




## Briefing Note: Work underway to support children and young people with learning support needs during Covid-19 lockdown

<b>To:</b>	Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	27 March 2020	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1224821
<b>Drafter:</b>	Nic Hill	<b>DDI:</b>	
<b>Key Contact:</b>	Susan Howan	<b>DDI:</b>	
<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

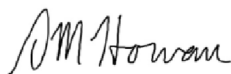
**Note** the information provided on the work underway to continue to provide support for children and young people with learning support needs and ensure they have access to online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

**Agree** that this Briefing will be proactively released.

**Agree / Disagree**

### Summary

- We are maintaining connections with children, families and whānau so we can continue to provide support. Our regional staff are developing ways to provide virtual service delivery.
- At this early stage, we are focussing on providing information about wellbeing to support families to settle their children into new routines at home.
- Parents will be receiving information from multiple sources and we aim to help in navigating the information so they can identify and access what is most useful to them.



Susan Howan  
**Associate Deputy Secretary  
Strategy and Implementation**

27/03/2020



Hon Tracey Martin  
**Associate Minister of Education**

29/03/2020

## Overview of response

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1. As a result of the introduction of Covid-19 Alert Level 4 earlier this week, the education system and the Ministry have moved quickly to ensure that children and young people with learning support needs and their families continue to receive the support they need and have access to online learning opportunities.

### **Adapting existing services and exploring new services**

2. It is important to maintain the connection between Ministry staff and families and whānau with children with learning support needs to allow us to continue to provide support. This is a key area of focus at this point. Our regional staff are developing ways to provide virtual service delivery. For example, having discussions by telephone, skype or zoom for existing cases or when a new request is received for support to identify needs and priorities, providing resources electronically (eg handouts and websites), support for the adults in a child's life to implement agreed strategies and embed supports into daily routines.
3. We have worked with the Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) executive and Managers Learning Support to develop guidance and expectations for RTLb clusters during the home isolation period. This has been sent out to RTLb clusters and lead school principals. Similar advice will be prepared for Resource Teachers Literacy (RTLits).
4. We are also at an early stage of working with Connect and Co, IHC and Explore, to develop a Facebook page, *Awhi at Home*, to support parents and whānau of children (0-11 years old) with high needs at home during the lockdown. The page will be responsive to what parents and whānau tell us they need but is expected to include tips and strategies, resources, specialists in video clips. Parents and whānau will be able to "talk to" each other and share experiences. We have had initial discussions and work is underway.

### **Provision of information and guidance to support online learning**

5. We are also focussing on providing information about maintaining wellbeing to help families and whānau settle into their new routines and deal with questions and concerns their children have. For example, we have provided advice about talking to children about Covid-19 on our website ([Talking to children about covid-19 coronavirus](#)).
6. Some parents are reporting that they are receiving information from multiple sources. To help parents navigate through the information, the Ministry has set up two "one stop shop" websites, *Learning from Home* and *Ki te Ao Marama*. *Learning from Home* contains advice and resources for parents and whānau, teachers and leaders spanning early learning through to senior secondary to support learning at home, including information on wellbeing. *Ki te Ao Marama* provides resources in te reo Māori.

### **Response by schools**

7. Directors of Education report that schools are being proactive in moving to online teaching and are doing a lot to support their students, including those with learning support needs. We will be gathering examples and ensuring good practice is being shared widely.

8. Special schools are providing support for their students, for example:
  - a. Day special schools have prepared resource banks for next term and are feeling confident. Teachers are keeping in touch with families and will support the adults with ideas for their children's learning. They are also, keeping in touch with Outreach students.
  - b. Residential Special Schools are connected to the Intensive Wraparound Service and are providing supportive contact with their students in collaboration with this service.
  - c. Regional Health Schools are well set up to provide distance learning to all their students except in-patients and those attending community facilities for Mental Health reasons. They are working closely with clinicians to support these students.

## Next Steps

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9. We will continue to establish the virtual approach to provide learning support to students and whānau who need it. Our focus will remain on ensuring the wellbeing of those students and whānau. From this basis we will curate and organise the significant amount of learning support material and resources that is available online to make sure it is available to whānau and to staff working with them.

## Proactive Release

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10. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.