SPECIAL EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

*Survey results*

*April 2015*

A national working group of early childhood education (ECE) organisations[[1]](#footnote-1) has been exploring issues for children who need extra support to successfully engage in learning.

The group is identifying strategies to better support children and families to participate in ECE and with the aim of influencing government policy settings and resourcing. In 2014/2015, 245 kindergartens completed a survey on the key issues for children who need extra support to engage in learning. This document presents key survey findings.

* 9% of children attending kindergartens in the survey are identified as needing extra support and 2% are identified as high needs.
* Among children needing extra support, speech and language is the most common issue for children, followed by issues around behavior. The most common support provided to children is a speech and language specialist, an Education Support Worker (ESW) or a teacher aide.
* Over half of kindergartens (55%) with children with special needs access an Early Intervention Teacher (EIT). Over half (54%) access an Education Support Worker (ESW).
* Teachers report that most EITs (31%) work one hour or less with children at the kindergarten and many teachers (17% responses) report that they do not know how many hours the EIT works. Teachers report that most ESWs (59%) work in the kindergarten between 3 and 7 hours per week.
* Most teachers do not feel the support is enough: 65% feel the ESW support is not enough and 55% feel the EIT support is not enough.

*When children are attending kindergarten 6 hours a day, and only receiving 1 hour support, that is leaving them vulnerable and limiting quality individual learning experiences - Teacher*

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| *\*most children have more than one issue.* | *Months to get an assessment is not good enough for children. Teachers, parents and children need strategies immediately. Long waits for intervention entrench disabilities. - Teacher* |

* Kindergarten teachers report making 1,918 referrals between 2012-2014. Referrals are most commonly linked to speech and language issues.

*\*children will usually have more than one issue.*

* 170 (69%) kindergartens report that referrals are not assessed by Special Education in a timely manner. One-third (33%) of teachers report it takes between 1-3 months for an assessment following a referral, nearly one-third (29%) report it takes between 3-6 months, and 4% report that it takes over a year for an assessment.
* Just over half of kindergartens in the survey are involved in the Incredible Years professional development programme. 85% of kindergartens using the Incredible Years programme indicated it was helpful.
* There is evidence of regional variation in access to special intervention support, length of time to be assessed, and professional development around special education issues.
* Teachers report that transitions to school for children with special needs are variable. There is some good communication, practices and shared understanding between schools and kindergarten, while others report poor, stressful transitions unsupported by a disjointed system of funding and service delivery.
* When asked “what is the one thing that would make a difference”, teachers reported more hours of support, reduced wait time between referral and action, and access to more effective, well-trained special education support staff.

*If a child is receiving support at ECE then this support often needs to continue into school…but funding in ECE works completely differently to funding in schools - there is no cohesion between the two. - Teacher*

The working group will be publishing a report in May 2015.

**For more information about the Special Education Working Group visit:** [**http://www.nzkindergarten.org.nz/Special%20Education/special-education**](http://www.nzkindergarten.org.nz/Special%20Education/special-education)

1. New Zealand Kindergartens and EC Leadership. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)