



Briefing Note: 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
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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:
 - 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.



Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support

13/2021



Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education

13/2021

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 of 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.

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Proactively Released

Ministry of Education Learning Support Workforce- Current state, pipeline and challenges

Investment through Budgets 2018 and 2019 have supported an increase in the number of specialist staff employed by the Ministry by 121.9 FTE (14.4%) since 30 June 2018 to 31 December 2020

Ministry specialists work across a range of learning support services, in early intervention for pre-school aged children, and in services supporting school-aged children.

See reverse for the key positions that make up the Ministry specialist workforce, including the qualifications and/or experience required for each role.

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

	Dec 2016	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Total Ministry specialist FTE*	793.4	789.0	865.6	923.0	968.7

*Excludes education support workers employed by the Ministry

As at 31 December 2020 there were 968.7 FTE learning support specialists supporting children and young people through Ministry-employed learning support services.

Position	Total Ministry FTE as at 31 December 2020
Advisor on Deaf Children	38.8
Early Intervention Teacher	163.5
Kaitakawaenga	25.6
Occupational Therapist	47.5
School-Wide Practitioner	24.1
Physiotherapist	18.7
Psychologist	193.7
Special Education Advisor	125.4
Speech Language Therapist	323.7
Other positions	7.7
Total	968.7FTE

Additionally, we are recruiting to 39 specialist positions

These 39 FTE are in various stages of recruitment. They are comprised of the following roles:

Roles in recruitment as at December 2020	FTE
Early Intervention Teacher	3
Kaitakawaenga	5
Occupational Therapist	1
Psychologist/Special Education Advisor	19
School-Wide Practitioner	1
Special Education Advisor	4
Speech Language Therapist	6
Total	39

The number of vacancies has decreased since mid-2020 from 55 to 39 vacant roles.

The recruitment to these specialist roles is to replace staff who have left existing positions.

Our learning support staffing position is currently strong overall

Historically we have experienced a shortage of Speech Language Therapists (SLTs) and educational psychologists.

This position has improved in recent times with COVID-19 having a positive impact on the retention of staff.

Of the 39 vacancies 19 are for psychologists. Some of these psychologist vacancies are progressively being filled by offshore candidates.

Historically we compete with Health, Corrections, and the private sector to recruit to these positions, and often struggle to match the salaries of other agencies.

We offer a number of Learning Support study awards and scholarships to support the development and ongoing availability of the specialist workforce

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 300 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	45	49	57	75	80
Autism Spectrum Disorder	19	19	18	14	16	9
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	179	178	170	168	194	208
Learning Support Needs**	3	4	12	2	N/A	N/A
Gifted						5
Total	284	295	299	295	349	369

*These numbers may change subject to confirmation at course enrolment.

**Not offered in 2020/2021 to prioritise the provision of awards in other higher priority areas.

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

Scholarship	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Psychology internships	15	19	28	28	34	33
Speech Language Therapy	18	21	19	16	32	TBC*
Sign Language interpreting	11	14	11	10	15	TBC*
NZSL tutor	4	8	7	n/a	7	5
Advisor on Deaf Children	10	7	8	9	16	15
Total	58	69	73	63	104	TBC*

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

We are strengthening online recruitment material and the pathways from study awards and scholarships to Ministry employment

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

We offer Educational Psychology internships, over 20 placements per year, and a range of [Learning Support awards and 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 historically high demand for these skills sets, especially within the social 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 Māori scholarship recipients by connecting them with a network of Ministry Māori 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 15 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 2019, 16 were then employed by the Ministry. In 2020, we hired 24 educational psychologists of 30 completing their internship.

Since COVID-19 has presented ways of using specialist staff more flexibly in hard to staff areas

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.

Ministry workforce gaps and opportunities

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 makeup of our learners and communities. This is critical to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Education and Training Act 2019 and Ka Hikitia. It will also support implementation of our evidence based kaupapa Māori programmes in schools – Huakina Mai and Te Mana Tikitiki.

In the last quarter of 2020, we conducted a series of online Zoom events with an Educational Psychologist, a Kaitakawaenga 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 Kōhanga Reo National Trust to develop kaupapa Māori resources to increase whānau and kaiako awareness 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 operate in a more joined up way to provide responsive and flexible support to ākonga, whānau and teachers. We have taken a step in this direction through the introduction in 2020 of He Pikorua, 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

Position	Pathway
Adviser on Deaf Children (AoDC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Teaching (3 years) followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching: Deaf and Hard of Hearing (2 years part time), and Once employed, AoDCs are supported to undertake a Master of Specialist Teaching (AoDC) offered by Massey University (up to 3 years part time) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood) (3 years) and Postgraduate Diploma in Early Intervention (2 years part time) Registered teacher with full practicing certificate
Educational Psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An equivalent qualification set that meets the registration requirements of the New Zealand Psychologists Board
Kaitakawaenga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) <p>Advantageous other experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 years' experience teaching te reo Māori 3 years' experience working in the community in Māori development Previous experience in the education sector, a learning support service or health agency
Occupational Therapist (OT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Health Science (Occupational Therapy) (3 years)
Physiotherapist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree in physiotherapy (4 years) and a current Annual Practising Certificate from the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand
School-Wide Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 practicing certificate
Special Education Advisor (SEA) / Learning Support Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Teaching (3 years) and Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education (1 year) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree in Speech Language Therapy (4 years) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree in relevant field (3 years) and Master of Speech Language Therapy Practice (2 years) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An equivalent qualification set that meets the registration requirements of the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association.