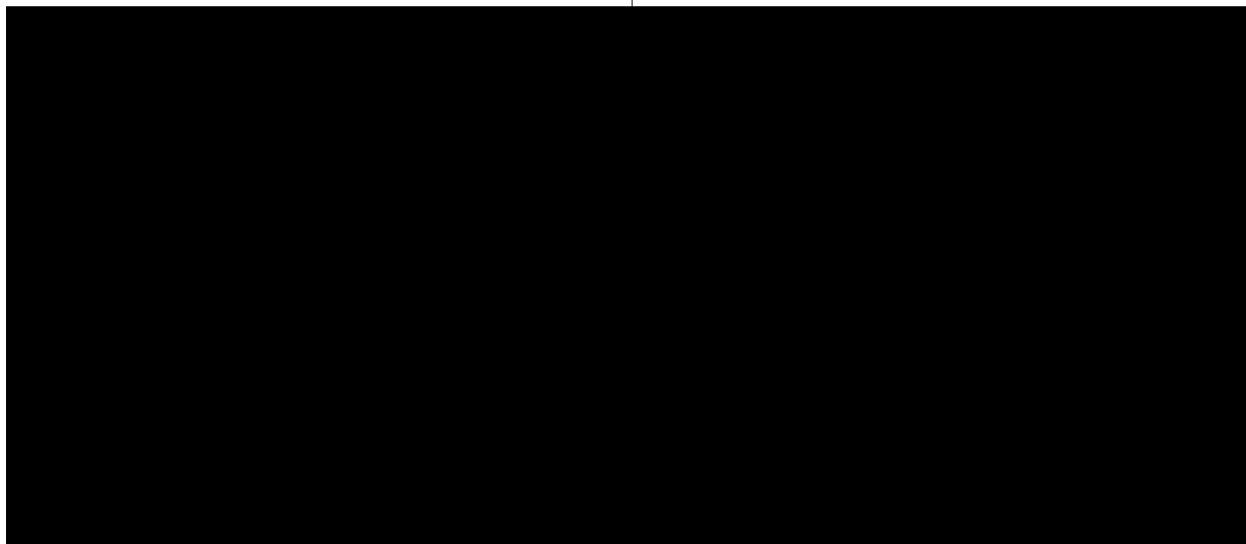
28. Because about 95% of children who need additional learning support are in mainstream education, feedback in the 2010 Review and ongoing feedback since then has questioned whether initial teacher education and professional learning and development for teachers has sufficient focus on inclusive education practices.
29. Resources have been developed by the Ministry for professional development providers to help them ensure that the professional learning and development they provide also includes a focus on children and young people who need additional learning support.
30. A useful next step would be for the Ministry to work with the newly established Education Council to examine how well initial teacher education programmes focus on inclusive education practice. A further step would be to determine how well current contracted professional development providers are using the resources developed for them and use the findings to inform the progression of professional development.

The current state of stewardship

31. Over the years the Ministry has consistently taken a leadership role with regard to many aspects of additional learning support. What has been achieved with regard to inclusivity, in partnership with the disability and education sectors, is a good example of this. The Ministry's leadership of initiatives such as the national system for response to traumatic incidents is another.
32. However the Ministry does not have a system wide view of the whole investment in additional learning support. As a result it is not well equipped to lead continuous improvement of the system based on a thorough understanding of the current state. Gaps in the picture include:
 - a) There is no nationally aggregated information about the progress and achievement of children and young people who need additional learning support.
 - b) No substantial analysis has been undertaken of the comparative value for money between different forms of additional learning support.
 - c) Demographic change affects demand for additional learning support; however the Ministry does not routinely monitor and report on the impact of trends in demand.
33. During the first half of 2015, as part of the update the Ministry sourced and analysed all the data needed to provide a picture of the system wide investment (\$586 million) in additional learning support. A summary of this data is provided in the Appendices. The financial model developed to support this picture can now provide an up to date picture of the annual total investment. The Ministry will use this to identify areas of inconsistent investment or potential unmet need to be addressed through a more flexible system in future.

The current state of funding arrangements

34. There are approximately 50 different areas of expenditure on additional learning support distributed across nine different appropriations in some ways reflecting the range of needs and support required for students with disabilities/special education needs. The great majority of this expenditure occurs in two appropriations: Interventions for Target Student Groups (Departmental) and Special Needs Support (Non - departmental).
35. Historically, funding for additional learning support within these appropriations has been targeted to particular areas of need and particular age groups. These constraints have been maintained over time resulting in the fragmented and disjointed mix of services referred to above. However, funding and resources can be re-allocated within the appropriations without recourse to Cabinet or the Joint Ministers if there is good reason to do so and the change does not represent a significant policy change.
36. The Ministry will be in a better position to recommend redeployment of funds within its appropriations once it has a better picture of utilisation, the outcomes being achieved and changes in demand. Some initial thinking about potential areas for redeployment to address unmet need is included below.
37. The proposed improvements to service design outlined later in this paper include much greater collaboration between the Ministry and the RTLB service and other professionals. Among other benefits, this is expected to result in more effective use of staffing which currently comprises 73% (\$436 million) of the total investment in additional learning support.



The proposed future state

42. From the analysis undertaken for the Update and the provisional findings from the engagement forums, the Ministry has developed a vision for a new system of additional learning support. This vision is illustrated in Appendix C. Strong collaboration across professional boundaries within the education sector and with health and welfare agencies is at the core of this vision. Other key features of the proposed new system of additional learning support are outlined below.
43. Greatly improved monitoring, reporting and analysis of the investment in additional learning support is also key to the new system. With this in place decisions about the system wide investment in additional learning support will be informed by a good understanding of how funds are utilised, the outcomes being achieved and the evidence of best practice.

Alignment with Communities of Schools/Learning

44. Communities of Schools/Learning offer significant benefits for children and young people who need additional learning support because of the opportunities for better managed transitions, improved continuity of service and economies of scale. Therefore alignment with Communities of Schools/Learning is a further key feature of the proposed new system of additional learning support.
45. In addition, once Communities of Schools/Learning are well established, they may be able to assume direct responsibility for the resources associated with the provision of additional learning support.
46. Special schools are a key component of the education system and could play an important role in their local Community of Schools/Learning. Involvement of special schools will be a feature of the new system.

Features of the new system

47. In the future additional learning support professionals across the education system will join up in support of Communities of Schools/ Learning to plan and address the additional learning support needs of all children and young people in that community. Key features of the new system are illustrated in Appendix D. These include:
- a) The progress and achievement of *all* children is monitored and reported and aggregated data is available to inform decisions about the best use of the system wide investment in additional learning support.
 - b) Educators, parents and whānau are recognised as the primary providers of teaching and learning and advising and guiding them is a priority for the additional learning support professionals.
 - c) Early identification and response to need is a priority.
 - d) The process for identifying and responding to need are simple and prompt.
 - e) The progress and achievement of children and young people is supported by a planned, managed, child centred approach that ensures continuity of support for as long as it's needed.
 - f) Professionals and educators collaborate at all levels and partner with children, young people, parents and whānau to ensure effective support.
 - g) Timely, useful information is available for children, young people, parents and whānau, including a single point of contact for them.

Proposed actions

48. During 2015 and 2016 the Ministry will lead a programme of significant improvements to implement the key features of the new system of additional learning support to accommodate the needs of students. The proposed timeline for the programme is included in Appendix E.
49. The key features will be implemented around the country through area based trials led by the Directors of Education and Regional Managers, Special Education. The Ministry will engage with the local Community of Schools/Learning to capitalise on the opportunity this model offers for a collaborative, sector driven approach to additional learning support.
50. The Ministry will closely monitor the areas based trials to develop a model of additional learning support that can be implemented consistently throughout the country during the second half of 2016.
51. Setting up the area based trials of the key features of the proposed system of additional learning support is underway. Some examples of area based trials initiated to date include:
- a) Ministry professionals and RTLBs collaborating with educators, parents and whānau to plan the right additional learning support for students who have been declined ORS funding but still require a moderate level of support to progress and achieve in their education.

- b) Ministry and RTLB staff meeting with local early childhood education providers, including Maori medium and Pasifika providers to fully understand the additional learning support priorities for their community and put the right guidance and professional development in place to help address these.
- c) Ministry and RTLB professionals implementing an internationally recognised professional development programme to help early childhood educators and parents meet the language development needs of their children.

52. The full programme of work proposed for the update includes:

- a) Completing analysis of the feedback from the engagement forums and incorporating the full findings into the key features of the new system of additional learning support.
- b) By the end of 2015, initiating area based trials of the key features of the new system of additional learning support around the country led by the Directors Education and Regional Managers, Special Education.
- c) Establishing a process to monitor the area based trials and using what is learnt to improve the design.
- d) Working closely with established Communities of Schools/Learning to align the new system of additional learning support with the Communities of Schools/Learning model, including early childhood education.
- e) Working with Children Young Persons and their Families and health sector agencies to improve interagency collaboration so that the impact on educational progress and achievement is fully accounted for in plans for the health and wellbeing of individual children and young people who need additional learning support.
- f) Developing a universal set of practices, service standards and processes based on what is learnt from the area trials.
- g) Designing a national implementation approach that provides for the new system of additional learning support to be rolled out across the education system during the remainder of 2016.
- h) Working with the newly established Education Council to examine how well initial teacher education programmes focus on inclusive education practice and determining how well current contracted professional development providers are using the resources developed for them.
- i) Establishing a nationally consistent curriculum across all providers of professional development for educators from early childhood education onwards.
- j) Continuing to engage key people in the education and disability sectors to ensure their ongoing support for the system wide improvements to additional learning support.
- k) Significantly improving the Ministry's stewardship of the investment in special education to include monitoring and reporting of major areas of system wide investment and outcomes such as student progress and achievement.
- l) Undertaking an ongoing programme of work to examine the comparative return on investment of key components of the investment in additional learning support.

- m) Within the Ministry's stewardship responsibilities, establish an ongoing programme of work to examine the return on investment for all components of investment in additional learning support. This will ensure that the best use is made of the total funds invested in additional learning support and may identify opportunities for redeploying funds to areas of greater need.

Financial Implications

53. The improvements proposed in this paper will be made within current funding.

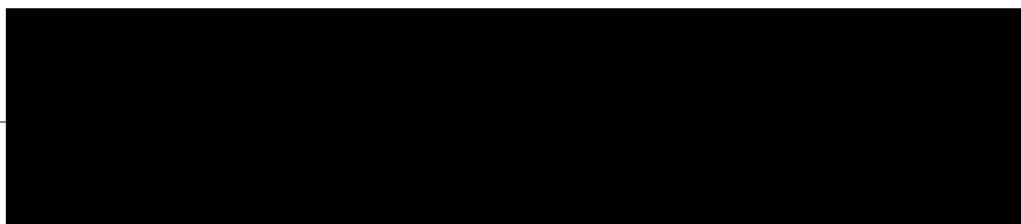
Other Relevant Information

IHC Complaint to the Human Rights Commission

54. In August 2014 the IHC lodged a claim of systemic unjustified discrimination against students with disabilities, where such disabilities require accommodations to enable learning and achievement in schools. to the Human Rights Tribunal The Ministry of Education is defending that claim on the basis that the complaints cannot be substantiated and that in any case a range of actions have been taken to further improve the responsiveness of the education system to accommodate the needs of all children.

55.

s 9(2)(f)(iv) OIA



Appendices

56. The following appendices are attached to this paper:
- a) The system wide investment in additional learning support.
 - b) The current state of the system of additional learning support
 - c) Overview of the proposed future state of the system.
 - d) The key features of the proposed future state of the system.
 - e) Timetable for the update.

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Appendix A: current system wide investment

Total services delivered by*:

Ministry of Education \$143.9 m (25%)

Schools including residential & special schools:
\$394.5 m (67%)

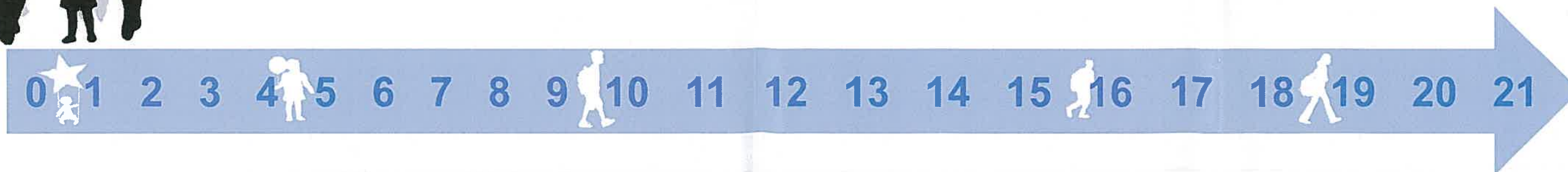
Independent service providers \$48.3 m (8%)

Total: \$586.7 m

* As opposed to budget held by

** Changed from original Update A3 to include
\$18.5 m of MoE funding that was missed.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS				
Service	Number of students	Age group	\$000 (FY 13/14 actual)	Responsibility
Residential & Special Schools	4,000	5 to 21	**\$155,879	Schools
Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) excluding ORS students at special schools	5,323	5 to 21	\$144,256	MOE & schools
High Health Needs	742	5 to 18	\$5,929	MOE
Intensive Wraparound Service	285	9 to 14	\$7,687	MOE
Complex Communication needs	1,233	5 to 8	\$4,404	MOE
Communication service	5,694	5 to 8	\$17,591	MOE
Severe Behaviour Service	3,550	5 to 18	\$39,043	MOE
Moderate Physical Disability needs	451	5 to 18	\$3,000	MOE
Early Intervention Services	14,134	0 to 5	\$44,390	MOE
Hearing Service for those not covered by ORS	1,314	0 to 14	\$1,500	MOE & Deaf Education Centres
SUBTOTAL	36,726		\$423,679	
GENERIC SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS				
Resource Teachers Learning & Behaviour (RTLb) supported students	13,214	5 to 14	\$86,763	RTLb service
Special education grants, estimated 30 – 50,00 students per year are directly supported	40,000	5 to 18	\$36,922	
SUBTOTAL	53,214		\$123,685	
Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L), currently supporting inclusivity in 582 schools		5 to 18	\$31,008	MOE & contracted specialist providers
Assistive technology, specialist assessments, equipment & advice, eligibility verification.		5 to 18	\$5,118	
National study awards (primary & secondary school staff)		5 to 18	\$3,245	
SUBTOTAL			\$39,371	
TOTAL	\$89,940		\$586,735	



Appendix B: the current system

Children and their whānau find access to additional support difficult to navigate, fragmented, lacking in continuity and often subject to delay.

Most services are accessed via separate processes, different criteria & different age limitations.

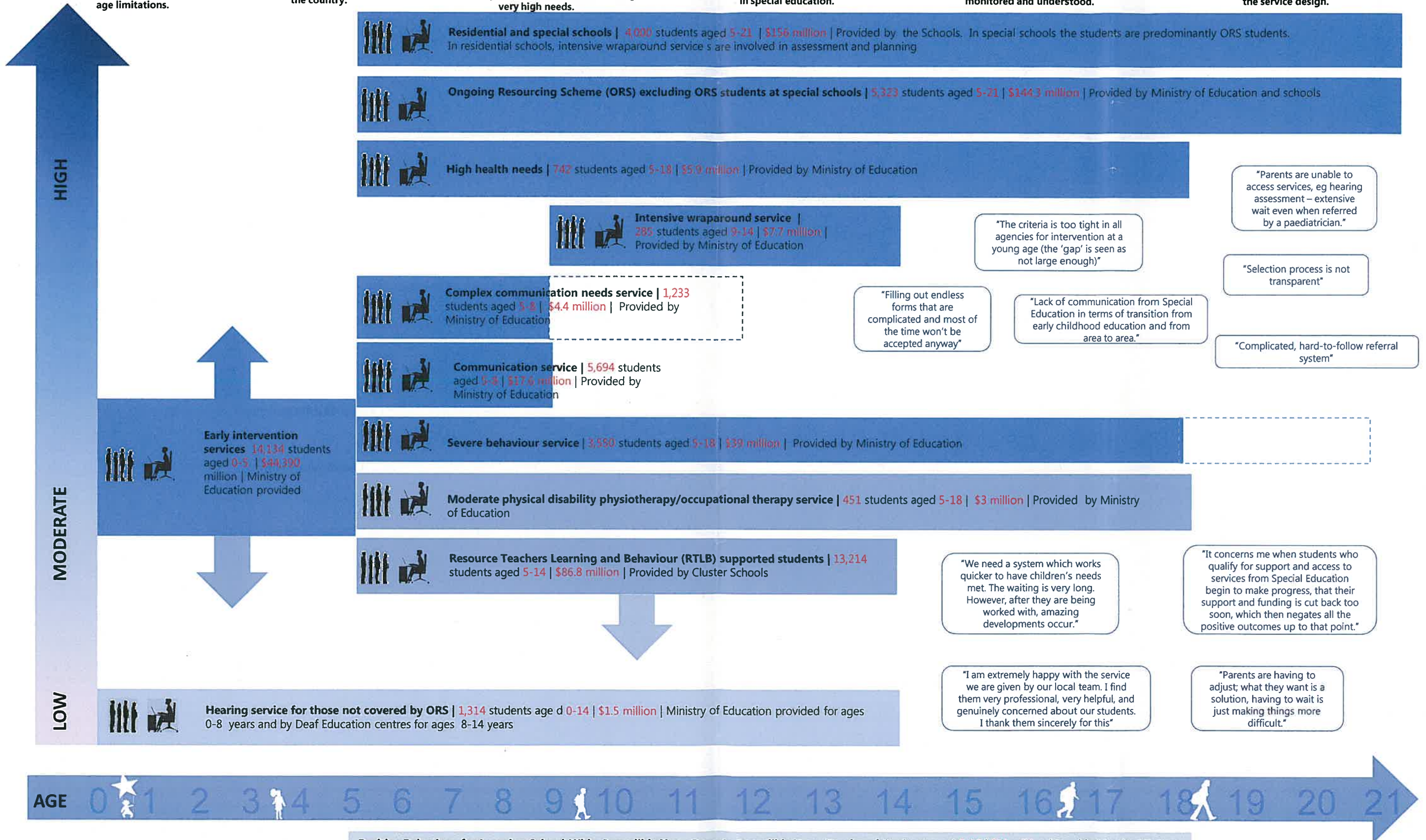
Wait list times for some services vary widely across the country.

Additional learning support is not aligned to a continuum of increasing intensity of need. Many services are only available to students with high or very high needs.

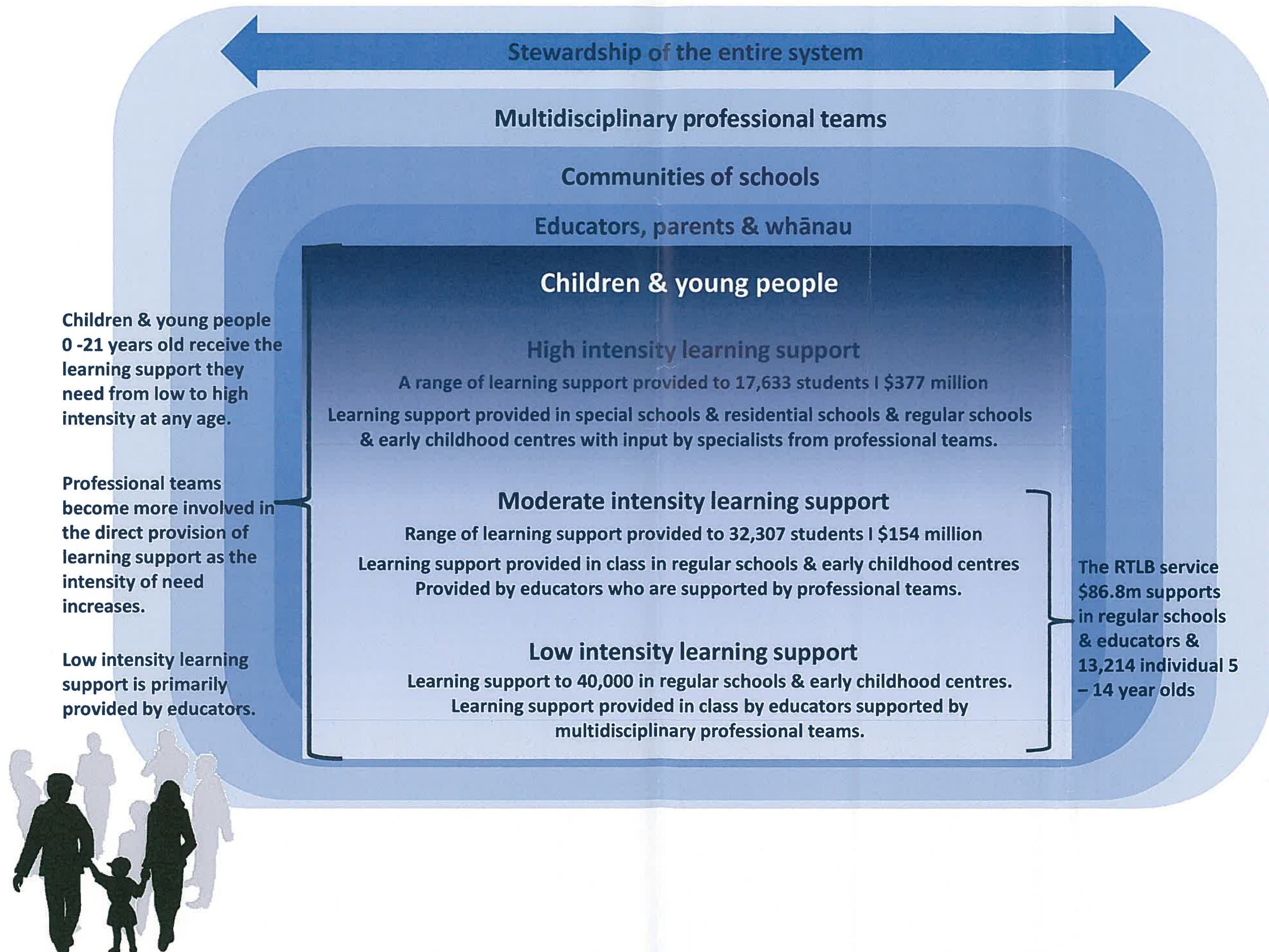
The Ministry does not have a sufficient system-wide view of the whole investment in special education.

There is some evidence that demand is changing, however trends in demand are not adequately monitored and understood.

Collaboration across ECE & school occurs in some instances but is not an expectation of the service design.

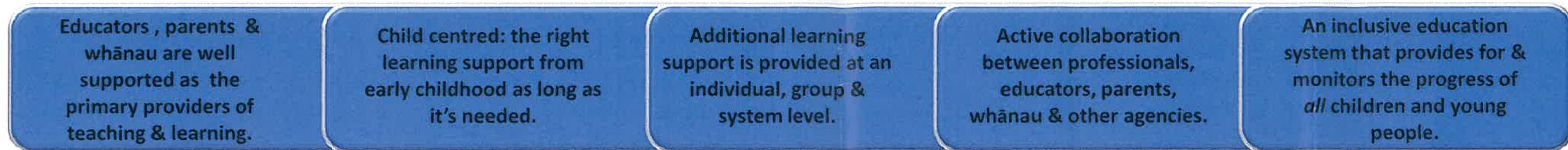


Appendix C: future state

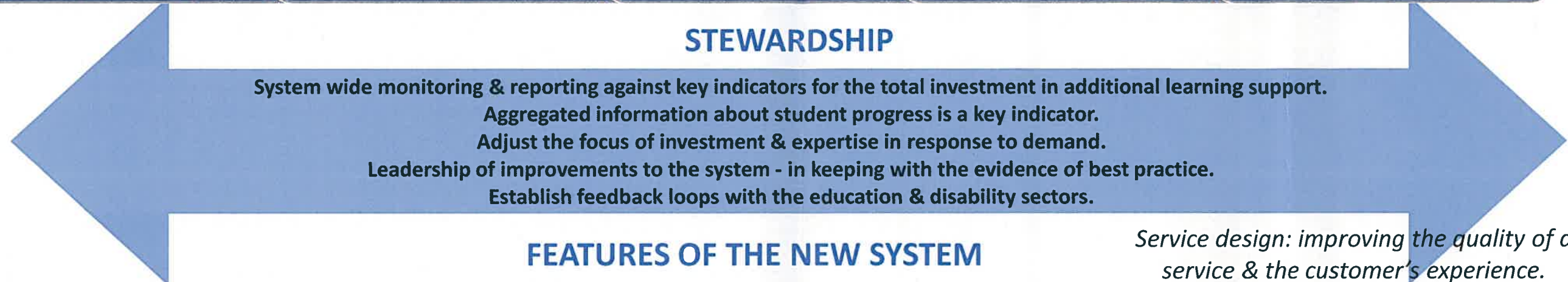


Appendix D: future state, key features

PRINCIPLES

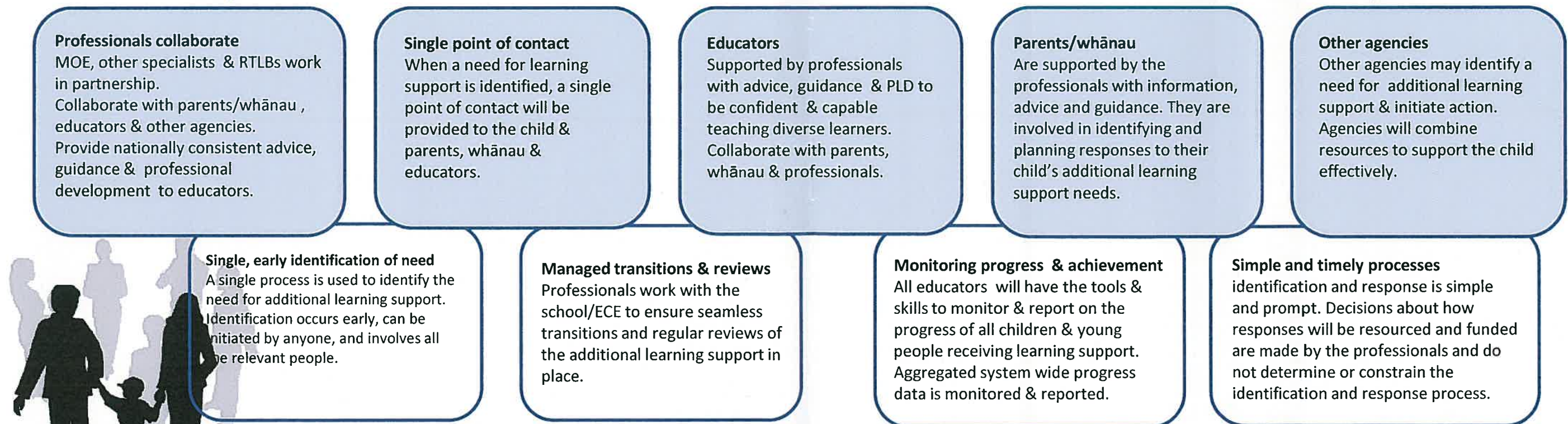


STEWARDSHIP

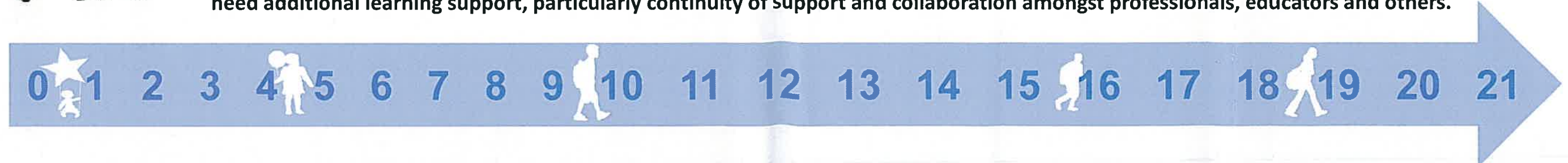


FEATURES OF THE NEW SYSTEM

Service design: improving the quality of a service & the customer's experience.



Communities of schools/learning will provide an ideal vehicle for the improvements we want to achieve for children and young people who need additional learning support, particularly continuity of support and collaboration amongst professionals, educators and others.



Appendix E: timetable

