Ministry of Education learning support specialist workforce information and key activities

To: Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education
Cc: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
Date: 1 March 2021
Priority: Medium
Security Level: In Confidence
METIS No.: 1250105
Drafter: Pamela Cohen
DDI: 04 463 8099
Key Contact: Susan Howan
DDI: 9(2)(a)
Messaging seen by Communications team: No
Round Robin: No

Purpose

This briefing provides you with information on the Ministry's learning support specialist workforce and key activities in this area as background for your discussion with education and disability sector groups and questions that may arise. It is part of the series of secondary Briefings to the Incoming Minister that we have provided you since November 2020.

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released.

Agree / Disagree

Summary

- The learning support workforce is large and diverse. It is made up of multiple roles requiring different levels of qualifications, training and experience. It includes Ministry employed specialist staff and in-school learning support roles employed by Boards of Trustees.

- As well as offering support to individuals and groups of learners/ākonga (ākonga), the Ministry's 968.7 FTE specialists help to build the capability and understanding of whānau and teachers who are supporting ākonga in early learning services and schools.
• The attached A3 describes:
  o our current Ministry specialist staffing position and vacancies
  o Ministry funded study awards, scholarships and pathways to employment
  o key learning support specialist roles and their training pathway
  o workforce challenges and opportunities.

Katrina Casey  
Deputy Secretary  
Sector Enablement and Support

[Signature]

13/01/2021

Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of Education

[Signature]

13/01/2021
Background

1. The learning support workforce is large and diverse. It is made up of multiple roles requiring different levels of qualifications, training and experience.

2. Teacher aides employed by Boards of Trustees are the largest group (headcount 23,000 - 27,000 per annum, as of 31 December 2020). In-school learning support roles also include Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (983 FTE employed by 40 lead schools), other specialist resource teachers, Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), Learning Support Coordinators, and pastoral care/wellbeing staff. There are also alternative education staff and staff employed by other social sector agencies or NGOs.

3. The Ministry directly employs 987.7 FTE learning support specialists in a range of roles. As well as offering support to individuals and groups or learners/ākonga (ākonga), the Ministry's specialists help to build capability and understanding of whānau and teachers who are supporting ākonga in early learning services and schools.

4. The Learning Support Action Plan 2019-2025 recognises the need for an overarching, coherent approach to developing the learning support workforce that recognises the breadth of the workforce across different settings (early learning services, mainstream schooling, alternative educational settings and specialist schools and their satellite education facilities).

5. The A3 attached provides a snapshot of the current Ministry employed specialist workforce and key activities underway to develop a specialist workforce that is flexible and fit for purpose into the future. It describes:
   - our current Ministry specialist staffing position and vacancies
   - Ministry funded study awards, scholarships and pathways to employment
   - key learning support specialist roles and their training pathway
   - workforce challenges and opportunities.

Proactive Release

6. We recommend the proactive release of this briefing, as per your expectation for the release of information as soon as possible. Any decision to withhold information from this briefing will be made in accordance with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

Annex 1: A3 - Ministry learning support specialist workforce – current state, pipeline, challenges.
Annex 1: A3 - Ministry learning support specialist workforce – current state, pipeline, challenges.
Ministry specialists work across a range of learning support services, including interventions for pre-school aged children, and in services supporting school-aged children.

The table below shows the overall increase in total specialist staffing between December 2016 and December 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dec 2016</th>
<th>Dec 2017</th>
<th>Dec 2018</th>
<th>Dec 2019</th>
<th>Dec 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>793.4</td>
<td>780.0</td>
<td>856.8</td>
<td>823.0</td>
<td>988.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excludes education support workers employed by the Ministry

As at 31 December 2020 there were 988.7 FTE learning support specialists supporting children and young people through Ministry-employed learning support services.

We support approximately 350 teachers each year to undertake a two-year Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching through the Learning Support teacher study awards. These teachers are mostly from early learning services and schools, with only a small number of Early Intervention teachers employed by the Ministry at the time of study. This number has increased from 320 as a result of additional funding from Budgets 2018 and 2019, and will further increase to approximately 369 in 2021.

Study award | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021*
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
Early Intervention | 46 | 46 | 48 | 57 | 75 | 80
Autism Spectrum Disorder | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16
Blind and Low Vision | 12 | 15 | 14 | 17 | 20 | 19
Deaf and Hard of Hearing | 15 | 20 | 18 | 22 | 27 | 28
Complex Education Needs | 10 | 14 | 18 | 15 | 17 | 15
Learning and Behaviour | 178 | 176 | 170 | 168 | 154 | 208
Learning Support Needs** | 3 | 4 | 12 | 2 | N/A | N/A
Gifted | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5
Total | 264 | 295 | 299 | 285 | 348 | 369

*The numbers may change subject to confirmation at course enrolment.
**Not offered in 2020/2021.

We also offer Learning Support scholarships focused on five specific roles within the specialist workforce.

| Scholarship | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021*
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
Psychology Internships | 16 | 19 | 28 | 28 | 34 | 33
Speech Language Therapy | 16 | 21 | 19 | 18 | 32 | TBC*
Sign Language Interpreting | 11 | 14 | 11 | 10 | 15 | TBC*
NZSL tutors | 4 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 17 | 5
Adviser on Deaf Children | 10 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 16 | 15
Total | 58 | 69 | 73 | 63 | 104 | TBC*

*TBC selection for these scholarships is confirmed in May 2021.

In 2020 we launched a new Learning Support career site to raise visibility and better engage with local talent and young people on these specialist roles that the Ministry regularly recruits for. [https://careers.education.govt.nz/learning-support-roles](https://careers.education.govt.nz/learning-support-roles)

We offer Educational Psychology internships, over 10 positions per year, and a range of Learning Support scholarships to promote and support students taking up Educational Psychology and Speech Language Therapy (SLT) – specialist roles where local talent supply has struggled to keep up with relatively high demand for these skills sets, especially within the special sector.

In 2020 we strengthened the SLT scholarship package to increase the number and proportion of SLT scholarship recipients that work for the Ministry after graduation. The updated scholarship package includes a guaranteed job interview with the Ministry upon successful completion and strengthens support for Ministry scholarship recipients by connecting them with a network of Ministry SLTs and allowing greater flexibility in their placement experience.

In 2019 we hired over 20 SLT graduates across our regional offices who were supported by our scholarship awards. Of the 16 scholarship recipients that graduated in 2020 eight have so far been hired by the Ministry.

The psychologist internship scholarship guarantees a Ministry job offer to successful graduates. Of the 22 external psychology interns who completed their internship in 2018, 16 were then employed by the Ministry. In 2020, we hired 24 educational psychologists of 30 competing their internship.

The Ministry has a robust scholarship offer, which supports our specialist workforce in various ways.

The experience of using telepractice and virtual provision of learning support services during COVID-19 restrictions demonstrated the potential effectiveness and efficiency gains in this way of working. Specialists used telepractice to provide individual support for children and whānau, as well as targeted programmes for example Incredible Years and PB4L School-Wide for groups of teachers and whānau. We are continuing to modernise service delivery to provide a wider range of more flexible supports that fully utilise technology.

One area of the Ministry’s learning support workforce in need of strengthening is cultural capability, including the language skills of our workforce to work with Māori and Pacific learners and their whānau. Māori and Pacific specialist staff are underrepresented in the specialist workforce. For example, PB4L School-Wide has one School-Wide practitioner with Te Reo proficiency and approximately 35 Māori Medium kura.

Building the cultural competence and capability of learning support specialist staff is required to be responsive to the needs and make up of our learners and communities. This is critical to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Education and Training Act 2018 and Ka Hikitia. It will also support implementation of our evidence based kaupapa Māori programmes in schools—Whāikaha and Te Mana Tūtukiwha in the last quarter of 2020, we conducted a series of online Zoom events with an Educational Psychologist, a Kaikākawenga and a SLT. These events initially targeted high schools but ended up attracting a diverse audience who were looking to be exposed to these career pathways. We are continuing with this work in 2021.

Funding received in Budget 2020 has enabled our specialist staff to partner with Te Kohanga Reo National Trust to develop kaupapa Māori resources to increase whānau and kaiāra and understanding of learning support and access to services. This initiative will help us adapt our learning support services to be more accessible for Māori whānau.

There are opportunities for the whole learning support workforce to work in a more joined up way to provide responsive and flexible support to whānau, whānau and teachers. We have taken a step in this direction through the introduction in 2020 of He Fisura, a shared practice framework for Ministry specialists and Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour. The Learning Support Delivery Model provides a mechanism for consistent, evidence-informed ways of working across the full range of learning support roles.
### Typical qualification and experience pathway for Ministry specialist positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Pathway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adviser on Deaf Children (AoDC)</td>
<td>- Bachelor of Teaching (3 years) followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching: Deaf and Hard of Hearing (2 years part time), and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Once employed, AoDCs are supported to undertake a Master of Specialist Teaching (AoDC) offered by Massey University (up to 3 years part time)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                                                          |  - OR  
|                                                                          |  - Bachelor of Speech Language Pathology or similar qualification to obtain employment as a Speech Language Therapist (4 year Bachelor or 5 year master’s degree), and  |
|                                                                          |  - Once employed, AoDCs are supported to undertake a Master of Special Education (sensory specialisation) as prescribed for Ministry AoDCs (up to 3 years part time)  |
| Early Intervention Teacher (EIT)                                         | - Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood) (3 years) and Postgraduate Diploma in Early Intervention (2 years part time)  |
|                                                                          |  - Registered teacher with full practising certificate  |
| Educational Psychologist                                                 | - Master’s degree in psychology (2 years) following on from relevant bachelor’s degree (3 years)  |
|                                                                          |  - Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Psychology (1 year) – includes practicum or internship involving 1,500 hours of supervised practice  |
|                                                                          |  - OR  
|                                                                          |  - An equivalent qualification set that meets the registration requirements of the New Zealand Psychologists Board  |
| Kaitakawaenga                                                            | - Proficiency in Te Reo me ona Tikanga - (Te Reo Attestation Level 3)  |
|                                                                          |  - Understanding of Te Ao Māori  |
|                                                                          |  - A relevant diploma qualification (min 2 years study)  |
|                                                                          |  - Advantageous other experience:  
|                                                                          |  - 3 years' experience teaching te reo Māori  
|                                                                          |  - 3 years' experiences working in the community in Māori development  
|                                                                          |  - Previous experience in the education sector, a learning support service or health agency  |
| Occupational Therapist (OT)                                              | - Bachelor of Health Science (Occupational Therapy) (3 years)  |
| Physiotherapist                                                          | - Bachelor’s degree in physiotherapy (4 years) and a current Annual Practising Certificate from the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand  |
| School-Wide Practitioner                                                 | - Master’s degree in psychology (2 years) following on from relevant bachelor’s degree (3 years)  |
|                                                                          |  - Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Psychology (1 year) – includes a practicum or internship involving 1,500 hours of supervised practice  |
|                                                                          |  - OR  
|                                                                          |  - Bachelor of teaching (3 years), current practising certificate and extensive experience working with children and young people with learning support needs  
|                                                                          |  - Registered teacher with full practising certificate  |
| Special Education Advisor (SEA) / Learning Support Advisor              | - Bachelor of Teaching (3 years) and Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education (1 year)  |
|                                                                          |  - OR  
|                                                                          |  - Bachelor of Teaching (3 years), current practising certificate and extensive experience working with children and young people with learning support needs  |
| Speech Language Therapist (SLT)                                          | - Bachelor’s degree in Speech Language Therapy (4 years)  |
|                                                                          |  - OR  
|                                                                          |  - Bachelor’s degree in relevant field (3 years) and Master of Speech Language Therapy Practice (2 years)  |
|                                                                          |  - OR  
|                                                                          |  - An equivalent qualification set that meets the registration requirements of the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists’ Association.  |