Highest Needs Review

Overview of the Mixed Model Approach for Supporting Learners with the Highest Level of Need

**DRAFT - NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY**

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# Highest Needs Review

## Overview of the Mixed Model Approach for Supporting Learners with the Highest Level of Need

A Mixed Model Approach aims to create a partnership with learners and families and whanau, enable flexibility, and deliver better supports through:

* Acknowledging a learner's need varies depending on the environment and context at the time.
* An integrated schooling network so learners can move between local and specialised settings.
* Multiple and clear pathways and opportunities based on the rights of the child to access different supports.
* Partnering with Maori, iwi, and Pacific communities to meet their needs.
* Consistent and equitable access to support across education settings and the country.
* Educators accept full responsibility for all learners in their care and connect/ partner with whanau.
* Ministry remains budget-holder while.
* Supports that are accessible, easy to understand and navigate, with a shared common language, so information flows to those who need it when they need it.

## Building blocks for change

We have identified the core building blocks for change for a mixed model approach to supporting learners with the highest needs. Below, we outline the issues with how the current system works in relation to each of these building blocks, and potential changes to achieve the desired future state.

### A new service delivery system

#### Current state:

* Separate funding pools, each with their own rigid, deficit-based criteria.
* Application processes that are complex and confusing.
* Planning handed from person to person as supports change.
* Multiple and complex overlapping barriers to learners accessing support they need, when they need it, which canvary depending on the environment or context.

#### Potential changes for the future state:

* Shift toward a more flexible, individualised approach where learners and families/whanau feel empowered and can make informed choices to develop tailored support, including for the adults around them.
* Develop an accountability system that increases educational success for learners with the highest need while allowing for creativity and innovation.
* Investigate the functions of a connector I kaituhono to build powerful and authentic relationships with family/whanau and walk alongside them throughout their journey:
  + The need for a connector function has been recognised by both EGL and Whanau Ora models, and within Oranga Tamariki.
* Consider a holistic plan for each learner with the highest needs, which would be owned by the learner and whanau, that is based on the learner's strengths and celebrates successes. The plan would follow the learner throughout their education journey.
* Consider a transdisciplinary team approach within education and across agencies to support family/whanau and learners.
* Build aligned, cohesive, and easy-to-navigate cross-agency systems that support diverse and complex needs, so that learners and families/whanau need only tell their story once and that information is shared with those who need it.

### An integrated and inclusive schooling network

#### Current state:

* Some specialist schools and Te Kura act as separate entities, creating a parallel system of support which has been criticised as segregating disabled learners from their peers.
* Possible exclusionary practices and lack of capability mean parents can't enrol their child in a local school.

#### Potential changes for the future state:

* Shift towards a more inclusive and integrated network where all learners can learn alongside peers in their local school while still having access to specialist expertise.

### Customised tailored supports

#### Current state:

* We have identified the core building blocks for change for a mixed model approach to supporting learners with the highest needs. Below, we outline the
* issues with how the current system works in relation to each of these building blocks, and potential changes to achieve the desired future state.

#### Potential changes for the future state:

* Family and whanau have a voice and choice in deciding the package of support for their child/young person.
* Explore options to replace application requirements for access to support.
* Investigate how a needs-assessment approach could work to identify if a need is present
* Identify and meet unmet need.
* Develop a funding model that enables a flexible taliored supports.
* Address impacts of deconstructing existing systems that feed into other systems like Immigration or long-term disability supports.

### Learning supports for Maori and Pacific developed by Maori and Pacific

#### Current state:

* Maori and Pacific families face additional barriers to access.
* Akonga Maori, whanau, Pacific learners and families experience institutional bias and discrimination in the education sector.
* Lack of alignment between western and te ao Maori and Pacific conceptions of disability
* A lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services, programmes, measures, and resources.

#### Potential changes for the future state:

* Partner with Maori, iwi and Pacific communities and families to explore approaches to support that meet the needs of whanau and families.

### Confident, capable workforce with the capacity to respond

#### Current state:

* Not enough staff feel confident supporting learners with the highest needs within the classroom.
* Families say bias and discrimination impacts on their disabled child's participation at school
* Significant shortage of specialists to meet current demand, with high workload and low job satisfaction

#### Potential changes for the future state:

* Build workforce that is capable, confident and has capacity to respond to learners.
* Explore ways to improve ITE and PLO opportunities that enable schools to: plan, teach, and include learners; support knowledge on the social model of disability; and challenge current ideas about disability and ableism, trauma informed responses and universal design for learning.
* Ensure online resources are fit-for-purpose and up to date.
* Look to increase uptake of NZ Sign Language and braille.
* Work to meet demand for specialist workforce and explore beyond what is traditionally considered specialist workforce.
* Connect with EGL Workforce Strategy and resource iwi and Maori to explore fit-for­ purpose specialist roles.
* Position workforce in the right places across the country to support rural learners and equity of access.

### A new funding model to support tailored, flexible approach

#### Current state:

* Separate funding pools mean learners are unable to access support across multiple programmes.
* Current funding model creates a rationing mentality within the education sector and unintended perverse incentives.

#### Potential changes for the future state:

* A funding model that allows for the development of flexible supports for learner's while being able to fund and support their educators/adults around them.
* Consider the data and infrastructure needed to gear the system to be ready to respond to increased need. This would include the use of population modeling and trends in current data to develop a predictive forecasting model.
* Monitoring and evaluation to know what is working and what isn't.