



- 4 SEP 2018

Katrina Bevan

fyi-request-8361-a13e8461@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Katrina

Thank you for your email of 20 July 2018 requesting the following information:

"As you know legislation says you do not have to enrol a child into school until aged 6.

- 1. Can you please release to me the advice you have received, and from whom, upon which you relied, to formulate your departments decisions to continue the practise of staff to cut funding an ESW (Education support workers) for a child in ECE after they turn 5 years and remain in ECE to 6 years?*
- 2. Could you also please release to me the advice you receive on the rationale of the Ministry of education practise to prioritise ESW funding based on age, (eg; current MOE practise is priority funding is for a 3year old child) and articulate how that advice takes into account a child may not be adequately diagnosed until optimal age of 4 to 7 years?*
- 3. Could you please release to me the advice you receive in education to what degree is a prioritised child's needs based on identified diagnosed persistent disability by age, 0-3, 3-5 and 5-6 and provide the statistics for this range including ethnicity, region and type of diagnosed disability."*

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Education Support Worker resource

The Education Support Worker (ESW) resource can be part of an early intervention team to support the inclusion and individual plans of children with the highest level of needs in early childhood education programmes.

Each Ministry of Education (Ministry) region manages their own ESW budget and uses the Ministry's internal guidelines to allocate ESW support. ESW funding is not automatically 'cut' when a child turns five. The guidelines recommend that priority be given to children aged three to five. However, in exceptional circumstances managers can approve the allocation of ESW beyond five. There needs to be an individual plan in place that includes plans for transition to school at a time that is in the best interest of the child as agreed with the collaborative team. The resource can be used by managers in the regions flexibly on a case by case basis.

The guidelines recommend a maximum of 15 hours of ESW support per week to support the inclusion of children with the highest level of needs in licensed early childhood programmes. There is no standard allocation as every child is different. There will be times when a child needs more support and times when they need less. Decisions about the type and level of support a child needs is a collaborative process with whānau, educators and specialist providers. Children will have a plan, developed collaboratively with the team around the child and that same team will monitor the level of resourcing and determine if it is appropriate to meet the goals set in the plan. The allocation of ESW assistance is carefully managed to enable the maximum number of children to get the right support.

In response to all three parts of your request for formal advice I have received on the basis for and application of the ESW resource, I have not received any such advice therefore I am refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Act on the basis that *the information requested does not exist*.

However, I did receive background information from the Ministry as per a request from a Member of Parliament's office with regards to funding and calculation process for the ESW resource in the early childhood education and school environments. I include this document.

The Ministry provides support on the basis of educational need rather than a particular diagnosis. The Ministry does not collect data on the diagnosed disabilities of children by age range. As such, I am refusing part 3 of your request under section 18(e) of the Act on the basis that *the information requested does not exist*.

Thank you again for your email. 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.

If you have further questions about the ESW resource, please don't hesitate to contact David Wales, National Director Learning Support, at david.wales@education.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CHIPKINS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

RAPID RESPONSE

Drafter: Julie Houghton
Metis Number: 1138418
File Reference: IM60/116/53/3
Date: 13 July 2018

Request:

Minister Hipkins' office has received a request from an MP's office for the following information about Education Support Workers (ESWs):

1. How is funding calculated for an ESW in an ECE environment when the child turns five?
2. Is the funding calculated based on the school term or the ECE requirements?
3. What is the process for the ECE/whānau to apply for the funding for an ESW in an ECE?

Response:

1. How is funding calculated for an ESW in an ECE environment when the child turns 5?
 - The Ministry has a set budget for early intervention services, which includes ESWs. Through this, we employ 150-160 full time equivalent (425 head count) ESWs and fund 184 early childhood and specialist service providers to provide support directly.
 - The ESW resource can form part of an early intervention team to support the inclusion and individual plans of children with the highest level of needs in ECE programmes. Not all of the children receiving an early intervention service are provided with or require support worker assistance.
 - The Ministry's *National Education Support Worker Guidelines (2012)* recommend a maximum allocation of 15 ESW hours per week to support the inclusion of children with the highest level of needs in licensed early childhood programmes. The guidelines were developed collaboratively with a representative from other Ministry funded Specialist Service providers (who they nominated themselves).
 - Decision making about the support a child needs is a collaborative process with whānau, educators and specialist providers and is linked to the child's individual plan.
 - Each region manages their own ESW budget and use the ESW guidelines to allocate ESW support. The ESW guidelines recommend that priority be given to children aged three to five. However, in exceptional circumstances managers can approve the allocation of ESW beyond five. There needs to be an individual plan in place that includes plans for transition to school at a time that is in the best interest of the child as agreed with the collaborative team. The resource can be used by managers in the regions flexibly on a case by case basis.
 - The allocation of ESW assistance is carefully managed to enable the maximum number of children get the right support.

2. Is the funding calculated based on the school term or the ECE requirements?
 - Funding is calculated on the basis of the school terms. Once again decision making about the support a child needs as part of their plan is a collaborative process with whānau, educators and specialist providers.

3. What is the process for the ECE/whānau to apply for the funding for an ESW in an ECE?
 - The ESW resource can form part of an early intervention service, it is not a service in itself. Our specialists work with whānau and educators to identify what supports are required. For some children, this will include an application for an ESW to support the implementation of the plan and inclusion.
 - Early childhood services and/or family and whānau can always contact their lead worker or their local Ministry of Education office if there are any concerns with their current level of support.
 - The Ministry is committed to maximising the educational benefit of the ESW resource for the maximum number of children and to work with early childhood services and families in that process.
 - Where possible we encourage all children to start school with their age peers. This is underpinned by a strong body of evidence related to successful transition and future inclusion and lifelong learning.