



## Briefing Note: Update on Attendance Services

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	6 May 2022	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	Yes / No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	Yes / No

### Purpose of Report

As requested by your office, the purpose of this briefing is to provide an update on the following:

- Summary of the 2021 mid-year review of attendance service providers and what we learnt from that (or more recent reviews if we have them).
- What would be our ideal state for the new attendance service contracts i.e. closer to in school provision.
- Do we still see the attendance service as focusing predominantly on the chronically absent ākonga only.
- What is the process going forward for redesigning the new contracts for attendance service provision in time for December.
- What are some examples of good practice out there (in addition to the trials, I know there are some contracts that are being run that are closer to the ideal state).
- Initial scoping of what the new contracts and provisions will look like – what this will mean for the young people, whānau, schools and providers.
- Timeline of key decision making points for minister and critical deadlines.

### Recommendations

It is recommended you:

- a) **note** the contents of this briefing and the approach Te Mahau will be taking to continue the attendance service redesign this year

**Noted**

- b) **note** the Ministry expects to receive the final evaluation report for the Kawerau and South Auckland trials by 13 May and this will be provided to your office the following week

**Noted**

c) **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**



Dr David Wales  
**National Director Learning Support Delivery**  
**Te Pae Aronui**

06/05/2022



[Hon Jan Tinetti](#)

[Associate Minister of Education](#)

06/05/2022

Proactively Released

## Attendance Service 2021 mid-year reporting – summary

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1. The Attendance Service mid-year reporting provides a snapshot of how providers are tracking halfway through the year using qualitative data and reporting measures. The mid-year reporting provides an opportunity to discuss some of the successes and barriers Attendance Service providers may have encountered over the reporting period and observations on trends that they are seeing in their respective area.
2. Common themes providers reported as areas of success included:
  - Continued inter-agency collaboration using holistic approaches to support students re-engage back into school. This was especially important during post-lockdown periods when there was a compounded risk of students disengaging.
  - Development of robust COVID processes and practice, enabling services to continue operating while the country moved up and down COVID levels.
  - As attendance services saw a wide range of referrals, tailored approaches to case management.
3. Barriers included:
  - Hesitancy from families to engage with attendance services due to heightened anxiety and worry over their children going back to school following lockdowns while COVID was still prevalent in communities.
  - Families needing encouragement and assurances that their children would be safe going back to school.
  - Students being referred to the service often having other complex needs which needed to be addressed first before engagement issues could be addressed.
  - Barriers to enrolment in school, for example, schools refusing to take students.
4. Key trends providers were observing while dealing with cases included:
  - Increased stress and anxiety in students returning to school.
  - Increased parent interest in Te Kura enrolments and home-schooling pathways.
  - Transient families.
  - Encountering students post-COVID with larger gaps in their learning.
5. These trends are consistent with the findings and research outlined in the Select Committee Inquiry report into attendance. Also included for your information as Annex 1, is the 2021 Attendance Service National Reporting which delves further into the quantitative data.

## Redesign of the Attendance Service

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6. The attendance service redesign is being conducted in two phases. Phase one was planned to begin in 2020, following the start of the Kawerau and South Auckland trials. However, due to COVID-19 lockdowns, engagement with schools was put on hold.

### **Kawerau and South Auckland trials**

7. Initial findings from the Kawerau and South Auckland trials indicate different models are being used for different contexts. Three distinctive variations are emerging as suitable and effective for different operational contexts - urban (densely populated), urban-rural, and provincial-rural. All models differ substantially from the previous service, notably being more localised and responsive, relational, and providing more wrap-around/intensive support for students and their whānau.
8. The new models are reported to be achieving better engagement with schools, students and whānau; and generally better outcomes for absent and non-enrolled students than the previous service. These findings have been reported by interviewees and shown by improvements in the KPI's and a reduction in NENS from 2019.

9. Strong local leadership, responsiveness, a relational ethos, being local and school-based, working holistically and across silos to address multiple barriers to learning and investing in programme continuity and development, are emerging as all key to the success of the trials.
10. Barriers to success are reported to include disruptions due to COVID, insufficient funding, children and families with high/complex needs who require more support than has been assumed or allowed for, and the current case management system (the Attendance Service Application ASA) that is both difficult to use and impervious to case complexity.
11. The Ministry expects to receive the final report for the Kawerau and South Auckland trial by 13 May and this will be provided to your office the following week.

### **Phase one of the redesign**

12. Phase one work resumed in 2021 where the Ministry consulted with schools and current attendance service providers, on what different service could be put in place for 2022. As a result, in some regions (for example, Bay of Plenty, Wellington and Hawke's Bay) new clusters of schools and Iwi Māori organisations have been contracted to provide the service in 2022.
13. These new services are closer to schools and local communities and are better aligned with the Ministry's Ka Hikitia objectives. In 2021, the AS was provided through 27 contracts – eight schools (or school clusters), seven Iwi/Māori organisations and 12 NGOs (Non-Government Organisations). In 2022, the AS is being provided through 44 contracts – 24 schools (or school clusters), ten Iwi/Māori organisations and ten NGOs. Phase one of the redesign has already started to make the desired shift.

#### *Bay of Plenty/Wairariki – an example of new attendance services*

14. In 2021, the service was totally redesigned resulting in new clusters of schools being funded to provide the service in the Bay of Plenty/Wairariki region (for 2022 only). The previous contractor was Datacom. This new attendance service model is built around the Te Puke Kāhui Ako which has established networks and relationships between schools, iwi and community, a learning support panel and Learning Support Co-ordinators. The schools recognised the link between attendance and the work underway through the learning support panel and saw an opportunity to better align services within the community.
15. Through consultation with the Kāhui Ako a lead Principal was nominated to manage the attendance service on behalf of the cluster. The learning support panel, comprised of learning specialists alongside Kāhui Ako members, acts as a strategic advisory group for the service. The strategic advisory group supports the oversight of the service, escalates matters of importance for the community, identifies trends and patterns and acts as an engagement forum for schools in the cluster to troubleshoot issues that may arise while dealing with unjustified absence cases or complex non-enrolment cases.
16. Service delivery for attendance service case management is delivered with Poutiri Trust, a local Māori health and social service. This collaborative partnership model assists with connecting whānau in the community.
17. The Te Puke Kāhui Ako continue working with Te Mahau and have given positive feedback on the model and will continue to work to embed it throughout the year.

### **Phase two of the redesign**

18. We are now in phase two of the redesign and are focused on how services will be delivered in the long-term from 2023 onwards. Te Mahau will further consult with regional stakeholders such as schools, mana whenua and current providers. Once there is agreement on a particular regional model, the Ministry will begin the procurement process. We will also be checking whether new models that began in phase one continue to be the preferred and optimal option.

19. The redesign aligns with the recommendations of the Select Committee Inquiry into attendance, specifically recommendations 12, 15 and 16<sup>1</sup>. The redesign work is also in alignment with the draft Engagement in Learning Strategy, as one of its priority actions that underpin the goals and objectives.

## Ideal state for new attendance service contracts

20. Lessons we are learning from the trial evaluations and phase one of the redesign are that the ideal attendance service is one where:

- The service has been designed by the people who will refer students to and from the service, that is, schools and with Iwi Māori.
- Schools are committed to supporting the engagement of all their students and this, in part, is done by shifting away from a focus on truancy.
- Local contexts are allowed to determine the delivery model. For example, a different service model will work in urban vs rural contexts.
- The service is culturally matched with the students and whānau who need support.
- The brokerage function provided by the service, between schools, the student and their whānau, is provided by people who are known and respected in the community, so schools, Iwi Māori and some other established community organisations are already well placed to do this.
- Efficiencies are realised by schools through integrating and leveraging off existing supports, services, trusted relationships and networks. For example operating the attendance service within an existing service cluster (eg a Kāhui Ako, LSC, RTLB or SWiS cluster of schools). There are often a shared cohort of students and whānau who are supported by these services.
- The service is adequately resourced, including resources for administration and management.

21. Kura may have a different model of delivery which is integrated within the kura learning environment and partnerships with whānau.

22. Regarding service scope, the Ministry is of the view that the Attendance Service should continue to be primarily focused on chronically absent students; students who are referred because they are unjustifiably absent or have been non-enrolled from school. The recent Budget 2022 announcement of a \$40 million regional response fund will support schools to address engagement challenges prior or in addition to seeking support by making referrals to the attendance service.

## Next Steps

23. An indicative timeline for phase two of the redesign is provided below. All attendance service contracts expire in December 2022. We will continue to provide updates to you at key points in this process, including when a national contracting plan has been drafted (July) and as contracts are negotiated and signed (September).

Tasks	Timeframe
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<sup>1</sup> 12: recommend that the Government further support and fund Māori-medium schools, mixed-medium schools, iwi organisations, and Māori Attendance Service providers. 15: recommend that the school attendance strategy integrate early intervention strategies, chronic non-attendance and non-enrolment case management, and any redesign of the Attendance Service. 16: recommend that the Government consider the outcomes of the Attendance Service trials in South Auckland and Kawerau, the regional Attendance Plans, and the Innovation Unit project when redesigning the Attendance Service including the implications for resourcing.

Determine provisional regional funding split	May-June
Consult with schools, iwi/Māori, current providers and peak bodies about the service model in their community, service description and KPIs.	
Decision on how service will be provided across NZ in 2023	June
Funding confirmed	June
Contracting plan approved	July
(Tender process)*	(June-Aug)
Letter of offer and draft contract to providers	Aug
Negotiate and sign contracts	Sept
Providers recruit their staff	Oct-Nov
ASA training	Nov-Jan
Service commences	Feb 2023 (Term 1 2023)

\* Tender process only required if we plan to contract NGOs (not needed for schools or Iwi/Māori organisations)

## Annexes

Annex 1: 2021 Attendance Service National Reporting