Briefing Note: Learning Support Written Parliamentary Questions Data Amendments Required

To: Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education
Date: 10 September 2019

Security Level: In Confidence
Drifter: Blythe Wood
Key Contact: Susan Howan
Messaging seen by Communications team: No

Priority: High
METIS No: 1204762
DDI: 59(2)(a)
Round Robin: No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note that the Ministry has identified that it has underreported data related to Learning Support specialist FTE for December 2016 and March 2019, and this data has been used in recent parliamentary questions related to workforce.

Agree that this briefing will be proactively released.

Agree / Disagree

Summary

• The Ministry has identified that it underreported data related to Learning Support specialist FTE for December 2016 and March 2019. This data was originally used in responses to four written parliamentary questions (WPQs) on 30 April 2019. These were then used in or referred to in a further eight WPQs. Six WPQs will require data to be revised.

• You have referenced an additional 120 FTE Learning Support Specialists employed between December 2017 and March 2019 on several occasions including in your replies to Oral Questions 11 (1 May) and 10 (2) 2019, as well in WPQs 17903, 17904 and 18986. The 120 FTE was a rounded figure and we do not believe this requires amendment except for the detailed regional breakdown in 17904.

• The Ministry identified this underreported data when preparing information for recent OIAs.
Underreporting resulted from human error made at the time the data was extracted, and was not put through quality assurance and peer review process. The corrected WPQs can be found in Annex 1.

Katrina Casey  
Deputy Secretary  
Sector Enablement and Support  
10/9/2019

Hon Tracey Martin  
Associate Minister of Education  
10/9/19
Background

1. Between 26 September 2018 and 27 June 2019 you and Ministers Hipkins and Davis on your behalf, have responded to 137 written parliamentary questions (WPQs) and four oral PQs relating to the Early Intervention Service.

2. When compiling data for a recent OIA we become aware that we had not captured all specialist staff employee categories for two data points, December 2016 and March 2019, which we have previously provided to you in response to WPQs. On both occasions, the total number counted was an underreporting of the specialist workforce at these times.

3. We have analysed the text of all WPQ and Oral PQ transcripts in Hansard to identify any replies whether the data was used. The original data was produced for, and included in replies to, four of the 23 WPQs asked on 30 April 2019. It was then used or referenced in replies to eight subsequent WPQs. Six of the responses require amendment. The information was used by you to reference the additional 120 FTE between December 2017 and March 2019 in your replies to Oral Questions 11 (1 May) and Question 10 (2 May). The information is now in the public domain.

4. The original underreporting at the December 2016 data point relates to the exclusion of some fixed term employees when the data was collated. The original response underreports the number of specialists by 36.94 FTE.

5. The corrected December 2016 data shows an increase in FTE compared to December 2015. The data then shows a decline at December 2017 and by December 2018 there was a significant increase in specialist staffing. This has continued at the next data point, March 2019.

6. The original underreporting provided for March 2019 relates to the number of secondments that should have been reported. The original response underreports the number of specialists by 2.4 FTE. This means that the total increase in specialist staffing since the Government has been in place has increased by a further 2.4 FTE to 123.8 FTE.

How did this underreporting occur?

7. The underreporting can be ascribed to human error. Our investigations indicate that errors were made extracting the data from large spreadsheets, and the extraction was not quality assured by a data specialist before being provided to your office. This resulted in some secondments and fixed-term employees not being counted in the data provided. Hence the underreporting of December 2016 and March 2019 data.

8. We have two pending OIAs requesting the originally supplied summary FTE data. A ‘decision’ has been provided to the one due this week. We will consult with you on the final data prior to providing this.

Use of the data

9. We have reviewed Hansard on Oral Questions and we can find no record that you have explicitly referred to the originally supplied December 2016 written data in the House.

10. You have referred on several occasions to an increase of 120 FTE (rounded from 121.4 FTE) more specialists since the current Government has been in place. On reviewing the data this number has increased by a further 2.4 FTE, making the total increase 123.8 FTE. The 120 FTE was a rounded figure and we do not believe this requires correction.
Next Steps

11. We have provided revised responses to WPQs for you to table in the House.

12. We have strengthened our processes and verification for providing workforce data and analysis for any future requests to ensure that these are quality assured by data specialists.

13. This includes a joint agreement between Ministry business units including process steps to commission, quality assure and have in place senior sign-off before we can use the data externally.

14. Internal audit will review the quality assurance processes used by Learning Support to record, review, and report on data sources (from different data sources) used by Learning Support delivery to assess and identify where there are control gaps or weaknesses that may be contributing to the cause of errors so that these can also be addressed.

Proactive Release

15. 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.

Annexes

Annex 1: Amended Written Parliamentary Questions

Annex 2: Possible Question and Answers
Reference only – not for submission

Annex 1: Amended Written Parliamentary Questions

Corrected Data
Below are the full tables of the WPQs that had data underreported, with the amended figures in bold.

16749 (2019)
Nicola Willis to the Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin) (30 Apr 2019): How many of each of the following category of early intervention specialists does the Ministry of Education employ and how do those numbers compare with previous years: Advisors on deaf children, early intervention teachers, education support workers, Kaitakawaenga, psychologists, speech-language therapists?

Hon Tracey Martin (Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin)) replied: I am advised that the attached table shows the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) number of Advisors on Deaf Children, Early Intervention Teachers, Support Workers, Kaitakawaenga, Psychologists and Speech-Language Therapists employed by the Ministry, as at 31 March 2019, and compared to the December totals for the last 3 years.

The only specialist role that works exclusively in early intervention is an Early Intervention Teacher. Other specialist staff are used flexibly across our supports for children and young people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dec-16</th>
<th>Dec-17</th>
<th>Dec-18</th>
<th>31 Mar-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor on Deaf Children</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention Teacher</td>
<td>115.5</td>
<td>116.5</td>
<td>144.0</td>
<td>146.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaitakawaenga</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>474.0</td>
<td>181.3</td>
<td>177.2</td>
<td>186.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Language Therapist</td>
<td>247.0</td>
<td>260.8</td>
<td>283.0</td>
<td>304.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Worker</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>133.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Background:
The number of Education Support Workers (ESWs) providing support varies throughout the year. Currently ESWs are funded on the basis of school terms (40 weeks), so we would expect to see fewer numbers in December than in March. Our Budget 19 Early Intervention Bid seeks to bring ESW funding to 50 weeks per year, which would better align it with Early Learning Service opening practices.

Note:
This response differs to the original submitted. When undertaking work for subsequent OIAs we discovered that some fixed term employees had not been included in the December 2016 calculation, resulting in the reported number of specialist staff FTE being understated. Also for March 2019, some secondments were left out of calculations, resulting in the reported number of specialist staff FTE being understated.
16750 (2019)
Nicola Willis to the Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin) (30 Apr 2019): How many specialist early intervention staff are currently employed by the Ministry of Education and how does this compare with each of the past five years?

Hon Tracey Martin (Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin)) replied: I am advised that the Early Intervention Service workforce includes Early Intervention Teachers, Psychologists, Speech-Language Therapists, Advisors on Deaf Children, Education Support Workers and Kaitakawaenga. Most of these roles work across early learning and school settings and most vacancies for specialist staff are not tagged to specific specialist services. The only specialist role that works exclusively in early intervention is an Early Intervention Teacher.

Our specialist staff are used flexibly across our supports for children and young people. The attached table shows the overall number of Learning Support specialist staff and Support Workers currently employed by the Ministry of Education, and how this compares to each of the past five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dec 14</th>
<th>Dec 15</th>
<th>Dec 16</th>
<th>Dec 17</th>
<th>Dec 18</th>
<th>Mar 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specialist staff</td>
<td>775.3</td>
<td>768.3</td>
<td>756.5</td>
<td>793.4</td>
<td>865.6</td>
<td>910.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>793.4</td>
<td>865.6</td>
<td>910.4</td>
<td>912.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Workers</td>
<td>118.1</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>133.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>874.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1045.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>893.4</td>
<td>858.7</td>
<td>837.4</td>
<td>851.9</td>
<td>942.9</td>
<td>1043.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>874.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1045.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Numbers of Support Workers vary to meet demand during the year.
This is also my response to PQ 16858 (2019).

Note
This response differs to the original submitted. When undertaking work for subsequent OIAs we discovered that some fixed term employees had not been included in the December 2016 calculation, resulting in the reported number of specialist staff FTE being understated. Also for March 2019, some secondments were left out of calculations, resulting in the reported number of specialist staff FTE being understated.
16752 (2019)

Nicola Willis to the Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin) (30 Apr 2019): How many staff employed by the Ministry of Education provide early intervention support work directly with children and how many work in co-ordination or management roles?

Hon Tracey Martin (Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin)) replied: I am advised that the Early Intervention Service workforce includes Early Intervention Teachers, Psychologists, Speech-Language Therapists, Advisors on Deaf Children, Education Support Workers and Kaitakawaenga. Most of these roles work across early learning and school settings and most vacancies for specialist staff are not tagged to specific specialist services. The only specialist role that works exclusively in early intervention is an Early Intervention Teacher.

Our specialist staff are used flexibly across our supports for children and young people. The attached table shows the overall number of Learning Support specialist staff and support workers that work directly with children across the Ministry’s specialist services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dec 14</th>
<th>Dec 15</th>
<th>Dec 16</th>
<th>Dec 17</th>
<th>Dec 18</th>
<th>Mar 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Support specialist staff FTE</td>
<td>775.3</td>
<td>768.3</td>
<td>756.5</td>
<td>789.0</td>
<td>865.6</td>
<td>940.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Workers FTE</td>
<td>118.1</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>133.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>893.4</td>
<td>858.7</td>
<td>837.4</td>
<td>851.9</td>
<td>942.9</td>
<td>1043.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, as at 31 March 2019 the Ministry employed 96.7 FTE staff to provide coordination or management of Learning Support services. This figure does not include Business Support staff.

Note

This response differs to the original submitted. When undertaking work for subsequent OIAs we discovered that some fixed term employees had not been included in the December 2016 calculation, resulting in the reported number of specialist staff FTE being understated. Also for March 2019, some secondments were left out of calculations, resulting in the reported number of specialist staff FTE being understated.
16853 (2019)
Nicola Wills to the Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin) (30 Apr 2019): How many additional front-line early intervention staff have been recruited since Budget 2018 funding for the Early Intervention Service became available on 1 July 2018 as at 2 April 2019?

Hon Tracey Martin (Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin)) replied: I am advised that the Early Intervention Service specialist workforce includes Early Intervention Teachers, Psychologists, Speech-Language Therapists, Advisors on Deaf Children and Kaitakawaenga. Most of these roles work across early learning and school settings and most vacancies for specialist staff are not tagged to specific specialist services. The only specialist role that works exclusively in early intervention is an Early Intervention Teacher.

Since 1 July 2018, we have increased our overall specialist services workforce from 846.8 FTE to 912.8 FTE as at 31 March 2019 (an increase of 66 FTE).

Note
This response differs to the original submitted. When undertaking work for subsequent OIAs we discovered that some secondments had not been included in the March 2019 figure, resulting in the reported number of specialist Early Intervention Teacher FTE being understated.
17904 (2019)
Nicola Willis to the Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin) (09 May 2019): Does she stand by her statement that “we have hired another 120 specialists in this area” and if so, how does that number break down by region and date of hire?

Hon Tracey Martin (Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin)) replied: I stand by my statement that “120 specialists have been employed in specialist services”, which refers to the increase in specialist FTEs between December 2017 and March 2019 across all Learning Support specialist roles.

I am advised that the attached table shows the increase in specialist roles broken down by region. The Ministry is unable to provide this data by date of hire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Change in Learning Support specialist FTE between December 2017 and March 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tai Tokerau</td>
<td>+10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>+29.5 +28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikato</td>
<td>+8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay of Plenty / Waiairiki</td>
<td>+14.8 +15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkes Bay Taïrāwhiti</td>
<td>+11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taranaki/ Manawatu/ Whanganui</td>
<td>+4.4 +5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>+16.5 +18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Marlborough West Coast</td>
<td>+4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury Chatham Islands</td>
<td>+15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago/Southland</td>
<td>+7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Office</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>+120.4 FTE +123.8 FTE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WPQs 17903 and 18986 only refer to 120 specialist FTE and do not require amendment.
19071 (2019)

Nicola Willis to the Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin) (22 May 2019): Can she confirm that the 120 specialists referred to in her answer to written question 17094 were hired to provide specialist learning support for all age groups and not just for those seeking early intervention support and if so, for each how many of those people were hired specifically to provide specialist early intervention support?

Hon Tracey Martin (Education (Associate Minister - Tracey Martin)) replied: I am advised that the Ministry of Education's specialist staff work flexibly across our learning supports for children and young people. Most of these roles work across both early learning and school settings, and most vacancies for specialist staff are not designated to specific specialist services. The only specialist role that works exclusively in early intervention is an Early Intervention Teacher.

Between December 2017 and March 2019, the number of Ministry of Education specialist staff increased by 120 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. 29.5 30.8 of these FTEs were Early Intervention Teachers.

Note

This response differs to the original submitted. When undertaking work for subsequent OIAs we discovered that some secondments had not been included in the March 2019 figure, resulting in the reported number of specialist Early Intervention Teacher FTE being understated.