



22 JAN 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 4 December to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

- *Statistics about the number of EI referrals received*
- *The average wait time until service is started*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

The Ministry does not collect data on the number of referrals received. As such, I am refusing the first part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act as the information requested does not exist.

The Ministry collects aggregated data on accepted requests for support. When requests are made, they may or may not specify a service. The Ministry assigns a service once a request is accepted following consideration of the child's needs.

As at 30 November 2018, we had accepted 7,864 requests for support since 1 July 2018, of which 91% had been decided on within 10 days. A further 323 requests were awaiting a decision.

In responding to the second part of your request, Table 1 shows the average waiting times for the Early Intervention Service (EIS) for the 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial years, as well as the waiting times as at 30 November 2018.

We acknowledge that waiting times for EIS are unacceptably high. We are actively working to reduce them and better meet the expectations of children, parents, caregivers and educators.

Budget 2018 provided additional funding of \$21.5 million over four years to address waiting lists and meet projected demand for early intervention services. Over 7,600 additional children will be supported over four years.

The funding boost will enable the Ministry to recruit additional front-line early intervention staff and increase the number of children with the highest needs supported through specialist early intervention providers. It will also fund 63 additional study awards and scholarships with the goal of growing the number of specialists in early intervention.

Additional early intervention staff are being recruited, but it will take time for the effects of this to impact waiting times for families

Table 1 - Average EIS wait times (days) by Region

Region	Average wait time (days) for the Early Intervention Service			
	2015/16 FY	2016/17 FY	2017/18 FY	30 Nov 2018 YTD (1 July 2018 to 30 Nov 2018)
Tai Tokerau	59.00	61.85	85.27	82.52
Auckland	86.72	72.06	89.41	95.81
Waikato	67.37	62.17	90.23	92.94
Bay of Plenty/Waiariki	177.84	77.19	86.19	109.24
Hawkes Bay/Tairāwhiti	77.48	84.80	94.14	80.64
Taranaki/Whanganui/Manawatu	89.26	71.15	87.27	122.03
Wellington	135.03	130.90	193.19	177.96
Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast	33.92	49.40	60.38	40.86
Canterbury/Chatham Islands	65.65	69.49	104.08	93.14
Otago/Southland	84.05	54.79	74.32	75.99
National	82.53	73.35	97.52	102.15

Table 2 shows that demand for the EIS has grown, and that we are providing service to more young children than ever before. In the first five months of the 2018/19 financial year (1 July 2018 -30 Nov 2018), 10,986 children received support from the EIS. This is a 4.4% increase on the number of children (10,523) who were supported by the EIS over the same period last year.

Table 2 – Total number of children supported by the EIS each financial year

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
No. of children supported by the EIS	13,273	13,243	14,026	13,929	14,414

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes responses under the Act on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your request. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Wales', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Wales
Acting Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support

Released under the Official Information Act 1982