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EVALUATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IN SCHOOLS PILOT

8 February 2023

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EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IN SCHOOLS PILOT EVALUATION

Unemployment rates are relatively high for disabled people. In the year to June 2020, the unemployment rate for disabled people was 7.4% compared with 3.9% for non-disabled people. The Employment Service in Schools (ESiS) pilot was funded to help address the needs of young disabled learners in their last two years of school. The pilot aims to promote employment and employment-related training as best options, and increase work preparedness for learners when they leave school.

Eleven employment service agencies skilled in preparing people for work were selected to deliver the pilot services in parts of Auckland, Waikato, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago/Southland. These providers were contracted to work with learners to prepare them for employment through skill development and work experience or job trials. The pilot goals were to promote employment 'best options' for disabled learners, improve learners' self-belief and the broader support around the learner, and make a pathway to employment.

Why evaluate the pilot?

The evaluation evidence documents progress from September 2021 to June 2022. The Ministry wants to know about the effectiveness of the pilot in making a pathway towards employment for disabled learners. It also wants to understand the coherence of the delivery approach, how the pilot empowered learners and whānau, and how the pilot built strong, reciprocal relationships with communities, providers, learners and whānau. The evaluation assessed the pilot against these four success criteria, using the Evaluation Partnership Group's agreed expectations of success to guide our judgement. The evidence will be used to inform the Ministry of Social Development's decisions about the future delivery of the pilot.

How do we know it worked?

The evaluation used a range of evidence collected and collated at two points as the pilot was being delivered.

The evaluation evidence included:

Monthly student reports on all enrolled learners from April 2021 to March 2022, and June 2022.

Case studies around learners (n=5) and their whānau (n=3), and school staff and providers relevant to 3 schools in November 2021. In the following year, case studies around learners (n=27) and their whānau (n=4), and school staff and providers relevant to 6 schools (by July 2022).

Key stakeholder interviews with 7 government officials in 2021 and 3 government officials in 2022.

Narrative reports submitted by 29 ESiS providers.

Secondary documents including procurement and contractual documents, and information made available online.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

The pilot empowered learners

The pilot was easy to access for disabled learners, albeit the selection process likely affected which schools and learners took part. The activities focused on providing choice and options relevant for learners, reflecting a respectful approach.

The pilot built partnerships

The pilot was successful at identifying key relationships around the learner. Although engagement with some was limited, these partnerships were forged with whānau and employers, and networks within the school were built around the individual learner.

The pilot was coherent

The pilot was successful at providing a coherent service, aligning well with most Enabling Good Lives principles, and complementing existing services available to disabled learners within the schools. Most notably, the pilot service provided the time necessary to deliver relevant support for disabled learners to enable their pathway to employment.

The pilot was effective

The pilot was effective at supporting learners along their pathway to employment. The providers put significant effort into engaging and building the necessary relationships, and identifying options and solutions to enable disabled learners to work towards employment.

PROGRESS

332 LEARNERS IN 74 DIFFERENT SCHOOLS ENROLLED INTO THE PROGRAMME ACROSS 5 REGIONS

A partnership was formed across the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education to manage delivery of the pilot

The pilot service was designed and aligned to most of the Enabling Good Lives principles

The pilot was designed with broad learner eligibility criteria

Pilot providers were selected by the newly formed partnership

Ministry of Education regional officials selected schools, and schools selected learners

Schools selected providers and identified learners

Take-up varied by school type and learner ethnicity

NEARLY ALL LEARNERS WERE CONTINUING TO MAKE PATHWAYS TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT

Providers engaged with learners, providing choices and opportunities in a way that was relevant to them

Providers worked in partnership with whānau

Providers built connections with school staff

The pilot provided a coherent pathway relevant to learners in their last 2 years of school

Although there are a range of activities in school, the pilot provided the necessary employment-focused support for disabled people

Providers continued to encourage and enable learners on the pathway towards employment

Whānau engagement varied

Building relationships takes time

Distance and school timetables limited engagement opportunities

SOME LEARNERS REALISED WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES BY JUNE 2022

Providers identified work experience and training opportunities relevant to the learner

Providers built connections with employers

Providers, in some cases, secured work experience opportunities for the learner

Post-school support was not available through the service

Broad barriers for disabled people to engage in employment still exist

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2013 New Zealand Disability Survey estimated that nearly one in four New Zealanders have recognised limitations that cannot be eliminated by an assistive device. Although some services exist to support people living with disabilities, unemployment rates are nearly twice as high for people living with disabilities as for those without.

The Employment Service in Schools (ESiS) pilot aims to address the employment-related needs and goals of young disabled learners in their last two years of school. The ESiS goals are to promote employment and employment-related training as 'best options' for disabled learners; to improve learners' self-belief and work-preparedness and the broader support around the learner; and help learners make a pathway towards employment. In 2020, 11 employment service agencies were selected to deliver pilot services across selected regions in New Zealand, and these service providers began engaging with learners from 2021.

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) commissioned an evaluation to determine if the pilot:

- was **effective** at making progress towards the pilot goals from September 2020 to June 2022

- was delivered in a **coherent** way, aligning with the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) principles and alongside activities within schools for learners and whānau

- built strong, reciprocal **partnerships** with communities, providers, learners and whānau

- **empowered** learners and whānau.

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach and collected and collated data at two points during the pilot implementation. Programme administrative data were collated and analysed, and included monthly student reports on all enrolled learners, narrative reports submitted by ESiS providers, and secondary documents such as procurement and contracting documents. Key stakeholder interviews were undertaken with MSD and Ministry of Education (MoE) officials, and one full Māori immersion secondary school. Case studies were conducted around the learners, including the learner and their whānau, school staff and employment consultant. The evidence was intended to inform MSD's decisions about future delivery of the pilot.

Findings

The pilot was found to meet expectations across all four success criteria: empowerment, partnership, coherence and effectiveness.

Empowerment

MoE regional staff recruited schools to take part in the pilot, sharing information with schools and supporting the initial school selection across the pilot regions. As the pilot progressed and gained recognition, schools began approaching officials about taking part rather than requiring initial engagement from MoE staff. By June 2022, 27% of eligible schools in five regions agreed to take part, and 76% of these schools enrolled 332 learners in the pilot. The lower-than-expected uptake among learners was likely due to the COVID-19 impact on schools during this period, and perhaps the varying interpretations of pilot eligibility. Although the eligibility criteria for the pilot was broad, the stigma associated with the term disability may have affected enrolments among learners that may otherwise be eligible.

The pilot appeared to be operating in an equitable way for Māori learners within engaged schools, at least insofar as enrolment, engagement and employment rates. However, only one of the 74 schools enrolling learners was a Māori medium school, and proportionally fewer isolated schools (with proportionally more Māori learners) were engaged in the pilot than the national average. It was suggested that service providers' ability to reach rural schools and engage in te reo Māori would strengthen service provision and enable fully equitable access for Māori learners.

The service delivery supported learners in a way that valued them and considered their specific needs and barriers. The pilot adopted an individualised, strengths-focused approach to support learners, catering for uniqueness while building learners' confidence and self-belief. While barriers such as digital accessibility and transport limited engagement and potential employment opportunities, ESiS providers sought ways to address specific needs.

Partnership

Government officials and ESiS providers' relationships were established at the beginning of the pilot, and the frequency and types of engagement evolved over time as they worked towards improving understanding of the pilot and strengthening the referral process. There was, however, a lack of partnership with Māori during the pilot design.

ESiS providers recognised the broad networks and relationships in the communities, as well as the strength of these connections, as imperative for successful delivery of the pilot. Providers built relationships with the learners, the school staff, and the community around the learner. ESiS providers developed connections to potential employers for the learner and provided advice to employers to enable opportunities. However, whānau engagement varied with only about half (56.2%) of learners' whānau being actively involved in the pilot service during June 2022. Engagements could have been constrained by limited school operating hours and the employment consultants' travel time, while school term breaks disrupted the continuity of engagements.

Coherence

The design of the pilot service aligns well with the EGL principles of person-centred, working towards ordinary life outcomes, mana enhancing, relationship building and ease

of use. The shortfall was alignment to the EGL principle of 'beginning early', as the pilot was specifically designed to help learners in their last two years of school. The pilot design could begin earlier in a learner's life. Further, the choice of provider was largely determined by the school rather than the learner and their whānau, which meant the approach was not fully realising the self-determination principle of EGL.

The pilot addresses a system gap and offers a unique employment service for disabled learners within the school context. The pilot affords the time to provide bespoke support to meet the unique needs of each enrolled learner. Further, the service benefits disabled learners who may not have been eligible for other disability services, or who may have been unable to fully benefit from other employment services due to their specific disability.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness within the programme was framed against the programme's aims of progress along a pathway to employment and employment-related goals for learners, rather than employment itself. The pilot made clear progress, with learners continuing to enrol in the pilot and receive support to make a pathway towards employment. Learners built confidence and self-belief in their employment potential. They identified opportunities and built skills, knowledge and connections towards their employment goals.

This pathway support was particularly valuable because employment can be challenging given the specific barriers relevant to this cohort of learners. The continued engagement is likely supported by the funding structure, which funds providers according to the number of supported learners rather than a specific number of engagements over time.

Work experience can be unique and challenging for this cohort of learners, yet about 10% of learners realised work experience opportunities by March 2022. Employment consultants' flexibility and relationships were key to support learners on their pathway, and learners' motivation and intent across the programme strongly influenced the progress they made.

Conclusions

Although there are clear gaps, ESiS was successful in meeting many of the expectations during the initial pilot delivery stage. The service brought together the support provided by schools, employers and other natural supports to promote and sustain employment for young disabled people. The service stimulated confidence and self-belief among those enrolled and promoted employment and employment-related training as best options to disabled learners. The pilot design enabled continued support for learners, helping them towards their employment-related goals.

INTRODUCTION

Disability and employment in New Zealand

The Office for Disability Issues notes that "disability is something that happens when people with impairments face barriers in society; it is society that disables us, not our impairments, this is the thing all disabled people have in common."[1] More specifically, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities says that disabled people include "…those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others…" (Article 1).

The 2013 New Zealand Disability Survey estimated that a total of 1.1 million (24%) New Zealanders were disabled.[2] This means that approximately one in four New Zealanders have recognised limitations in activities that cannot be eliminated by an assistive device. The term 'learning support' used within education encompasses the range of practices, systems, supports and services that help children and young people with diverse strengths and needs to experience success in their learning and relationships. Around one in five children and young people will need learning support at some time during their years at school. This might be because of disability, learning difficulties, disadvantage, physical or mental health, or behaviour issues.

Unemployment rates are relatively high for disabled people. In the year to June 2020, the unemployment rate for disabled people was 7.4%, compared with 3.9% for non-disabled people.[3] Disabled young people are even less likely to be employed or to be participating in education or training. Only 3% of disabled people were enrolled in non-compulsory education, in comparison to 12% of non-disabled people (Household Labour Force Survey, 2019).[4] In the year to June 2020, the not in employment, education or training (NEET) rate for disabled people aged 15-24 years was 48.2%, compared with 10.6% for non-disabled young people.[5]

The Employment Service in Schools pilot

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) funds an employment service to support disabled adults into open employment, paid at or above the minimum wage. Budget 2020 provided an additional $12.5 million over two years to expand and strengthen this service in response to COVID-19. A proportion, up to $2.5 million a year, is being used to invest in the Employment Service in Schools (ESiS) pilot to 30 June 2022, addressing the

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[1] https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/about-the-strategy/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2016-2026/read-the-new-disability-strategy/new-zealand-disability-strategy-read-online/who-we-are-our-community/, downloaded 27 July 2021.
[2] https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/disability-survey-2013, downloaded 7 July 2021.
[3] Ministry of Social Development, Requirements – Evaluation of the Employment Services in Schools Pilot for Disabled Students.
[4] Office of Disability Issues, https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/education/data-on-education/, downloaded 8 November 2022.
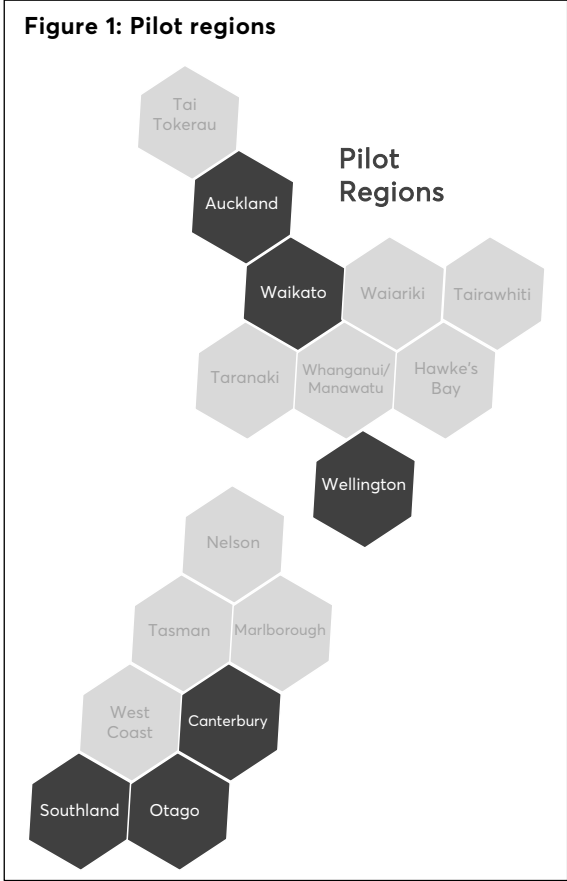[5] Statistics NZ Labour Market statistics (disability): June 2020 quarter, https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-disability-june-2020-quarter

needs of disabled learners in their last two years of school. From 1 July 2022, an additional $2 million is being invested in the ESiS pilot to 30 June 2023.

The pilot aims to promote employment and employment-related training as best options and increase work preparedness for learners when they leave school.[6] The eligibility criteria are broad. The service is available to the learners in New Zealand secondary schools in five regions[7] who are participating in the pilot. Eligible learners are those who have a disability or health condition that may include a mental health condition or neurodiversity, which is likely to continue for at least six months and means the learner will likely experience difficulty obtaining employment.

In 2021, 11 employment service agencies (herein, 'providers') were selected to deliver the pilot services in parts of Auckland, Waikato, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago/Southland.[8] These providers were skilled in preparing people for work and finding job opportunities.

Although the focus was on the learners, providers were expected to work with the 'natural supports' around the individual. They did this by encouraging the learners' family, whānau or 'aiga and school team to recognise employment as the best option after exiting school; helping learners maintain and extend social and support networks; and providing support to employers to ensure issues or barriers that might impede the employee's ability to remain in employment were addressed.

Figure 1: Pilot regions

Pilot Regions

Tai Tokerau
Auckland
Waikato · Waiariki · Tairawhiti
Taranaki · Whanganui/Manawatu · Hawke's Bay
Wellington
Nelson
Tasman · Marlborough
West Coast · Canterbury
Southland · Otago

MSD and Ministry of Education (MoE) with the New Zealand Disability Support Network and Imagine Better invited various stakeholders to a facilitated workshop to help identify how they could develop an effective service and work in partnership locally. More specifically, the workshops sought to discuss the new contract and identify:

- how groups could contribute to the success of the learners

- ways information, including personal and professional networks and resources, could be shared to support learners to get meaningful employment

- how the community could most effectively work together to create pathways that maximise the possibility for all learners leaving school to successfully enter employment.

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[6] ES in schools Registration of Interest (ROI)
[7] The pilot did not span across the full regions.
[8] Ministry of Social Development, Requirements – Evaluation of the Employment Services in Schools Pilot for Disabled Students

The workshops were held in five regions with secondary school educators, ESiS providers, learners and their whānau. These discussions were used to develop materials relevant to deliver the pilot (e.g. information sheets, application forms). Providers were contracted to work with learners, with the earliest enrolments commencing from April 2021. The providers' employment consultants focused on preparing learners for employment through skill development and work experience or job trials,[9] and specifically to help learners:

- identify what types of jobs they could do when they leave school

- find information to help them make decisions

- find out what type of work and job they would like

- create a CV

- get ready for interviews

- find work experience

- get a part-time job while at school.[10]

Although the pilot service was not required to place learners into permanent employment, this would be a welcome outcome. However, the pilot aimed to enable disabled young people to consider employment as an option and create a pathway towards it. As such, an 'effective' pilot is defined as making a pathway towards employment. Once in employment, the service provides support for learners and their employer to help them stay and progress in employment. [11]

The context

Since 2008, the New Zealand disability sector has been undergoing a major transformation process.

The New Zealand Government has historically funded a range of services and support for people with disabilities. However, in 2008, two landmark events occurred that broadly impacted many within New Zealand's disability sector. First, the Social Services Select Committee concluded its inquiry into the quality of care and service provision for disabled people. It found that people in support services often feel they have little control over the services they receive and made several recommendations to improve service provision.[12] Second, New Zealand ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (UNCRPD). This meant that the New Zealand Government committed to improving the outcomes of disabled people and their ability to participate fully in society. The New Zealand government is required to report regularly on its

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[9] [Employment service for secondary school learners with a disability or health condition - Work and Income](#), downloaded 6 July 2021.
[10] [Employment service for secondary school learners with a disability or health condition - Work and Income](#), downloaded 6 July 2021.
[11] Ministry of Social Development, Requirements – Evaluation of the Employment Services in Schools Pilot for Disabled Students.
[12] https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-NZ/48DBSCH_SCR4194_1/cb220d2e3ba25dc33dec0b28b29b30578d110dd5, downloaded 24 September 2022

progress towards implementing the UNCRPD to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

These two events cultivated an environment where, in 2011, the Minister for Disability Issues at the time asked the Ministry of Health and MSD to work with the disability community to develop an approach for change. This approach became known as Enabling Good Lives (EGL), and set out the principles of self-determination, beginning early, person-centred, ordinary life outcomes, mainstream first, mana enhancing, easy to use, and relationship building (c.f. Appendix A). In 2012, the Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues agreed to the EGL principles as the basis for change in the disability support system.[13]

More recently, on 1 July 2022, the Government formally launched Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People. Whaikaha will, "lead the realisation of a true partnership between the disability community and government and help drive ongoing transformation of the disability system in line with the EGL approach."[14]

The ESiS pilot was launched in February 2021 as a collaborative effort between MSD and MoE.

The delivery of the pilot services include partnership between these two agencies, engaging across both national offices and with the MoE regional offices and the ESiS providers. From April 2021, the providers started to engage with learners, bridging their support with both the learner and whānau within the school setting, while extending the existing support networks available to them.

This approach aligns with the multi-level partnerships expected of the EGL principles-based[15] change process. These partnerships include disabled people and their families being active partners with supports and not framed as passive recipients.[16] These multi-level partnerships also include joined-up government approaches to increase the ease for learners and families to access and use supports, as well as leadership and governance structures to reflect a tripartite partnership approach, i.e. Crown, Tāngata whaikaha Māori, and the disabled community.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the delivery of the pilot, with different regions having different impacts at various times.

Up to 2 December 2021, regional lockdowns were being issued in areas that had very high infection rates. The Government then introduced Omicron phases, with the focus shifting to testing and isolating individuals and household contacts as case numbers grew. Further, vaccinations were mandated and masks were required within school settings from 15 November 2021 until these mandates were narrowed on 4 April 2022. ESiS was being delivered throughout this period.

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[13] https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/other-initiatives/enabling-good-lives/egl-background-information/
[14] https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/disability-system-transformation/ministry-for-disabled-people-establishment-unit/index.html#CreatinganewMinistry2
[15] https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/
[16] There is close alignment between the EGL partnership approach and Whānau Ora, with Whānau Ora focused on improving the wellbeing of individuals in the context of their whānau, rather than simply focusing on the needs of individuals.

On 16 February 2022, while the pilot continued to provide support to learners, schools stayed open and offered hybrid learning but continued to be impacted by COVID and had staffing issues. Collectively this interrupted learner, whānau and school engagement with the pilot and the ability of providers to access and maintain engagement and progress service delivery in partnership with schools, learners and whānau.

The pilot operated within the context of schools and provision of learning support.

The context of New Zealand state schools is that they are owned and funded by the state and deliver education to the New Zealand national curriculum with governance being a local responsibility bestowed onto the school's Board. This localised decision-making means that schools decide which programmes are relevant to their school and how they participate in these programmes.

Schools offer a wide range of employment-focused supports and services for all learners. In terms of wider support available to improve secondary transition pathways, the MoE provides resourcing to schools, such as through the Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource, or specialist advice, such as through the Principal Advisers Secondary-Transitions. MSD also provides Education to Employment brokers who may be available to some learners.

Schools may promote courses for its learners who are, similar to ESiS, in their last two years of school. As an example, the MoE[17] makes available:

- Trades academies, whereby secondary school learners can access a blend of learning from the school curriculum, industry training and tertiary provision.

- Services academies, consisting of NCEA subjects at school as well as youth life skills and leadership courses run by the New Zealand Defence Force.

- Gateway funding, where learners in Years 11 to 13 can access structured workplace learning.

Further, Youth Guarantee courses are available for young people who have left school to support their progress towards higher level qualifications.

Although these supports and courses are available to learners, they do not explicitly cater for learners with disabilities, and some may even be limiting for people with physical disabilities (e.g. Services Academies). Further, learners with disabilities may be accessing other services available to support their specific learning needs (c.f. section 3.3).

Learners and their whānau need to navigate their pathway through and with these different services within schools. After school, different supports will be available. For instance, disabled people can attend vocational services or tertiary education with programmes and courses developed specifically for those who need support with their learning.

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[17] https://youthguarantee.education.govt.nz/initiatives/opportunities-at-school-and-beyond/, accessed 24 September 2022.

Further, the Youth Transition Services (YTS) initiative was established in 2004 to support the Government's goal of having all 15 to 19-year-old youth in work, education or training, or other activities that contribute to their long-term economic independence and wellbeing.[18] This service is available to school-leavers rather than those at risk of prolonged disengagement from work.

The MoE makes a wide range of services and support available for learners, teachers and whānau to meet learning support needs. A recent addition is the first tranche of Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs) who make sure that learners with mild to moderate, neurodiverse or high and complex learning support needs receive appropriate support when they need it.[19] Specialist services and specialist teachers are available to support learners with a wide range of needs and additional funding is provided for school-based supports.

Specific services and support, however, may not be available to all learners. For instance, the eligibility criteria may not be met for some learners (e.g. Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) is only available to learners with the highest ongoing levels of need for specialist support), or services may be time-limited, e.g. RTLBs mostly work up to Year 10). Although they will vary according to year level, learning supports do not provide employment service providers.

To support effective transition from school to adult life, MoE National Transition Guidelines for specialist educators, schools and parents have been developed. They provide best practice principles to ensure effective transition support is in place for children with learning support needs.[20]

The evaluation

The evaluation was commissioned by MSD to understand the **effectiveness** of the pilot, and specifically to identify and document the progress made toward the pilot goals from September 2020 to June 2022. The pilot goals were to promote employment 'best options', improve learners' self-belief and the broader support around the learner, and make a pathway to employment.

The evaluation was also commissioned to help understand the **coherence** of the delivery approach, as well as how the pilot built strong, reciprocal relationships with communities, providers, learners and whānau (**partnership**) and empowered learners and whānau (**empowerment**).

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[18] https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/yts-evaluation/yts-report-2008.pdf
[19] Ministry of Education. (2020). Learning Support Coordinator: A guide to the role.
[20] National Transition Guidelines for specialist educators, schools and parents, Guidelines for transitioning students with special needs from school to adult life, National Transition Guidelines for students with additional learning needs – Education in New Zealand, downloaded 14 November 2022.

? Key evaluation questions (KEQs)

1. To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals of:

   a. Promoting employment and employment-related training as best options to disabled learners and their family or whānau.

   b. Supporting disabled people to believe in their ability to obtain employment.

   c. Improving the support provided by schools, employers, and other natural supports to promote and sustain employment for disabled people.

   d. Supporting young people to achieve their employment-related goals.

EVIDENCE QUALITY OVERVIEW

Evaluation approach and methods

The evaluation was commissioned by MSD to document progress of the pilot and to inform decisions about the future delivery of services. The evaluation adopted principles from the utilisation-focused approach[21] and was designed to enhance the likely utilisation of the evaluation among users. Apart from the specific data collected and collated for use, the evaluation integrated specific activities to meet the intended users' needs in a timely manner. These activities included a staged data collection approach, integrating an evaluation partnership group (EPG) to help define success, make sense of and use the evidence as the evaluation was delivered, and using the synthesis approach (c.f. Appendix A).

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach to collecting and collating data across the design, management and delivery of services at two points in time across the implementation period. Considering the evidence twice allowed progress to be examined while enabling the evaluation activities to adapt (e.g. indicators and methods) throughout delivery.

The evaluation evidence, across two cycles of data collection, is summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Data collection and collation methods (rows) used across the two cycles of data collection

Methods	Cycle 1: Sept-Dec 2021	Cycle 2: May-Aug 2022
Secondary documents and data	- ESiS procurement and contracting documents - Provider narrative reports (n=26)[22] - Monthly student reporting on every enrolled learner (April to October 2021).	- Monthly student reports on all enrolled learners (April 2021 to March 2022) - Student monthly report (June 2022).
Key stakeholder interviews	- Staff at MSD (n=1) - MoE national office (n=2) - MoE regional office (n=4)	- MSD staff (n=1) - MoE national office (n=1) - MoE regional office (n=1) staff - One full Māori immersion secondary school (wharekura) (n=1) staff

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[21] Patton, Michael Quinn.(2008) Utilization-Focused Evaluation: 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications.
[22] Provider reports were available in 2021 only.

Methods	Cycle 1: Sept-Dec 2021	Cycle 2: May-Aug 2022
Case studies interviews: Wellington and Canterbury regions[23]	• Learners (n=5) at three schools and whānau (n=5) • Employment consultants (n=3)	• Learners (n=21)[24] at six schools and whānau (n=4) • Employment consultants (n=3)
Sense-making session	• EPG meeting	• EPG meeting

The available data were triangulated and synthesised to address the key criteria for success and answer the key evaluation questions. Further information on the evaluation criteria and methods used for this evaluation are included in Appendix A.

Evidence quality and use

The evaluation sought to inform future implementation of ESiS in New Zealand, and any future delivery of similar programmes contextualised within the school sector. Although this evaluation was relatively small, the evidence is documented so MSD (the intended audience) may build upon this experience more broadly.

For this context, the evaluation collated evidence to the following standards:

- **The evidence is sufficient for learning:** The evaluation focused on exploring context and meaning within the pilot, exploring what works in different circumstances and why. Although the data did not achieve saturation across these multiple contexts and methods, the data were sufficient to identify factors that may influence success (or otherwise) when implementing such a programme in the New Zealand education setting.

- **The evidence has limited generalisability:** Data were intended to be informative but would not likely be generalisable across all elements of the evaluation. The monthly student reports were provided for each learner, and therefore would represent the whole population of learners. However, there would be some limitations given variable detail in reporting among providers. The case studies demonstrate aspects of performance in relation to the selected individuals or region but will not be generalisable to the pilot.

- **The evidence is balanced:** The collective results provide a balanced picture of ESiS across the different roles, experiences and settings relevant to the first year of the pilot.

The quality of evidence used here was deemed appropriate for the agreed purpose of this evaluation, and the findings should be used in the context of these evidence standards.

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[23] The two regions included Canterbury (Rolleston, Hornby, Ashburton to Rangiora) given the region's relative maturity in terms of delivery, with the highest numbers of schools enrolled in the service and likely greatest opportunity to learn from cases, and the southern North Island (Wellington, Hutt Valley, Horowhenua) given accessibility to schools for the evaluation team and the COVID-19-related restrictions in travel. Both regions were discussed and confirmed with MSD and MoE.

[24] Only one student repeated the interviews between time periods. Two providers (the same personnel) and one Learning Support Coordinator were followed up for interviews in 2022. All other interviews were unique to each time period (the third provider repeated but with different personnel involved in the interviews in 2022).

FINDINGS

What we found

The pilot was found to meet expectations across all four criteria: empowerment, partnership, coherence and effectiveness. The results and evidence are presented below for each criterion. The salient themes that emerged from the data are presented as a series of findings (as bolded statements) to support a judgement on each established criterion. The evidence justifying each finding statement is summarised below the statement and highlights the source(s) of evidence: case study interviews (CS), key stakeholder interviews (KSI), secondary data, including provider narrative reports (NR) and monthly student reports (MR). Also included is information shared as part of the evaluation partnership group (EPG) meetings. The specific design documents, such as the procurement documents and contracts, as well as the wider literature are referenced in the footnotes.

1. Empowerment

ESiS providers are expected to support disabled people to believe in their ability to obtain employment. The evaluation looked at the extent to which providers' employment consultants are improving learners' self-belief, as well as ensuring the empowerment of these learners through the ESiS activities and processes. Empowerment is essential for the pilot to meet its goals to support disabled people to believe in their ability to obtain employment.

The synthesised case study, key stakeholder interview and the secondary data demonstrated that the pilot was **meeting expectations**[25] in terms of empowerment. This means that although the evidence highlighted some potential system gaps to achieving equitable access, the evidence consistently showed ease of access, choices available to learners and whānau, and learners being valued and respected.

The key findings and learning in terms of empowerment are summarised below.

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[25] The evaluation criteria were defined by the Evaluation Partnership Group at the outset of the evaluation, and the levels of success reflect the expectations of the pilot relevant to its size, scale and scope after the initial year of delivering the service.

The MoE regional staff worked to share information and to support school selection in five regions. By June 2022, 27% of all schools with learners in Year 11 and above had joined, and 76% of these schools (n=74) had one or more learners enrolled to receive the ESiS service, and in total 332 learners enrolled. The context influenced school enrolment in the following ways:

- Fewer isolated schools took part in the pilot, which was likely due to the ESiS providers' ability to travel to these more isolated schools.

- Learner enrolments were lower than expected, which was likely influenced by the broader COVID-19 operating environment as well as the stigma associated with 'disability' among learners, and school staff limited interpretation of those who may be eligible for the service.

Government officials took care to ensure Māori and Pacific learners could access the pilot, and that providers could provide a culturally responsive approach. One identified gap was that the pilot was not co-designed with and for Māori medium learning settings. Only one Māori medium school joined the pilot, and the rest were English or mixed medium learning settings.

Employment consultants provided services in a way that considered the learners' specific needs, providing a variety of options relevant to them while building the learners' confidence and self-belief. These empowering practices aligned with best practice principles. The context influenced delivery in the following ways:

- Digital accessibility limited engagement for some learners.

- Schools selected the ESiS provider(s) rather than the learner, which was necessary to ensure a manageable partnership approach between the provider and the school staff.

Each of these findings is presented as a subheading below, followed by the evidence that supports this finding.

Equitable and easy access

1.1. The MoE regional staff worked to share information and to support school selection.

The ESiS eligibility criteria requires that learners are, among other criteria, in a New Zealand secondary school.[26] This element of the pilot criteria highlights the school context and rationalises recruiting learners and delivering service within this school context.

Although the eligibility criteria are broad, the pilot was only available in some regions and some schools in each of those regions. This was due to budget availability and the

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[26] Outcome agreement for Employment Service in Schools.

intent to co-design the service and test delivery through the pilot to inform future provision. *"…Part of this additional funding, up to $2.5 million a year, is to be used to expand the service into schools. This means up to 500 young disabled people a year will receive employment support while at school …"* [27] An additional $2 million will fund ESiS from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

Five regions were selected to be part of the pilot, and the evaluation team discussed the process for selecting and engaging schools with regional staff in two of these five regions and with government officials. As reported by national office staff, regional MoE teams worked with schools to support the process of confirming pilot schools and kura, and the approach taken in each region varies slightly. The variations across regions, again reported by national office staff, reflect the nature of the local network of schools. In urban areas a small number of large schools with higher Māori and Pacific enrolments were approached and in other areas a higher number of smaller schools were approached. At the beginning the demand was unknown so initial pilot schools were identified and then others were added over time to try to balance provider capability and demand.

The MoE regional staff in the two case study regions reported identifying specific schools to approach in the first instance, using their local intelligence to identify schools. In one region, staff were invited to nominate a selection of schools, working with the manager learning support and the director of education (KSI). Both regions considered provider travel distances when identifying the schools to be invited to participate. One of these two regions looked at different types of schools, exploring schools in different areas and with different school populations. In each of these two regions, they worked with schools to confirm their interest in the pilot. Both regions shared information with schools, communicating with them to help them make an informed decision to take part in the pilot.

1.1. Unsolicited interest was coming from more schools as the pilot became more well known.

As the pilot progressed, more schools expressed an interest in the pilot, rather than requiring an initial engagement from the MoE regional staff (KSI). As reported by one government official, most of these schools joined the pilot, subject to agreement. This change suggests some interest among broader schools to be involved in ESiS, and this interest was coming from schools that were not initially engaged to be part of the pilot. The result suggests broader interest, but it was not clear if it was reasonably practical to include these interested schools given provider capacity and/or provider location.

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[27] Service and Contracts Management Evaluation Report Tender for Employment Service in Schools.

1.2.   In total, 27% of eligible schools in the five regions agreed to take part in the pilot by June 2022.

In 2021, across the five regions there were 362 schools and kura with students in Year 11 and above who could have been part of the pilot.[28] These schools had 116,868 learners enrolled from Year 11 and up, and 834 of these learners were enrolled in Māori medium education.

The regions were asked to identify pilot schools and not engage all schools. Of those schools that were eligible, 98 agreed to take part in the ESiS pilot by 20 June 2022 (SD) – i.e. 27% of all schools and kura who provide for this age range across the five regions.

1.3.   By 30 June 2022, 76% of the schools that agreed to take part had enrolled learners in the pilot, with sizeable variation in uptake among the regions.

Some schools that joined the pilot didn't make any learner referrals. By 30 June 2022, 74 pilot schools had referred learners for an ESiS service (76% of the pilot schools). Looking across the regions, 47% of all (45) schools and kura in Otago/Southland that had learners in Year 11 or above enrolled learners onto the pilot. This was followed by 36% of all (50) of the potential schools and kura in the Waikato region, and 23% and 18% of all of the potential schools and kura in the Wellington (66) and Canterbury (63) regions, respectively, enrolled learners onto the pilot. In Auckland, 7% of all (138) the potential schools and kura had enrolled learners by 30 June 2022. This was likely due to the region selecting only a portion of their region to implement the pilot. As reported by one government official, this community was selected as one that had large populations of Māori and Pacific learners.

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[28] Data was extracted and summarised by the Ministry of Education on 20 October 2022 as an "Education Data - Request for Information". The data are the MoE's July school roll returns. The information was used to support the Budget Bid process, and this data was also provided to the evaluation team on 27 October 2022.

Figure 2: ESiS pilot delivery across five regions as of 30 June 2022, *source: monthly student report (30 June 2022) and MSD's Employment service for secondary school students online information[29]*
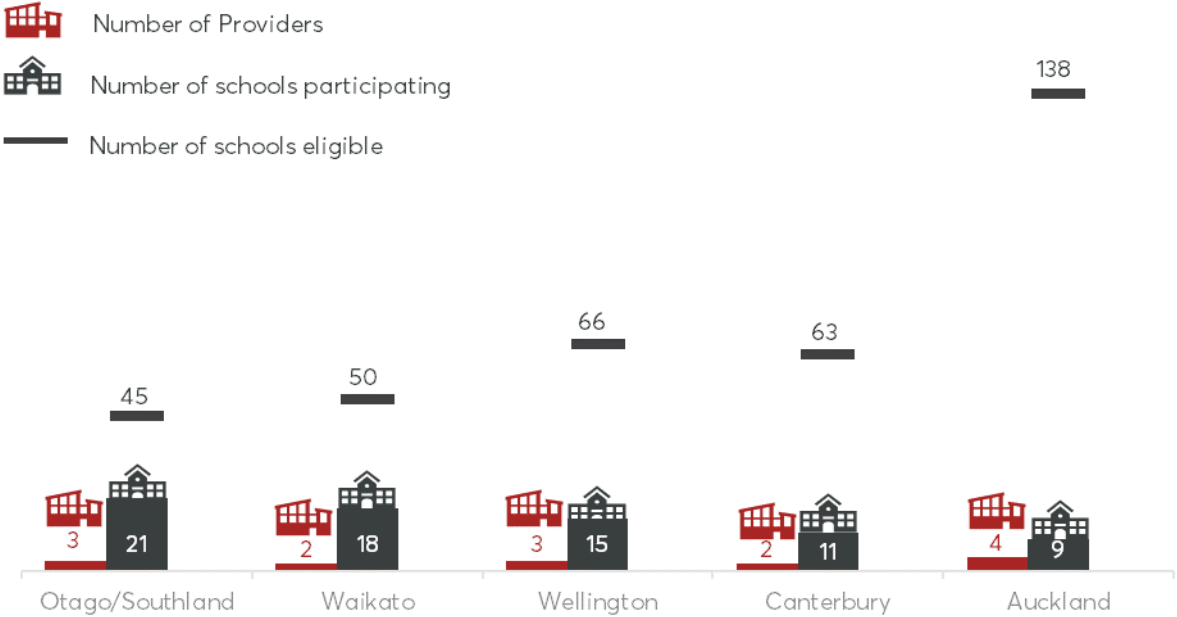
It seems reasonable that COVID-19 impacted on school engagement, particularly in Auckland, given the extensive regional lockdowns occurring in Auckland throughout 2021. It should be noted that although there was a slowing down, at least as far as learner referrals during late 2021 (c.f. finding 4.1), there was not a dramatic increase in school and learner enrolments from January to June 2022 (MR). This suggests that factors other than regional lockdowns could likely have influenced uptake over this full period, and these factors could include, for instance, local isolation due to COVID-19, the school recruitment process and/or school interest.

1.4.   Proportionally fewer isolated schools than the national average, and only one was a Māori medium school engaged in the pilot.

Only one of the 74 schools enrolling learners in the pilot was a Māori medium school (wharekura) (1.4%). This was despite the 34 Māori medium education kura (9.4%) providing for learners in Year 11 and up in these five regions.[30] One key official interviewed noted that a missing point in the design and delivery was Māori partnership (KS).

The 74 schools that had referred learners for an ESiS service were proportionally less isolated than the full population of New Zealand schools. What is shown below is that 77% of ESiS schools are located in areas with an isolation index of 1 or lower, demonstrating less distance from the centre of highly populated areas. This is notably higher than all New Zealand schools, with 58% sitting this close to centres of highly

[29] https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/work/health-and-disability-job-support/employment-service-in-schools.html, downloaded 17 August 2022.
[30] Data was extracted and summarised by the Ministry of Education on 20 October 2022 as an "Education Data - Request for Information".

populated areas. This is likely to be due to the way in which schools were recruited (at least for the two regions engaged in the case studies), which took into account the providers' ability to reach the schools (KSI). It should be remembered that, as a pilot, the service did not set out to reach all schools. Nevertheless, when compared to Pākehā learners (2%), larger proportions of Māori learners are in rural schools that provide for secondary school-aged children (7%)[31]. Providers' reach to rural schools is therefore important to consider equitable access to the service.

Figure 3: Distribution of schools by isolation index, comparing ESiS schools to all schools in New Zealand, *source: monthly student report (30 June 2022); New Zealand School Directory (25 August 2022)*
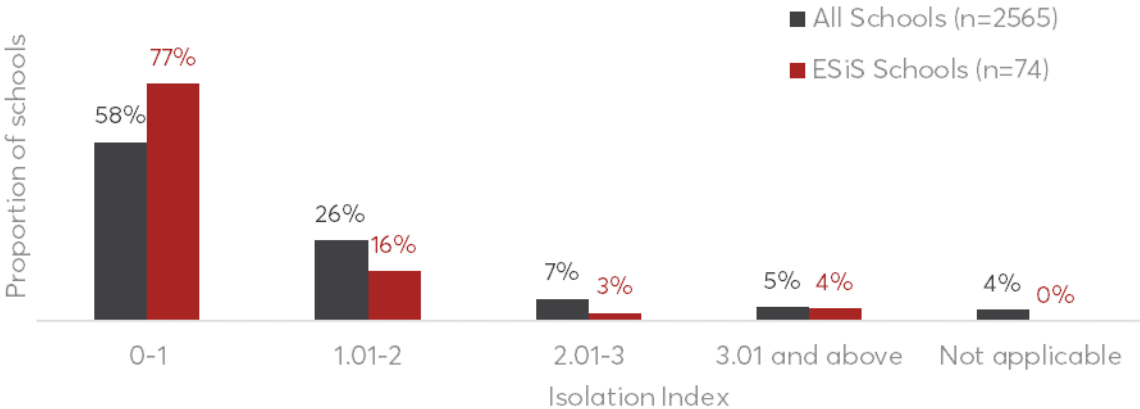
1.5.   Learner eligibility criteria were broad.

The pilot set out to enable equitable access among eligible learners. As noted elsewhere, the secondary documents make clear that the pilot service was available to those individuals that have a disability, health condition, mental health condition or are neurodiverse, and this condition would likely continue for a minimum of six months and present a barrier to employment.[32]

All those engaged in the evaluation process agreed the criteria were broad, particularly when compared to other services available for disabled people (KSI, CS, EPG). For example, the Ministry of Education's ORS is only available to provide additional support for young people with the highest level of need that require high levels of specialist support or significant adaptations of the curriculum.[33] As reported by key stakeholders, the pilot was designed with this broad definition in mind, so that it reaches more disabled learners than other supports can.

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[31] New Zealand School Directory (25 August 2022) ethnicity statistics relevant to school types that provide for learners in their final two years of school - composite, contributing, correspondence and secondary schools, and special schools and teen parent units.
[32] The only exceptions to the eligibility criteria were those that qualified for support to transition from school that is funded by the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), or if they are currently accessing MSD-funded transition services.
[33] For further information, see Ministry of Education ORS funding, https://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/ors/criteria-for-ors/

1.6.   Learners were largely identified by school staff.

Various people are able to identify eligible learners, noting that *"Parents, whānau and schools are best placed to identify learners who are most likely to benefit from the service."[34]* However, in practice school staff had a key role in sharing information and connecting learners to the service. The case studies and key stakeholder interviews with the wharekura highlighted how school staff selected learners. Some school staff identified learners as those not eligible for other options, such as school-based Gateway, or if they were not ready for employment (CS). Other staff identified learners more broadly, according to those that "may benefit" from the initiative, introducing learners with various barriers to employment (e.g. dyslexia, epilepsy) (KSI). The broad criteria and the interpretations of eligibility could likely have shaped who was referred onto the pilot.

1.7.   By 30 June 2022, 332 learners were enrolled.

Figure 4 shows that there were 332 learners that were in some way enrolled[35] in the pilot service by 30 June 2022. This number of enrolments (n=332) falls short of the original aim to engage up to 1,000 students[36] enrolled in a New Zealand secondary school.

Figure 4: ESiS enrolled learners across five regions (as of 30 June 2022), *source: monthly student report 30 June 2022*

Otago/Southland	Waikato	Wellington	Canterbury	Auckland
87	77	78	40	49
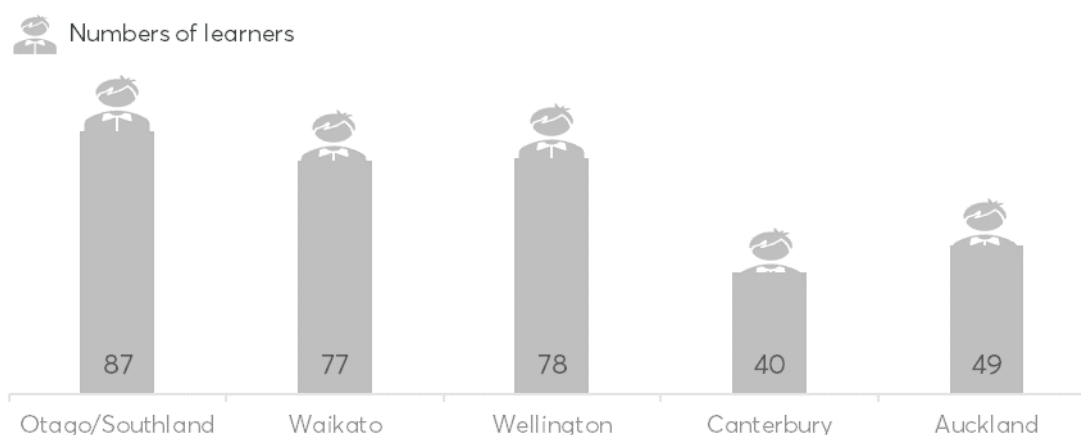
The lower-than-expected uptake was believed to be due to COVID-19 impacts on schools, as discussed previously, as well as school staff understanding about eligibility to the pilot, and the widely used term "disability".

The need to strengthen communications during the pilot to target different people within the school and around the learner was identified (EPG). In 2022, in response the MoE reported that they had updated communications with schools, aiming to increase the number of learners referred. As suggested by the Ministry, these communications drew attention to the types of need covered by the pilot and identified those in the school that might be involved in identifying eligible learners.

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[34] https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/programmes-and-projects/employment-service-in-schools.html, retrieved 17 August 2022.
[35] They were provided with a client number
[36] Ministry of Social Development, Requirements – Evaluation of the Employment Services in Schools Pilot for Disabled Students

1.8. Enrolment was easy, with learners completing the enrolment forms with support from different people.

The enrolment forms are completed by the learner, and parents, caregivers or whānau who would formally give their consent, while an authorised person at the school endorsed the application.[37] As reported by a key stakeholder, learners typically returned the form to a selected provider or school in each area. In some cases the employment consultants completed the forms with learners, and in other cases the school completed the form (CS). The process, without exception, was considered easy by those engaged in this process (CS, KSI).

The different approaches to completing the forms may influence who takes part or doesn't take part. For instance, some individuals may not follow through with completing the forms if required to do this independently, and therefore may miss out on receiving valuable support. For other individuals who may not have a real interest in taking part, they may be enrolled by someone else and not engage. Individual motivation is a key theme highlighted for successful engagement (c.f. finding 4.7), and highlights why learners' involvement in the consent process is important.

1.9. When compared to the national averages of learners' ethnicities, similar proportions of Māori learners were enrolled in the pilot while proportionally more Pākehā learners and fewer other ethnicities were enrolled.
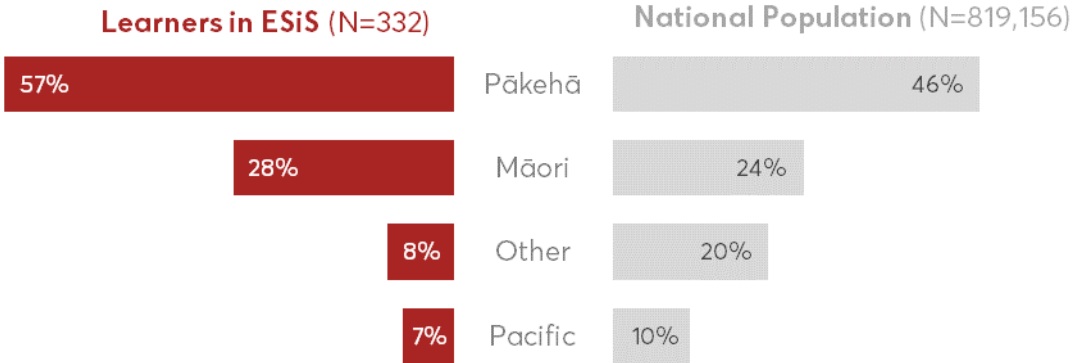
The secondary data and monthly student reports showed some difference between the demographics of the learners participating in the pilot, and the broader population of learners. When examining the ethnicity of those learners enrolled in the pilot using the student reporting dataset (as of 30 June 2022) and the New Zealand school directory roll returns,[38] the pilot was shown to enrol similar proportions of Māori learners (28%) as the national average in relation to the wider school population (24%). Although similar proportions of Māori learners were enrolled, few full Māori immersion schools were engaged (c.f. finding 1.5).

The data also showed that proportionally more Pākehā learners (57%) and proportionally less 'other' learners enrolled in the pilot than the national averages (46% and 20%, respectively).

[37] https://workandincome.govt.nz/documents/forms/employment-service-in-schools-referral-form.pdf, retrieved 17 August 2022.
[38] Student Rolls by School 2010-2021, Education Counts https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/6028, retrieved 27 August 2022.

Figure 5: ESiS pilot participants according to primary ethnicity, in comparison to the national average, source: monthly student report 30 June 2022; New Zealand Student Roll by School as of 1 July 2021

Learners in ESiS (N=332)   National Population (N=819,156)

	Learners in ESiS		National Population
Pākehā	57%		46%
Māori	28%		24%
Other	8%		20%
Pacific	7%		10%

These other ethnicities can include a variety of ethnicities. The New Zealand school roll, for learners aged 14 and above, shows that the largest ethnic group in this category in 2022 was Asian (14.9% of the school population), followed by a notably smaller proportion of MELAA – Middle Eastern, Latin American and African (2.4% of the school population).[39]

Culture and ethnicity are important to consider in terms of equitable access particularly given the racial and cultural considerations that often surround and pervade how one's conception of disability is defined.[40] Some communities, for example, view disability as "something to hide, be ashamed of or to get rid of through finding a possible cure."[41] Such views would likely influence whether or not a person takes up support that is provided specifically for people with disabilities. How, and to what extent, any cultural or community reference influenced uptake would need to be explored further, alongside further defining these "other" learners.

Nonetheless, the figure above assumes that disability rates are the same across different groups. However, the 2013 New Zealand disability survey[42] showed that 23% of Māori people aged 15-44 years were disabled, while 16% and 17% of European and Pacific people in this same age bracket were disabled. The Asian population has the lowest disability rates, with 10% of those aged 15-44 being disabled, and 18% of 'other' (MELAA and other) disabled.

The figure below compares the ethnicity of those enrolled in the programme (red),[43] and the estimated profile of disabled people, by ethnicity, in these schools (grey), weighting the estimate according to the prevalence of disability statistics relevant to each ethnicity

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[39] https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/6028, Roll by Age and Ethnicity 2014-2022

[40] Feng, J. 2019. Cultural intrepretations among Asian views of disability, Journal of Teaching Disabilities Studies, https://jtds.commons.gc.cuny.edu/cultural-interpretations-among-asian-views-of-disability/, downloaded 15 November 2022.

[41] How disability is perceived in the Asian community and why views need to change, Disability Horizons. https://disabilityhorizons.com/2021/04/perceptions-of-disability-in-the-asian-community/

[42] Statistics New Zealand Disability survey: 2013, data table 2.01: disability-survey-2013-all-tables.xls (live.com)

[43] NZ disability survey data is available for Other (23%) and separately Asian (10%) ethnicities, while the pilot data groups these categories as "other". These are therefore excluded for comparison here.

(grey).[44] The shape of the distribution highlights that the pilot is enrolling learners as would be expected in terms of prevalence of need within these schools, albeit with more Pākehā learners and likely less 'other' learners[45] (discussed above).

Figure 6: ESiS pilot participants according to primary ethnicity (left) and the estimated profile of disabled learners (by ethnicity) in schools providing for secondary school-aged learners (right), *source: monthly student report 30 June 2022; Statistics New Zealand 2013 Disability Survey*

Ethnicity

Profile of ESiS learners		Estimated profile of disabled people, by ethnicity, in schools providing for secondary-school aged learners
57%	Pākehā	48%
28%	Māori	27%
7%	Pacific	10%
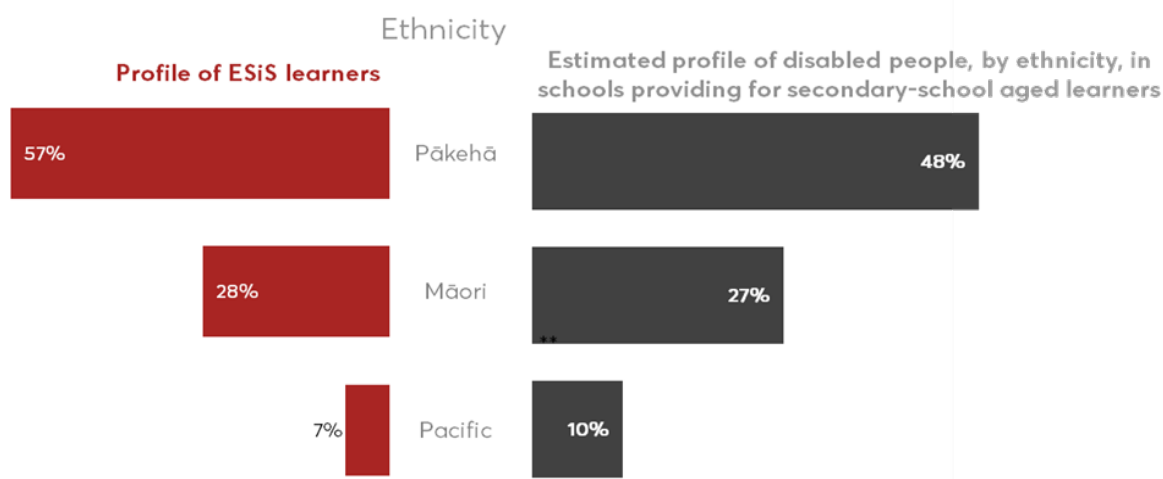
1.10. The pilot worked well for some Māori learners, while there are further opportunities

Māori learners are enrolling in the pilot in numbers that would be largely expected (c.f. Figure 5 and 6). When enrolled, the student monthly reporting (June 2022) showed that similar proportions of Māori learners were actively participating in the pilot (89.5%) and finding paid employment (3.1%) when compared with non-Māori learners (90.9% and 2.8%, respectively). Thus, pilot appears to be operating in an equitable way for Māori learners insofar as enrolment, engagement and employment statistics.

Nonetheless, it's important to recognise the pilot's responsiveness to Māori in delivering the services. A tumuaki kura in an engaged full Māori immersion secondary school (wharekura) suggested that providers' ability to engage in te reo Māori would strengthen service provision broadly and enable fully equitable access for Māori learners (KSI).

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[44] The school roll returns (July 2022) provide the total number of learners, by ethnicity, in schools providing for secondary school-aged learners. The New Zealand 2013 Disability Survey provides estimates the rates of disability for different ethnicities and age groups. These estimates allow us to approximate, using the weighted prevalence of disability rates across the different ethnic groups, within these schools. For instance, there are 82,800 Māori learners enrolled in schools that provide for secondary school-aged learners. Of these learners, approximately 23% would have a disability according to Statistics New Zealand 2013 Disability Survey result relevant to those aged 15-44 years old. This would suggest that there would be approximately 19,062 Māori learners in these schools who have a disability, which make up 26% of all estimated learners with disabilities. This statistic does not include the margin of error relevant to this survey, so the number could only be seen as a very rough estimate. Similarly, as 211,883 of these learners are European and 40,416 are Pacific, we'd roughly estimate that there are approximately 33,901 Pākehā disabled learners (16%) and 6,871 Pacific learners with disabilities (17%) in these schools.
[45] NZ disability survey data is available for Other (23%) and separately Asian (10%) ethnicities, while the pilot data groups these categories as "other". These are therefore excluded for comparison here.

1.11. While the service was designed so learners, whānau and educators had a choice of provider, in practice it was schools who mostly selected their provider rather than the learner.

Once selected to take part, the project team ran co-design workshops in each region so schools and whānau could meet the providers. Emphasis was placed on the ability of students, whānau and educators to choose the provider who was the best fit for them. In practice it was the school staff who chose the specific ESiS providers that would provide the pilot service in their school (KSI, CS). Although there was theoretical provision for the learner to select a provider,[46] case studies consistently demonstrated that schools chose one provider from their region (CS).

Nevertheless, some school staff understood that different employment consultants from the same provider could work in their school, and at least for some schools the learners could choose their specific consultant (CS). Given the available data, it is unclear how many providers allowed for this option or how often learners actively selected a specific consultant.

According to school staff, selecting one provider made the process more manageable for them, allowed for a partnership approach between the provider and school, and helped build a relationship between the learner and provider (CS). Although practical within a school context, this meant the choice of provider was not determined by the learner and their whānau and the approach was not fully realising the original intention nor the self-determination principle of EGL.

1.12. In addition to operating within a COVID-19 context, interpretations of disability and eligibility likely affected which learners take part.

Schools were operating in a time of COVID-19, which affected uptake and engagement throughout delivery (MR, CS). Nonetheless, the process by which learners were identified likely further influenced which learners took part. Those learners were often identified as having an employment-based need and linked to learning support or disability by others. This process may pose challenges in terms of enrolling some learners. Several school representatives (e.g. SENCO, LSC, career advisors) took exception to the limited term 'disability' (CS). Early in the pilot, one barrier identified was when ESiS participants were referred to by their disability or diagnosis. This meant that schools were limited in who they understood were eligible. This changed in phase 2, where the mindset of some school representatives had moved to include a wider range of learners (CS). This included not just people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or learning or physical disabilities but also those people who were experiencing anxiety and depression. This finding demonstrates that learning about the broader eligibility criteria grew over the period.

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[46] MSD lists "providers you can chose from" here, downloaded 24 Sept 2022.

1.13.   The term 'disability' and the associated stigma with the term, may limit enrolments among some that are otherwise eligible.

The term 'disability' may be stigmatising for some. Many learners who may be eligible for the pilot service may not regard themselves as disabled, and according to at least one learner with ASD and a school staff member that may limit enrolment as they want to avoid social stigma (CS). Other officials and providers agreed (EPG). Although these are not self-reports directly from those learners who did not take part in the pilot, their assertions suggest that there may be a gap in service for those who don't identify as having a disability. This is particularly true when considering adolescence – where there is a shift of attention to social evaluations and social standing, sometimes referred to as social sensitivity. [47] The impact of social sensitivity is that *"they might be more emotionally reactive to explicit cues indicative of social inclusion or exclusion... [and] more attuned to instances of real or perceived social evaluation."*[48]

We do not have data available to test the possible implications of the selection process or other factors such as COVID-19 on uptake. Nevertheless, these pre-existing views about self in relation to learning support need or disability *may have* resulted in fewer learners accessing this pilot. Conversely, perhaps the school's role in selecting learners (c.f. finding 1.7) may have resulted in *more learners* accessing the pilot than otherwise would have; it *may be* that individuals who do not view themselves as disabled would not have considered the option of ESiS without the prompting from school staff.

Learners valued and respected, with choice and manageable activities

1.14.   Stakeholder described the pilot as supporting learners in a way that considered their specific needs.

Case study participants reported that ESiS was a much-needed service for disabled learners, taking into consideration the support they required. Initial meetings among providers, learners and whānau were believed to be crucial to understand learners' interests and motivators, and for the teams to tailor skills and learnings towards that goal (CS). During this process, the consultant works with the learner, school and whānau to identify learner strengths and to start to recognise possible areas of employment. This took time (CS, MR) but the impressions of the ESiS pilot for whānau were favourable (CS).

The learners' individual uniqueness was catered for (CS, MR). For instance, some learners worked better as individuals, while others worked better as groups (CS). One learner said, *"I prefer the group times because you can hear other people's ideas, collaborate, and sometimes it's more comfortable."*

Employment consultants built relationships and engaged with learners in various ways. The case studies provided examples of learners engaging with their consultant by text, email and in person. In cases where learners had difficulty communicating, augmented

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[47] Somerville, L.H. (2013), *Special issue on the teenage brain: Sensitivity to social evaluation*. Curr Dir Psychol Sci. 2013 Apr 1; 22(2): 121–127
[48] ibid, pg. 2.

systems of communication were considered, such as having conversations by text message rather than face-to-face (CS). The logistics of communication was also found to be a barrier to learners' engagement in the pilot (MR). A number of learners did not have access to a computer or the internet and did not have email addresses or mobile phones (c.f. section 1.8).

During the pilot, major life changes were occurring for some learners, which likely influenced how support was provided and the pace of the service provision (CS). For example, some young people were receiving new medical diagnoses that they had to process, while others were transitioning to new gender identities (MR, CS). For another learner, the consultant paused the employment part of the pathway to concentrate on building relationships, while the learner focused on their physical health, mental health and wellbeing (MR).

EGL principles reiterate the need to create positive relationships designed to assist self-determination and to build trust. The recent review of the system changes in the MidCentral health region in New Zealand for disabled people showed that establishing trust with funders and service providers was a key element in whether people believed positive outcomes were possible.[49]

1.15. The employment consultants are finding ways to address their specific needs through a strengths-focused approach.

The individual approach adopted by consultants reportedly helps support individuals towards their goals (CS, MR). Across the case studies the interviewees, including providers and learners, provided examples of their strengths-focused engagement with learners. For example, consultants are reframing strengths some people may overlook or consider to be issues or deficits. An example of focusing on learner strengths was shared, *"I talk about my interests to tease more information from the learner. So, when a learner says, 'I like to game,' I might reply, 'So you're a good problem solver.'"* In other examples, learners talked about their dreams of going to university and the consultants took a 'can do' attitude rather than looking at barriers. Learners' strengths and goals were always sought, and often options were identified to achieve their goals (c.f. sections 1.6 and 1.7).

> ## THEY ACTUALLY FOCUS ON WHAT HE CAN DO RATHER THAN WHAT HE CAN'T DO. SO, THERE'S A REAL POSITIVE… THE WHOLE PROCESS HAS BEEN REALLY GOOD. THE COMMUNICATION IS FANTASTIC. WE'VE BEEN INVOLVED AND HEARD. — WHĀNAU (CASE STUDY)

The individual approach adopted by consultants also reportedly helps address learners' specific barriers (CS, MR). Numerous examples were provided in the monthly student

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[49] Wilson, C.S. and Benjamin, M. (2022). Repeat Study MidCentral: 2018-2021 (2022). Monograph written on behalf of the Ministry of Health, New Zealand. SAMS Evaluate, Innovate, Educate; and Morrison, C and Wilson, C.S. (2019). Baseline Study of the Disability Support System in the MidCentral Area: Summary Report

reports. Individual learners' wellbeing, such as managing emotions, was being supported (MR). Personal habits, such as hygiene, clothing and sleep, were being guided (MR). Time-management and daily planning skills were also mentioned in the data as skills that were being intentionally taught to the learners in the pilot (CS, MR).

Transport was also regularly mentioned in the data as a barrier to employment (CS, MR) (c.f. section 4.5). The consultants worked to address the learners' specific barriers. In one case study, for example, a learner said they were highly anxious about using buses and had several bad experiences when doing so with a sibling. In line with best practice principles of developing and practicing functional life skills at home and in other natural settings,[50] the consultant and the learner's learning assistant (LA) developed a plan for the learner as they needed to catch more than one bus to get to a local tertiary institution. Steps to achieving independence included: the LA and/or the consultant travelling with the learner on the bus, meeting the learner at the first bus stop, meeting the learner at the bus exchange, meeting the learner at the destination. The learner reported a successful outcome if they made it to the first bus in time and that, *"things were pretty ok."*

In addition, ESiS have also been helping the learners gain their driver licences, either their learners or restricted licence, which can hopefully give learners more employment options and some incremental independence (MR). One family stated:

> **OUR DAUGHTER DOES NOT COPE WELL WITH STRESS AND TRANSPORT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A BARRIER FOR HER. WE HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE SUGGESTIONS [THE CONSULTANT] MADE TO WORK WITH OUR DAUGHTER ON THIS. WE ARE ROLE PLAYING HOW TO USE A TAXI WITH A FAMILY FRIEND WHO COMES TO OUR HOUSE AS THE TAXI DRIVER. THIS IS HELPING TO REDUCE OUR DAUGHTER'S ANXIETY. — WHĀNAU (CASE STUDY)**

Learners involved in the programme (and sometimes by extension their whānau) were overwhelmingly impressed with the individualised approach taken by the employment consultants (CS). All the schools, learners and whānau interviewed for this project (especially in 2022) were positive about the possibilities offered by the programme and the realities they have already experienced (CS). This consistent finding speaks strongly to empowerment, at least for those learners that are actively involved.

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[50] National Transition Guidelines, principle 8.

1.16. Learners are provided a variety of options to choose from, while the choices were relevant to the individual learners' interests and abilities (or disability).

One evidence-based practice, according to the National Transition Guidelines, is collaborating with the learner to ensure their programme aligns with their aspirations and meets their needs in terms of life-long development. The evidence consistently showed providers working in accordance with this best practice principal.

Case studies and secondary data consistently demonstrated engaged learners being presented with a range of employment and training options depending on their interests. More specifically, the case studies and monthly student reports showed that consultants were discussing a wide variety of employment choices alongside identifying learner's strengths and interests. For example, the range of some of these options included (CS, EPG, MR):

- Working in a supermarket / childcare centre / hospitality / Christmas gift-wrapping / lawn mowing or basic gardening / recycling.

- Work experience in charity or opportunity stores / SPCA / car garage / on a farm.

- Volunteering at local library / local theatre / animal care / language teaching assistant.

- Training to work as a barista.

Consultants also explored options for university and polytechnic placements, or short courses provided by the polytechnics or by organisations such as Papa Taiao. The school staff reported successful placements of learners in tertiary education settings. For example, one learner was successfully placed in the New Zealand Management Academies (NZMA) is it offered pre-training courses in areas such as nursing, while another was enrolled in a life skills course at Whitireia (a polytechnic in Porirua). At least two other learners from the same school were looking at tertiary placements in 2023, including university programmes.

Across the data sets, the wide range of options was clearly dependent upon the learner. As could be expected, some learners were clear about their passions, such as animals, which could be transferred to work experience options like volunteering with the SPCA (MR). Some learners were less clear about their future. Consultants used employment assessment tools and/or assisted learners to navigate employment related internet sites to generate ideas (CS), while other consultants focused on them gaining experience across the breadth of interest areas. The following case study is pulled together as a storyline from a series of monthly student reports about one learner (MR):

> The provider had an initial meeting with Ben* and his whānau, where Ben identified his broad interests covering topics such as science, animal care, woodwork and computers. Over a year, the provider identified and then helped Ben secure two separate work experience options, including volunteering with animals and work involving woodworking.

Unique to this pilot in relation to other transitions services, the case studies highlighted that it was important these goals were considered in light of the learners' specific disabilities, strengths and needs. Some learners were in a position to work with children

or animals, start a job at a grocery store, start barista training, or felt able to gain experience in a high-stress job (MR). For other learners such options were not viable, and alternatives were pursued. For instance, one case study demonstrated highlighting a related occupation (e.g. fire prevention officer) to the learner's desired occupation (e.g. firefighter) in light of the individual's physical disability (CS).

1.17. Consultants sought to build confidence and self-belief.

The evidence demonstrated a range of examples highlighting the consultants' approaches to building confidence among learners. Building learners' self-belief was viewed by consultants as a process, and sometimes a long process, whereby they would work with the individual to set goals, and then identify manageable steps along the way (CS). The monthly student reports highlighted a range of steps, and although these varied they appeared to focus on the conversations with young people. Some providers undertook assessments (MR) and built CVs to identify the learner's goals and experiences (CS, MR). Other consultants focused on a strengths-approach to instil a sense of empowerment (c.f. finding 1.16). Consultants also worked on identifying solutions relevant to the young person's barriers (MR, CS) such as how to catch public transport by going with them and guiding them through the process or doing charity work with learners to help contribute to their self-belief and independence. Sometimes goals were accomplished through courses (SD, CS), while the support along the way promoted confidence in the learner.

1.18. The lack of digital accessibility is limiting for some learners in the pilot.

The monthly student reports from providers highlighted examples of how access to digital devices was restrictive for some learners participating in the pilot. The limitation was noted for several learners in the monthly student reports, with consultants having to set up email addresses with learners and encourage learners to access SIM-cards, while it was reported that several learners share mobile phones with others in their family. These digital barriers were found to be restrictive for consultants when trying to communicate with learners to arrange meetings and give the learners employment updates (MR). For example, one learner was not able to take up any of their three job offers, as the employment consultant did not have any means to communicate with them – the learner did not have computer or internet access, nor did they have a phone contact (MR). In addition, some learners did not like online meetings, while others did not like talking on the phone (MR). These challenges, in conjunction with COVID-19 limitations, meant that some meetings were delayed. For some learners and employment consultants it was a while until they could meet face-to-face. Communication was mixed among the learners. In the monthly student reports many emails sent by the consultant were reportedly not responded to, which questions whether email is the best way for initial contact to occur.

Digital accessibility is important not only for meeting learners but it's also relevant to disabled people in relation to employment. MSD developed Working Matters, which sets out the long-term aspiration to help ensure disabled people and people with health conditions have an equal opportunity to access good work. Working Matters sets out a range of actions for policy work, and relevant here, to support options that enable

disabled people to take up work opportunities created by new assistive and digital technologies.[51] Because of this, and the increasing use of digital technology across New Zealand, digital access should remain a focus for these young people. The activities by consultants to support learners to set up email addresses and access SIM-cards can thus be viewed as a key activity in supporting these individuals in their pathway to employment.

2. Partnership

As illustrated in the evaluation questions as well as the evaluation rubrics (c.f. Appendix A), it was expected that the pilot would promote employment 'best options' for disabled people by further enhancing the support provided by schools, employers and other natural supports around the learners, as well as developing partnerships across the governance and management systems. As such, partnership is key for the pilot to meet its goals to promote and sustain employment for disabled people, particularly through these supports.

The synthesised case studies, key stakeholder interviews and monthly student reports demonstrated that the pilot was **meeting expectations**[52] in terms of partnerships. This means the evidence showed that these relationships were identified and then built over time, albeit with somewhat inconsistent evidence insofar as the connections and partnerships, in particular those with Māori during the pilot design.

The key findings and learning in terms of partnership are summarised here.

Partnership: Key findings and learning

While government officials and ESiS providers' relationships were established and evolved throughout the pilot, ESiS providers built relationships with learners and partnerships between the school and the community supports around the learner. Providers were also building connections with potential employers for the young person. Whānau engagement varied throughout the pilot. The school context, such as the school's operating hours, limited opportunities for engagement among some whānau, while the school timetables and providers' travel to and between schools restricted the interactions between employment consultants and learners.

Each of these findings is presented as a subheading below, followed by the evidence that supports this finding.

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[51] https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/what-we-can-do/disability-services/disability-employment-action-plan/working-matters-2020-spreads.pdf, pg. 26.
[52] The evaluation criteria were defined by the Evaluation Partnership Group at the outset of the evaluation, and the levels of success reflect the expectations of the pilot relevant to its size, scale and scope after the initial year of delivering the service.

Management partnerships

2.1. Newly established connections across national agencies are supporting ESiS, although this did not include Māori partnership at the outset.

The interviews with key government stakeholders consistently highlighted the value of project-related partnership across agencies to build upon their respective expertise and relationships in the social and education sectors. More specifically, the commencement of the pilot began with building relationships, most notably across the Ministries of Social Development and Education (KSI). All key stakeholders who were interviewed, including staff from national Ministry offices and two MoE regional offices, described working together (KSI) to design the pilot, and specifically contributing to a facilitated co-design workshop with officials from the national and regional offices, schools and learners with disabilities and their whānau. They also discussed working with the regional teams to select providers to deliver the pilot service, generating ideas to support delivery, and developing communications materials. However, it was also noted that a missing point in the design was Māori partnership (KS), as noted above (finding 1.5).

Key stakeholders reported the two national office teams then engaged in "somewhat regular" emails and meetings during the pilot design and early delivery stages to develop communications material and the referral form for the pilot. The MoE regional offices led the selection of schools to take part in the pilot, building upon their relationships and knowledge of their local schools and their views and intentions.

Beyond these government official relationships, the key stakeholder interviews made clear that the providers report to MSD and engage directly with the schools, whānau and learners, and any relevant individuals around the learner (e.g. employers, staff in tertiary institutions).

Figure 7 highlights the connections developed as part of the pilot service (KSI).

Figure 7: Network of relationships involved with the delivery of ESiS
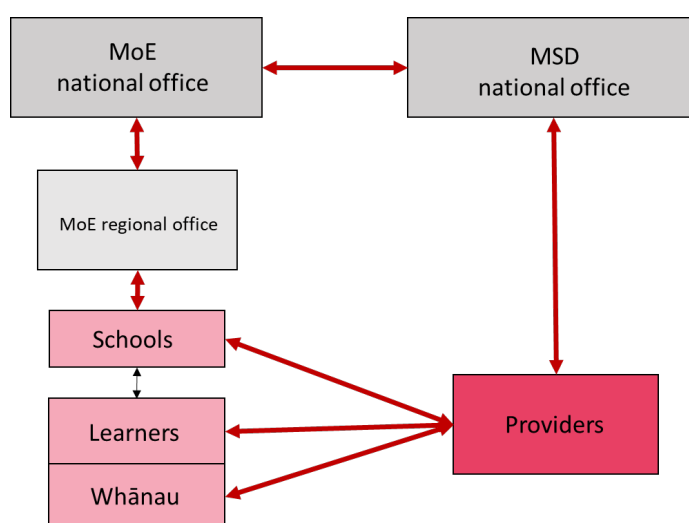
The frequency of these types of engagements between the Ministries' national offices changed at different times in the pilot. They met frequently prior to and at the start of

the pilot in 2021 and again at the start of 2022. At other times they reduced the frequency of meetings given the more mature stage of the pilot (KS). MoE continues to manage the communications with regional offices, while the regional co-ordinators manage the relationships with schools. MSD continues to manage the providers and the information provided as part of their contracts. These continued roles and responsibilities form an ongoing working relationship as part of ESiS management and their partnership approach (KS).

2.2. The number and types of engagements evolved over time, and these connections worked towards improving understanding of the pilot and strengthening the referral process.

As reported by the key stakeholders, MSD relies on information about services provided to schools and learners from providers, while MoE shares information between national and regional offices that communicate with schools. Such an approach requires strong communications, as recognised by key officials (KS).

As reported by key officials, MSD and MoE worked together to design the pilot. This working group was then supported by two-day workshops undertaken across the five regions (SD). The workshops invited participation from secondary school learners who have a disability, physical health and/or mental health condition, the learners' whānau, secondary school educators and ESiS providers. Working with MoE and MSD, they took a partnership approach (KSI).

Key stakeholders reported that the Ministries worked together to create communications throughout the pilot delivery. The examples provided included FAQs, specific terminology for education and disability, and an information sheet for the pilot services. Further, they also created a MSD webpage for the general public,[53] while some providers, such as APM[54] and Habit Health,[55] provide further information online.

The case study and key stakeholder interviews suggested that these communication channels and materials were supplemented with the less formal information sharing between schools. For example, career advisors and other staff reportedly talked to each other, across schools, about the pilot. Case study interviewees noted that as time progressed, and other school personnel saw the successes within the pilot, referrals increased. All the schools in the case studies noted the increased buy-in of the pilot by the Deans (Head of Departments), who are now involved in referring learners to the programme (CS). This assertion was supported by the analysis of secondary data, which saw increased numbers of enrolled learners.

Also, national office officials continued to develop communications to support the sector (KSI). Apart from the activities already underway, key officials reported engaging further with the broader network in the following ways:

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[53] Employment Service in Schools - Information for schools and providers - Work and Income
[54] Employment Services in Schools | APM NZ (apm-nz.co.nz)
[55] Employment Service in Schools (habit.health)

- strengthening collateral (e.g. the communications around the pilot, and notably to make clear the broad eligibility criteria and to challenge traditional thinking about disability)

- face-to-face visits with providers (e.g. visiting providers' sites, and sharing learning across these providers to support their approach to getting learner referrals)

- online forums (e.g. running a sequence of online discussions with schools and providers in the regions to talk about the pilot and address any questions).

During this period, the pilot grew from 44 schools and 230 enrolled learners[56] in October 2021 (April-Oct 2021 monthly student reports) to 74 schools and 332 learners by 30 June 2022 (30 June 2022, monthly student reports).

On-the-ground delivery partnerships

2.3. Providers recognised the broad networks and relationships required for successful delivery.

Case studies involving the providers and their narrative reports showed that the pilot relies on collaboration, for example, between consultants and learners, whānau, employers, school management, kaiako, occupational therapists, carers, SENCOs and RTLBs. The network of relationships, as shown in Figure 7, was notably less structured than that at the management and governance level. For example, the learner and whānau need to be considered together and in the context of their community. Likewise, all of those associated with the learner's education and employment support (indicated by green bubbles in Figure 8) are embedded in the community. The networks between all of these areas contribute to the potential opportunities and social networks of the learner.

Figure 8: Network of potential relationships required to deliver the programme around the individual

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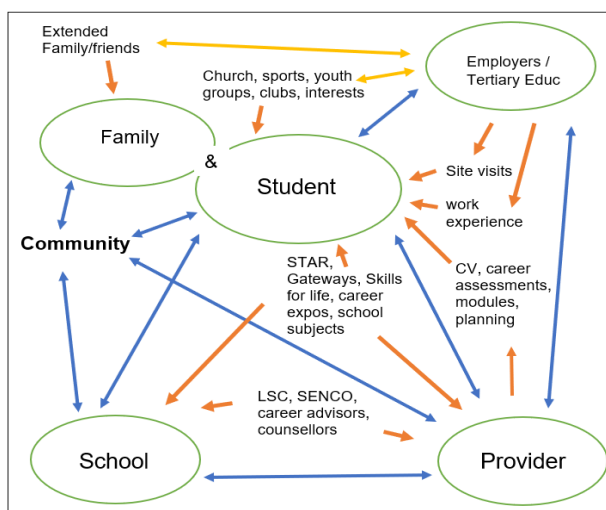
[56] Those learners that had a specified start date, and were not enrolled.

Consultants consistently reported that these connections, and the strength of these connections, was a determinant of the success of delivery.

2.4. Employment consultants built connections with relevant school staff over time.

During the initial stage of the pilot, providers and key stakeholders broadly recognised that success relied on knowing who to engage within the school and then their ability to coordinate with them (CS, EPG). At least initially, these relationships did not always exist, for example, one consultant talked about quite broad relationships across the schooling community (CS) and another consultant reported establishing this network with the relevant school staff as the pilot was underway (CS).

Despite regional workshop sessions focused on building relationships and understanding the complexity of the education sector at the initial stage (as reported by a government official), consultants reported communications within schools was complex and sometimes challenging (CS). At least one consultant reported that information was not shared; in this one case, there was a single contact person at the school, and the SENCO/LSC were possibly not receiving the information to advise the learners about the pilot.

A second series of regional workshops were delivered in May 2022. Further, several school staff and consultants reported that there was a more coordinated effort in 2022, increasing connections and communications between the relevant school personnel and the consultants working with individual learners (CS). This change was promising. Developing partnerships between the school and community is one of the 10 best practice principles that support successful transitions for young people.

In one case study, a school was appreciative of the time that a consultant took to meet with the career advisor and the learning support coordinator before engaging with the learners. This consultant was, *"mindful of treading on the toes of specific staff in key roles"* (CS). Information was shared by the school with the provider about the learners who were registered on the pilot.

Relationship building was critical and improved how the consultants worked with the learners and helped them to feel valued. In contrast, one singular consultant had reportedly not used a collaborative approach when working with schools (CS). They lacked an understanding of how the schools operated and didn't communicate effectively with young people. This lack of collaboration meant that the provider was transitioned out of the school.

By mid-2022 and following the circulation of updated pilot information to schools and providers, across the case studies school staff reported that more school personnel were aware of what the pilot offered and were making referrals to the consultant. In one case study, the schools indicated that the consultants were now embedded in their school, and cooperation between school officials and the consultants was "fluid" (CS). The monthly student reports similarly showed reports of consultants and school staff working together to support the learner. Two different examples are provided below, each presenting what the consultant had done in terms of integrating school staff in their delivery.

I asked for the teacher aide to keep working on this form after our session and between our next meetings so we can have a starting point for a CV.

His attendance at school has been very poor and his Year Dean also attended the meeting to express his concerns.

2.5.   Partnership with whānau varied

The ESiS consultants concentrated on a person-centred approach involving whānau at the learner's discretion (CS, MR). The approach used in the pilot was important for those it seeks to help. One school official described the crippling effects of social anxiety or anxiety generally with people being, *"paralysed by what to do next or next steps"* (CS). Involving whānau was viewed as important for some learners, especially for those with social anxiety and/or a communication impairment (CS, MR).

The case studies and monthly student reports showed variable engagement with whānau. The monthly student reports provide data on whānau involvement. As a snapshot, the June 2022 reports showed about half (56.2%)[57] were actively involved in the pilot services in this month (MR). Variable engagement was also reflected in the case studies, where although whānau recognised that they are key to success for some learners (CS) they often found it difficult to engage during school hours given, for example, work commitments (CS).

According to the National Transition Guidelines, the learner and their whānau driving the process is an important aspect of best practice principles that underpin successful transitions for learners with disabilities. Given the school context of the pilot, whānau involvement will likely remain limited given school hours overlap with usual working hours.

Key stakeholders further noted that some whānau may not engage because of financial concerns (EPG), while other whānau may not want to engage because they think they will be given more work to do on top of their already complex lives (EPG).

The ways in which whānau were involved varied as well. The monthly student reports showed that whānau involvement included telephone conversations with the consultants, coming to meetings with the learner (e.g. "*A parent came in for a meeting around her expectations for her child and the best way we can support her.*") as well as undertaking supplementary activities with the consultants (e.g. "*Visited Whitireia with whānau for course information, met with tutor and disability support coordinator.*").

Further, one case study suggested that the providers' existing connections with the community helped engage learners and their whānau. He was local, embedded within the community and the Marae. These connections were believed to provide him with an advantage when establishing relationships and connecting with the whānau and broader community (CS).

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[57] 104 of these 185 learners

2.6.   Consultants built connections with employers.

The case studies and monthly student reports demonstrated the different ways that consultants connected and collaborated with employers. While some used existing employer connections, it was clear that consultations went beyond these and established new connections to suit learners' needs and their interests and goals. The following student report highlights, as an abbreviated (and anonymised*) learner story, the impetus for the employer connection (MR):

> We did CareerQuest and it highlighted the types of jobs Alice* would be interested in and best suited to doing in the future – landscaping, bee keeping and dairy farming. We looked into each of these jobs and found out what the entry requirements are, what the job opportunities are, what the pay is and what personal skills are required. Two months later, I found a gardening job that Alice might be interested in.

Case studies and monthly student reports also demonstrated examples of consultants and learners using existing connections to open up opportunities (CS, MR). However, at least in one case study interview, the consultant said they did not approach employers that were already part of a school programme or one of the guidance counsellors 'stable' of employers. This was simply so that they did not overtax the employer with too many people approaching them.

2.7.   Consultants provided advice to employers to enable opportunities.

Secondary documents clearly set out the aim that providers would "support employers to overcome barriers to employing people with a disability or health condition",[58] and "once placed into employment, [the provider would] support the learner and employer as needed to remove barriers to sustained employment."[59]

Although the evidence did not clearly show how the consultants improved the support employers provided to employed learners, it did demonstrate the advice provided to employers. The consultants similarly conveyed the importance of communicating with employers to keep them informed, supported and equipped for specific placements (CS). Where a placement was made, the consultant further noted the importance of employers providing, for example, augmenting equipment or access to workstations and premises, and providing ongoing support for questions and solving problems (CS). In another situation, the consultant reported that they would ideally provide a work buddy to allow the learner time to learn and then fade that support over time, although further noted that there was no available funding for this (CS). For another learner, the consultant acted as a go-between to be sure they felt safe in the work environment, for example, the consultant told the employers about the learner's preferred communication method.

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[58] ESiS indicative contract, section 2.1.
[59] ESiS indicative contract, section 7.1

2.8. Logistics, including distance between providers and schools, and the school timetable, limits the number of engagements.

The case studies consistently showed that logistics restricted the interactions between consultants and learners. More specifically, one of the main obstacles the ESiS providers described was that of being stretched across a wide geographical area. One provider in the lower North Island indicated they travelled between learners in Wellington, the Hutt Valley and Masterton (CS). Likewise, the Canterbury provider referred to learners as far away as Rangiora and Ashburton (CS). This was in spite of the schools, at least in two regions, being invited to take part in the pilot according to provider reach (c.f. section 1.1) and more schools being in less isolated areas (c.f. section 1.5). The time the providers spent travelling diminished time spent with learners, and more broadly the building of connections and support for employers and whānau. Given the context of the New Zealand geography and landscape, it would be challenging to ensure equitable access to learners in more rural schools with the current pilot approach and providers.

Further, both the case studies and the provider narrative reports identified the limiting nature of the school timetables. There were numerous examples provided of school holidays and term breaks reportedly interrupting the continuity of engagements, most notably between the consultant and the learner in the case studies, student reporting and narrative reports.

3. Coherence

Coherence, in terms of the pilot, refers to alignment with EGL principles, and activities within the schools and for learners and whānau. Coherence is key to ensuring ESiS is meeting its goals to support young people to achieve their employment-related goals, aligning to existing principles and complementing existing services, while making the work manageable with schools and along the learners' journey to employment.

The case studies, key stakeholder interviews and the secondary data demonstrated that the pilot was meeting expectations[60] in terms of coherence. The key findings and learning in terms of coherence are summarised here.

Coherence: Key findings and learning

The pilot service aligns well with the EGL principles. The pilot affords a unique service, working alongside other services and supports available to learners while filling a system gap for those learners eligible for ESiS. It provides a coherent approach relevant to these learners, although the pilot design could begin earlier in a learner's life and longer-term planning could enhance the service for learners.

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[60] The evaluation criteria were defined by the Evaluation Partnership Group at the outset of the evaluation, and the levels of success reflect the expectations of the pilot relevant to its size, scale and scope after the initial year of delivering the service.

Each of these findings is presented as a subheading below, followed by the evidence that support this finding.

Pilot alignment to EGL principles

3.1.   The design of ESiS is mostly in line with the EGL principles.

The ESiS pilot appeared to bridge the gap between some traditional silos for disabled learners that lack a specific employment focus, with consultants making links and connecting employment related solutions. Silos, in this context, refer to isolated or compartmentalised systems, such as employment, social supports and education. Therefore, the cooperation in this pilot between MSD and MoE, and the expectation that partnerships are built between schools and consultants, are encouraging. This spirit of cooperation is founded upon EGL principles, which are central to the belief that disabled young people can achieve their employment-related goals.

The evaluation evidence showed that ESiS aligned well with the following EGL principles.

- **Self-determination and person-centred**: These two EGL principles refer to the expectation that the individual, and (where appropriate) their whānau, has autonomy. The case studies were consistent in showing a particular strength of the pilot is that consultants were working with the learner to identify the learner's goals. However, each step and how they are navigated is determined by the learner in partnership with others. The employment consultants consistently developed plans that reflected upon the challenges learners face on the pathway to employment (c.f. finding 1.15). The consultants attempted to break these down into achievable goals. Initial goals could be, finding a method to communicate with the learner and/or their whānau, or to help overcome a specific anxiety like using a bus or taxi, or introducing the learner to a key representative at a tertiary institution (CS, MR). However, the principle of self-determination could be supported by enabling the learner to choose their specific provider (c.f. finding 1.12).

- **Ordinary life outcomes and mainstream first:** The ESiS pilot focused primarily on employment-related goals by working within local schools, making use of mainstream services (e.g. tertiary or training organisations, employers) and working towards ordinary life outcomes. It was also reported that the pilot design, notably having broad eligibility criteria, meant that a wider range of learners could access support. Some learners chose to go through ESiS rather than the transition service (for learners verified with high or very high needs) because it is employment focused, inclusive and doesn't separate the enrolled learners from others (EPG). This is significant within the context of EGL, working towards ordinary life outcomes through employment and economic security (NZDS).

- **Mana enhancing and relationship building:** The aspects of mana enhancing and relationship building were found to be a particular strength of the pilot and were consistent across the case studies. The ESiS pilot focuses on the partnerships being forged by the consultants with all stakeholders, building relationships especially between the learners and whānau. The employment consultants were

consistently found to adopt a strengths-based approach (CS) and enhance the mana of the learners (c.f. finding 1.16 and 1.17). The consultants were also able to place the learners in the context of their whānau and communities. Consultants referred to the connections made within specific cultural contexts and utilised these connections to assist with building employment possibilities. In 2021, one learner was looking at work prospects through connections within their wider whānau, while others had connections through youth programmes, church, marae and the rainbow community.

- **Easy to use:** Ease of use is reliant on simple step-by-step processes that are easy to follow and involve one key point of contact, the employment consultant. The pilot, while straight forward to access, demonstrated that there were initial challenges in locating key individuals in schools. There were also difficulties in receiving the correct information about the respective learners. Despite this the pilot was easy for learners to use, as reported consistently across the case studies. Learners could either gain entry through a referral or, more rarely, self-refer themselves for the pilot. The criteria for entry were broad enough to encompass learners who may not have been eligible for other programmes within the school.

3.2. Some involved with delivery didn't believe the service began early enough in a learner's life.

One area that was seen by some as a potential shortfall in the design was alignment to the EGL principle "beginning early" (CS, EPG).[61] Beyond the EGL, beginning early is also noted as important to transitioning from school into adulthood for learners with additional learning needs. According to the Ministry of Education National Transition Guidelines, the first principle notes: "The transition from school process starts when the student turns 14 at the latest. It is part of a specific planning process that aims to maximise academic achievement as well as functional life skills."[62]

The pilot design limits learners to when they are in their last two years of school.[63] Some of those involved in the case studies as well as the EPG reflected the concern that the ESiS pilot, as with many other transition programmes, was too late for learners. For some learners their anxiety issues may have early origins and confronting these challenges earlier would have been preferrable. However, the ESiS pilot had the specific aim of assisting learners towards employment-related goals. Most stakeholders agreed that some anxiety challenges required at least two years to help resolve. In 2021, one Year 13 learner described the pilot as, "too little too late." For some whānau, the prospect of their learner leaving school before the main benefit of the pilot could be realised was concerning. Other whānau believed their learner could continue with the same provider or consultant as an adult (post-school).

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[61] The view also reflects other guidelines, notably the National Transition Guidelines for students with additional learning needs. These guidelines identify, as noted, a range of different evidence-based best practice principles. One of these principles is that support planning begins early – by age 14. (https://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/national-transition-guidelines-for-students-with-additional-learning-needs/) Downloaded 9 November 2022.

[62] Ministry of Education National Transition Guidelines, https://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/national-transition-guidelines-for-students-with-additional-learning-needs/national-transition-guidelines/, downloaded 11 November 2022.

[63] Employment Service in Schools - Information for schools and providers - Work and Income

Pilot clarity and uniqueness

3.3.   There is a range of support and activities within the school, including employment services and services for learners with learning support/disability related needs, but there are no other employment services that provide employment services specifically for disabled learners.

As outlined in the Context section, MoE also make available services and support specifically for learners with disabilities, and some individuals or schools may purchase one-off employment support services. The available supports do not include access to employment support services for disabled learners while they are at school. While vocational-based learning is available to all learners, disabled learners experience participation barriers, such as engaging in services academies for those with a physical disability.

3.4.   Some recognised the pilot as filling a system gap for those eligible learners.

Interviews with key stakeholders and case studies demonstrated the importance and relevance of the pilot for disabled learners and those with learning support needs. School staff indicated that the employment consultants were filling a necessary gap in their ability to help prepare learners for employment or further education (CS). At least in one case, the school staff stated that while the schools have their own career path options, such as activities organised by career advisors, Gateway and links with other further education providers, the ESiS consultants were providing individualised pathways that were relevant to the disabled learner (CS). A similar view was reiterated by a regional official (KSI):

> ## IT'S WHERE LEARNING SUPPORT MEETS CAREERS. NEITHER SIDE OF THAT EQUATION CAN MEET THE NEEDS OF THESE SPECIFIC CHILDREN ALONE. THAT'S WHAT THE PILOT PROVIDES.
> ### -   MINISTRY REGIONAL OFFICIAL

Through the other existing services, learners' needs were not always being met. The individualised approach to employment services in the pilot was the point of difference, as noted by one whānau:

> **WE JUST DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN. WE HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE. IT'S ABSOLUTELY NEEDED FOR US PARENTS AS WELL BECAUSE WE REALLY WERE AT A LOSS. WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT YEAR BECAUSE HE WAS READY TO QUIT. — WHĀNAU (CASE STUDY)**

Case study interviewees consistently noted the time required to make progress with learners with unique needs. Time was often viewed as a luxury at schools, where staff cater for the learning needs of numerous learners. The pilot was consistently viewed favourably in the case studies, as it provided the time needed to help disabled learners. One learning support coordinator described the additional, complementary benefit for learners.

> **HAVING [EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANT] ALONGSIDE ME HAS BEEN INVALUABLE... OUR ROLES ARE DIFFERENT. [SHE] GIVES THE LEARNERS TIME. THIS PROGRAMME HAS GIVEN THEM TIME FOR ONE-TO-ONE. — LEARNING SUPPORT COORDINATOR (CASE STUDY)**

A key stakeholder echoed this sentiment, recognising that a key strength of the pilot is that employment consultants have the dedicated time to work with disabled learners. In addition, employment consultants can bring together employment opportunities and specifically cater for disabled learners.

3.5.   Some learners with specific disability could benefit from the pilot, as they were not eligible for other services

Among those learners with physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties engaged in the case studies, it was clear that their unique experiences were catered for in an individually relevant way. Most schools embraced the pilot's openness to include neurodivergent learners, as many of these students would not fit within other disability or mental health funding streams (CS). Interviewees noted that this cohort of learners also represented young people who could benefit from this type of programme (CS).

3.6. The pilot pulls together the services and provides employment support catering specifically for disabled learners.

There was also a clear understanding of what the schools offered in terms of pathways to employment and what the ESiS providers offered. The need to work together and not duplicate activities, contacts and resources was seen as essential to the successful outcomes of some plans (CS). In 2021, a school official stated:

> ## THIS IS THE BEAUTY OF IT. ANYTHING THEY DO IS JUST VALUE ADDED. WE DON'T NEED TO DO ANYTHING. WE'RE ALREADY BUSY DOING OUR THING. BUT ALL WE NEED TO DO IS FIND SPACE AND MAKE SURE IT'S GOING TO WORK. AND SO, FOR ME, THE WORK THAT I DO WITH THE STUDENTS IS OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY
> — SCHOOL STAFF (CASE STUDY)

As the pilot progressed, the case studies found that the consultants carefully delineated their own boundaries with school staff working in the same space, particularly the career advisors and school counsellors (CS). The aim was to reduce duplication, such as employer contacts, and to work in partnership. Thus, as plans were developed with each learner, the employment consultants considered the options within the school that could be available to learners, such as Gateway, STAR, Skills for Living, hospitality courses, career expos, employment samplers, visits to tertiary institutions and course samplers. Employment consultants also worked with school personnel to share resources around specific learners. For example, career advisors arranged trips and provided transport to career expos or employers (samplers), and the consultants helped clarify areas of interest and provided follow-up with each learner. There were also examples where learners were admitted to a portion of a programme, such as hospitality or Gateway, within a school if the goals of the programme aligned with the learner's goal. The schools also assisted with or provided bus transport for learners who needed to get to employment or training locations. Some family members also assisted with transport on weekends or after hours.

The monthly student reports, from April 2021 to March 2022, also showed providers documenting their consideration of Gateway as an option for at least eight different learners, and trades academies for at least one learner (MR). For example:

> *Did research on horse training options and discovered an equine course with Gateway. Made contact with the organiser of that and also the Gateway teacher at school. Seems this may be a good option for Jen* with built in support and flexibility on timeframes and assessment submissions. Meeting planned with Gateway teacher, Jen and mum (MR).*

The pilot focuses on mainstream first, making use of existing services where possible. These findings demonstrate clear coherence with this EGL principle.

Coherent for learners

3.7.   ESiS provides a coherent pathway relevant to the learner within the context of the last two years of school.

The monthly student reports revealed that the pilot presented learners with a relevant employment pathway. As further described elsewhere (c.f. finding 1.15), providers begin with the learner and the employment consultant getting to know one another. They move onto helping the learner identify the areas that they want to work in, using tools and discussion to empower them to explore options within their context. They then help learners, at least in some cases where the learner was ready, to identify work experience options. This was a consistent process across all the case studies, although some learners fluctuated between these stages, and even what may be incorrectly viewed as 'going backwards'. For example:

> In the first month, the learner completed their CV and submitted an application to New World. The consultant prepared them for the interview, and Sam* secured the part-time role, with a start date this same month. The consultant maintained the engagements with the employer and learner, and mid-way through the year, the learner received further pathway support, which in this case meant working with the occupational therapist and another specialist (MR).

The support was available to learners within their last two years of schooling.

3.8.   Sustainable solutions would be a key consideration moving forward.

ESiS learners can move onto other employment service (ES) support once they leave school and the pilot. By design, the learners can continue to be supported by the same providers, as the ESiS providers are also ES providers. Nonetheless, the transition between school and adult life may be particularly difficult with a disability, as learners and whānau need to understand a whole new set of challenges. At least one engaged whānau was particularly concerned, mainly for logistical reasons, about the school to post-school transitions since they themselves work or have roles outside the home. These transitions would reportedly rely on their support to enable the learner to be involved in activities outside the family home.

The other needs likely to continue beyond the last two years of school noted with learners and whānau include:

- Transportation: Transportation accessibility was found to be a repeatedly hindering factor for this cohort and was sometimes perceived as an anxiety-inducing trigger for certain learners (MR). In some instances, transport issues (e.g. catching a taxi, a bus, or crossing the road) was the reason why learners left the pilot (MR). Overcoming these barriers through creative holistic collaboration and problem solving will allow people to realise daily mainstream life outcomes (MR). One learner in the case studies who wants to attend university in 2023 reported that getting to and from classes is an issue because of transportation.

- Identifying or facilitating solutions: One learner finds interacting with the course content to be an obstacle, for example, hiring a reader-writer or utilising

transcribing equipment. Identifying what solutions may be available for the learner would be important to ensure that they have the right supports in place to enable participation.

- Institutional support: Support for employers who are willing to employ people with specific support needs, as well as for higher education institutions who are attempting to create inclusive learning environments.

Such ongoing needs are not generally considered within the pilot. Although learners may be referred to other transition services, such as MSD's employment service, the pilot services try to find solutions that may be sustainable beyond the time of the support.

4.Effectiveness

The evaluation focused on the effectiveness of the pilot and examined to what extent the service was making progress towards its goals, as well as learners progressing along the pathway to employment. The focus on progress reframes "effectiveness" for the pilot as *progress along a pathway* rather than achieving employment.

The evaluation also found the pilot **met expectations**[64] in terms of each of the four pilot goals. As demonstrated above, the pilot was found to promote employment 'best options' for disabled learners (c.f. findings 1.17 and 4.2), improve learners' self-belief (c.f. findings 1.15 and 1.18) and the broader support around the learner (c.f. findings 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 and 3.6), and make a pathway to employment (c.f. findings 3.6, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4). Further, the case studies, key stakeholder interviews and the secondary data demonstrated progress made along the pathway to employment for learners.

The key findings and learning in terms of effectiveness are summarised here.

Effectiveness: Key findings and learning

Learners are continuing to enrol in the pilot, and for the large part, continuing to receive support and make a pathway towards employment. The continued support was particularly valuable given employment can be challenging given barriers such as limited opportunities and transport. The funding structure that funds providers according to each supported learner rather than to a specific number of sessions, is likely supporting providers' perseverance in continued support.

Although realising work experience can be unique and challenging for this cohort of learners, about 11% of learners realised work experience opportunities by March 2022. Employment consultants' flexibility and partnerships were key to support learners on their pathway, and learners' motivation strongly influenced the progress that they made.


Each of these findings is presented as a subheading below, followed by the evidence that supports this finding.

Learners progress on the pathway to employment

4.1.   Learners are continuing to enrol in the pilot.

There was a drop in enrolments from August to November 2021 (MR), likely due to COVID-19, and again in December 2021 and January 2022 due to school closures. Nevertheless, enrolments continued with increasing cumulative numbers from April 2021 to June 2022.

Figure 9: Numbers of enrolled learners, *source: monthly student report 30 June 2022*
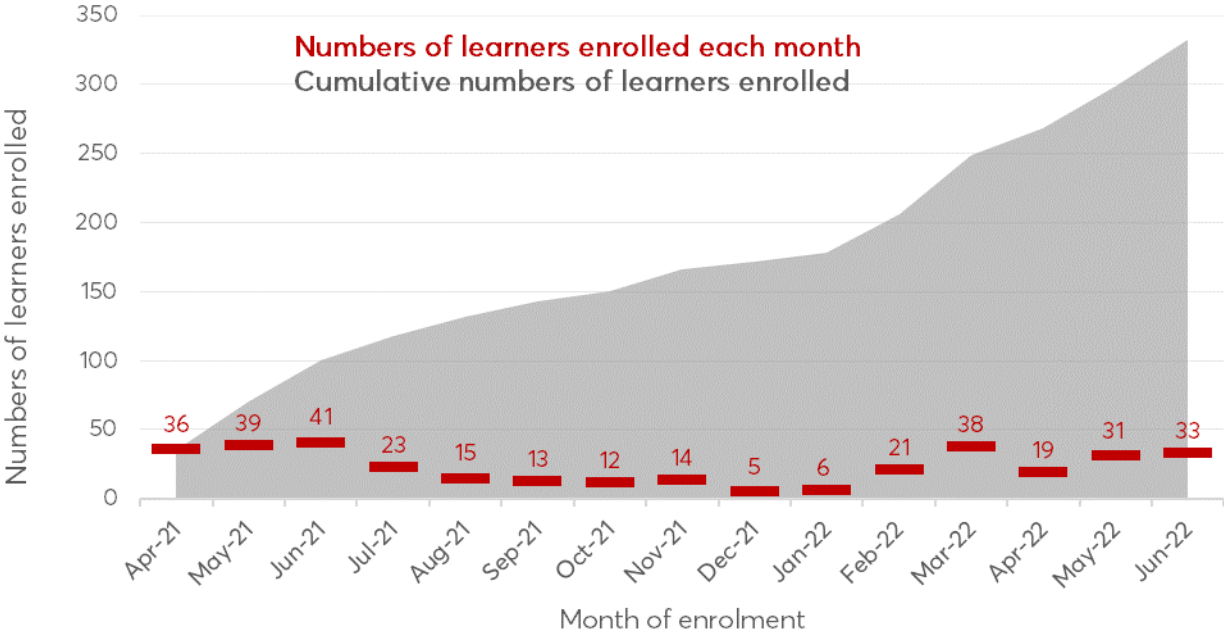
As noted above, the MoE reported they had extended communications with schools, aiming to increase the numbers of learners referred. Even though the school staff were thinking more broadly about the eligibility criteria over time (c.f. finding 1.12), the evidence in Figure 8 suggests that the communications had limited influence on learner enrolments. After February 2022, the enrolment numbers were similar to those evidenced prior to regional lockdowns commencing (July 2021) and early in the pilot, in Term 2 in 2021 (April – June 2021).

4.2.   Once enrolled, learners are making a pathway to employment.

Once learners have enrolled, the monthly student reports, case studies and secondary data demonstrated that learners are creating an employment pathway. As discussed above, consultants were building the relationships, which entailed organising initial meetings with the learners and then meeting with them in ways that considered their learners' specific needs (c.f. finding 1.15). The consultants also extended upon these core

relationships, setting up meetings and subsequently engaging with those around the learner, including the school staff (c.f. finding 2.4) and whānau (c.f. finding 2.5) where possible.

Beyond establishing the relationships and networks around the learner, consultants worked directly with learners to support them towards employment (c.f. findings 1.17, 3.4, 3.6). For example, identifying interests and opportunities for the learners, building employment skills (c.f. finding 1.16) while identifying and then working with employers to realise work experience options for the learner (finding 2.7).

Using the available longitudinal data (April 2021 to March 2022), we found that most learners in the pilot for 1 to 6 months (n=71) were building relationships and working towards employment at the onset of the support (90%), while a few were not engaged. These learners continued to build their relationships and work towards employment in their latest month of reporting (94%, n=67), while 3% (n=2) were placed in employment. What is further notable is that the 10% of learners (n=7) who were initially not engaging with the consultant began building relationships and working towards employment. Conversely, two learners (3%) that were initially engaged had either not returned to school or were no longer engaging in the pilot.

Figure 10: Learners in the pilot for 1 to 6 months (n=71 learners), showing their stage in the pilot upon enrolment (left side) and the stage in their latest month of reporting, *source: monthly student report (April 2021-March 2022)*
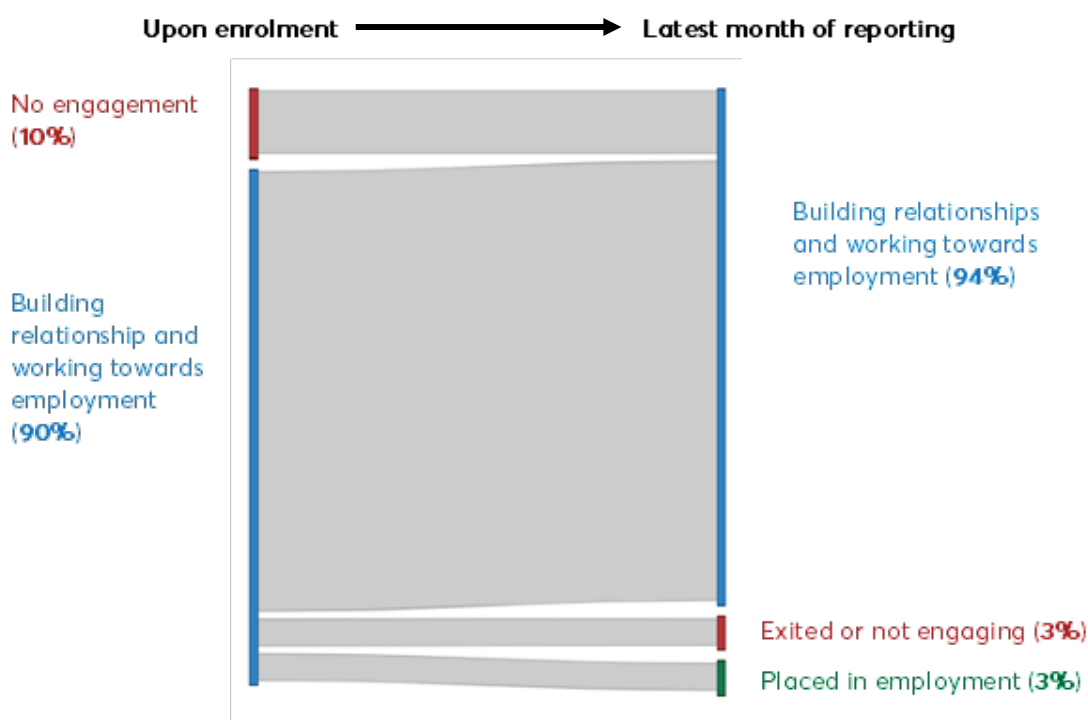
This pattern is somewhat similar when examining those learners that were in the pilot for a longer period of time. Using this same longitudinal data (April 2021 to March 2022), we found that most learners (71%, n=110) that were in the pilot for 7 or more months (n=154) continued to build relationships and work towards employment. This would make up the majority of these 154 learners, while the other learners had successfully been ready for employment (7%, n=11) or placed in employment (4%, n=6). The remaining 18% included

individuals who exited the pilot because they were moving home or transferring to another service or support (n=4), or that they weren't engaging for unknown reasons or sickness, or otherwise (n=23). This means that "exited or not engaging" should not be considered a failure of the pilot but rather unforeseen circumstances that arise in life.

Figure 11: Learners in the pilot for 7 months or more (n=154 learners), showing their stage in the pilot upon enrolment (left side) and the stage in their latest month of reporting, *source: monthly student report (April 2021-March 2022)*
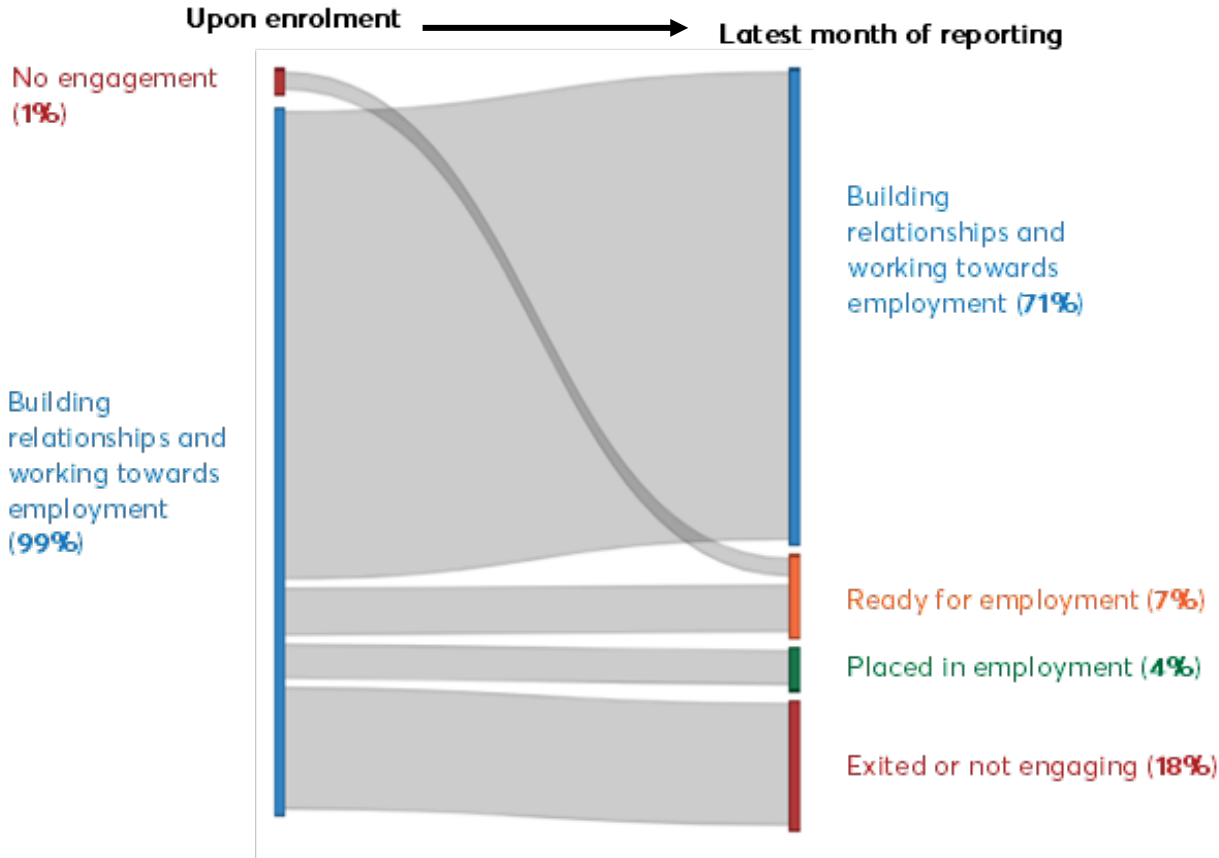
What is notable, irrespective of the amount of time in the pilot, is that the bulk of learners are continuing to receive support and work towards employment. This finding demonstrates consultants' ongoing efforts to support learners on their pathways.

What may support this continued engagement rather than unenrolment (i.e. "exited") is the funding structure. As shown in the secondary documents, payments are made to providers for the numbers of learners enrolled, with the payment limited to $4,000 per learner.[65] The payments are made upon learner enrolment, and then subsequent payments are made for reported progress towards employment, employment related training, pre-employment skills and/or in-work support. Thus there are financial incentives to continue to support learners and, as evidenced in the monthly student reports and case studies, many providers persevered to engage with learners to try to help them towards employment. The incentive is therefore likely supporting the perseverance, rather than limiting their support to a specific number of engagements or period of time.

[65] ESiS Indicative contract

4.3. Engagement nevertheless varied, which was likely heavily influenced by COVID-19.

In terms of engagement, 9.7% (n=27) of the 277 learners with information about their participation status on 30 June 2022 "did not participate" while 90.3% (n=250) "actively participated" (MR). The longitudinal data indicated, through open-ended qualitative reports, that the percentage of learners and providers not engaging from July to December 2021 varied between 9-38% of the enrolled learners. Outside of this time, non-engagement reached 6% at its highest level.

The analysis showed that some of the reasons learners didn't progress related to learner/whānau non-response (e.g. meeting no-shows or postponements, learner illness, including physical or mental health family matters) or the lack of opportunity to engage (e.g. regional disasters, school closures and school holidays). COVID-19 likely impacted on many of these reasons. The timeline below shows the largest proportion of disengagement occurring during August-December 2021, as COVID-19 cases increased and regional lockdowns were occurring.

Figure 12: Percentage of learners engaging in the pilot (red), in work experience (blue), not engaging (grey) and missing data (white) for each month, from April 2021 to February 2022, *source: monthly student report (April 2021-March 2022)*
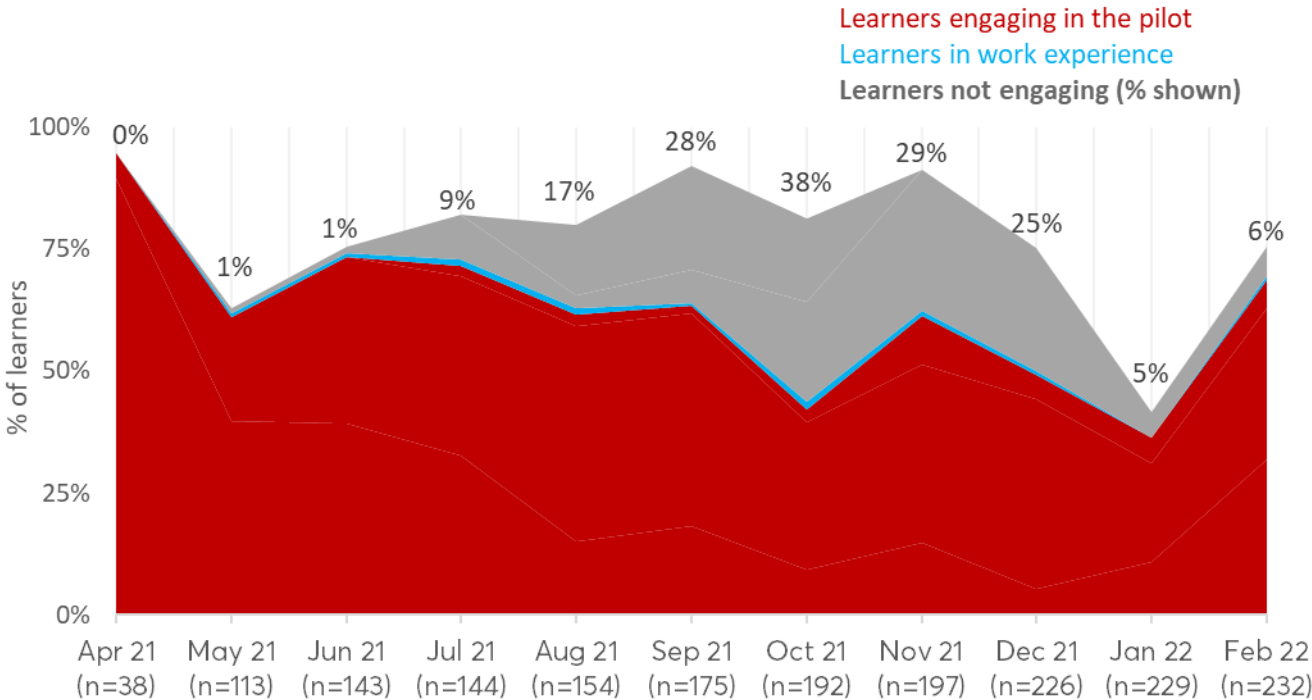
4.4. This pathway is not linear, with some learners realising work experience opportunities throughout their support.

The data were consistent in that progress is often a non-linear pathway for the learner. The following storyline has been adapted from monthly student reports and anonymised to demonstrate the progress of one learner over a 9-month period of support in the pilot.

In the early engagements, Jim* met with the consultant to identify his goals – Jim* has a long-term goal of a farming apprenticeship – and to create a CV. The consultant approached a range of employers for after-school work. In their next meeting, they reviewed the CV, with a subsequent meeting with an OT while the consultant helped Jim complete his CV. After another assessment and four months, a work experience opportunity was identified, where Jim gained experience over a 2-month period. The consultant proceeded to support Jim, identifying further work experience options and engaging with potential employers. In the most recent report, Jim and the consultant had contacted 15 local businesses to discuss after-school work and identified one as a potential option for school holiday work.

By November 2021, few learners in the case study schools had been engaged in work experience opportunities or similar (CS). Nevertheless, there was a hope quite broadly across all those engaged in the delivery of the pilot (CS) that the new year would bring far fewer interruptions and goal plans would progress. In 2021, some learners were looking forward to planned visits to employers or tertiary institutions (or had done so already), some had engaged in courses such as barista training, and one of the five case study learners had a work experience placement with animals. It should be highlighted that the service is not required to place learners into employment, but rather to help learners make a pathway towards employment.

More recent data, including the monthly student report for June 2022, showed that of those 188 learners that were actively participating and were enrolled at that point,[66] 10.1% (19 learners) were ready for employment and another 3.2% (6 learners) were in paid employment.

However, this is just one snapshot in time – the proportions of enrolled learners during the month of June (2022). When examining the longitudinal dataset, we were able to estimate the numbers of learners that had work experience at any stage of the pilot. Among those in the pilot for 1 or more months from April 2021 to March 2022 (n=225), 11% (n=24) were reported to have experienced work at some point.

In the case studies, learners were found to clearly identify and, in some cases, trial work or training options. In Canterbury, some learners were attending ARA Institute of Canterbury, a vocational training institute, one or two days a week while still attending their classes. In the Wellington region another learner attended Universal College of Learning (UCOL) once a week and reported they would probably attempt to do it again next year in order to pursue an early childhood education work goal. The coordinated efforts of the school, employment consultant and whānau assisted these learners to get themselves up each morning and get to their placement locations. One learner described how they "catch a bus around 7.30 each morning," in order to attend a course. The pilot support provided practical training in what it takes to get to a placement on time and work consistently throughout the day.

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[66] The following learners were removed from the analysis: 3 learners were designated as "end of service", 3 learners "no longer wants to participate"; 6 learners "left school…" and 2 learners "moved elsewhere in New Zealand".

4.5. For this cohort of learners, realising work experience can be challenging given barriers such as opportunity and transport relevant to disabilities.

ESiS providers consistently aligned to the best practice principle, according to the National Transition Guidelines, and helped learners identify and overcome barriers to learning and support. The lessons from the case studies demonstrated the unique challenges that disabled people face in gaining work experience. For example, one learner could not pursue an option because of the health and safety regulations limiting their participation on the building site.

Transportation was a common theme across the case studies as a barrier to disabled people's pathway to employment. The partnership between the consultants, schools and whānau assisted with some transportation issues, but not all of them could be overcome. For example, two schools in Canterbury were interested in sending learners to Project SEARCH, an initiative facilitated in Burwood Hospital, but considered the location and transport costs to be prohibitive. Beyond the costs relevant to transport, learners could not take transport independently to Burwood as it isn't centrally located.

Time and costs were also limiting in terms of options. In one case study, the work experience option was withdrawn by the employer because of COVID-19. One consultant further reported that the cost of entry to engage in some activities, such as up to $150 for taster courses, were limiting for some.

4.6. Consultants' flexibility and relationships were important to support disabled learners on their pathway.

Opportunities were sometimes limited, as exemplified above. The consultants' abilities to identify realistic work experience was only the first step, followed by identifying and engaging employers to make the opportunity available. Consultant flexibility was required, even when work experience options were found. One young person started working in a grocery store but was not enjoying it (MR). The consultant helped this learner find a job at a garden nursery that they would enjoy more and helped them resign from their job at the grocery store (MR). The consultant also helped the young person prepare for their job at the garden nursery by going through flash cards to help them learn the names and associated images of a variety of plants (MR). This demonstrates the importance of the individualised plan that is a critical component of the pilot. Here, the consultant took into consideration what was best for the learners' wellbeing in the longer term rather than simply placing them into work experience.

In 2021, one consultant noted that success was dependent on the relationship between the learner and their whānau, and the learner and whānau relationship with their community (CS). This was particularly important for Māori or Pacific learners, but equally so for learners or whānau involved with particular social networks (churches, the rainbow community, clubs and organisations). Establishing rapport also meant understanding the person and their values, and the experiences and values of their whānau and carers. Understanding the whānau in terms of their own expectations and concerns for the future of their learner is an important consideration. Some were highly motivated to support their learner into higher education or employment, while others were simply concerned for the future post-school, with some realising that employment in and of itself may not be the only consideration needed for successful transition planning.

Understanding of the personal and cultural position of the learner and whānau were necessary for successful planning and this required coordination with and understanding of both stakeholders.

4.7. Working in the secondary school context is not without its challenges.

Within the schools, the consultant needed to work closely with the person leading the pilot to coordinate learners leaving classes for set periods (for consultations, training or placements) and for joint consideration of diverse issues such as subject choices, attendance issues (especially if only certain classes were being avoided), counselling needs and bullying. Identifying opportunities when these meetings could occur with learners and whānau was sometimes found to be challenging (CS, MR), and therefore progress may have been stalled. However, if the individuals were fully engaged, and the partnership strong, these logistical challenges were not insurmountable. This suggests that the learners' motivation and the partnerships that employment consultants built strongly influenced the progress they make.

Not only logistics, but the intent of the learner to stay in school may limit their engagement in the service. Staying in school the whole two years was difficult for some learners in the programme (CS). One learner from 2021 who appeared to have been convinced to come back in 2022, after initially declaring they were going to leave, did not return for the second year (CS). Similarly, another learner in the 2022 case studies was adamant they were not returning to school the next year as they wanted to leave school with their Year 13 peers.

CONCLUSIONS

What do we conclude?

Overall, the pilot was successful, meeting all the expectations of the pilot in this initial period. Beyond these judgements and the identified value of the pilot during this initial stage of delivery, the conclusions in relation to the pilot goals are summarised below.

The Employment Service in Schools pilot stimulated confidence and self-belief and promoted employment and employment-related training as best options to disabled learners and their whānau.

The pilot was empowering for disabled learners and their whānau. Consultants built relationships and trust with learners and their whānau. This allowed them to get to know the learner, help them identify their strengths and interests, and ultimately the range of potential employment goals and opportunities for them. The approach focused on building confidence among disabled learners through a facilitated stepped process, seeking to inspire learner and whānau aspirations.

The focus on the learner was key and helped them to discuss not only their goals but their experienced barriers as well. Transportation was a key barrier for some learners, not only for those who experience physical disabilities but also for those who were managing anxieties. Where solutions to barriers could be identified they were often facilitated by the consultant. Where solutions were not possible, viable employment options were identified given the unique strengths and challenges.

The service was also effective, with multiple examples of options identified as well as learners progressing on the pathway to employment. Building relationships and trust with the learner and whānau are key to advance the idea of employment and training as viable options to individuals that may not have considered it otherwise. Research has shown that:

> "While people with disabilities are as likely as those without disabilities to express the desire for a job, they are less likely to be actively looking for a job, apparently due to less optimism about finding a suitable job. This lower optimism may reflect the very real recognition that one's impairments often constrict productivity in a number of jobs so that fewer suitable jobs are available, particularly if one has low education and training levels. Importantly, the lower optimism may also reflect perceptions that employer attitudes or culture—including prejudice, discrimination, and reluctance to make workplace accommodations—often decrease the chances of a job offer, promotion, or successful retention (Schur, L., Kruse, D., Blasi, J., Peter, B., 2003)."[67]

Building optimism and promoting these employment options requires an individualised approach, and the service provides exactly that. The service design provides a unique opportunity for disabled learners, providing consultants with the time necessary to build

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[67] Ali, M., Schur, L., Blanck, P. (2010). What Types of Jobs Do People with Disabilities Want?, J Occup Rehabil (2011) 21: 199-210.

the relationships necessary to consider the unique strengths and challenges related to disabled people.

The Employment Service in Schools brought together the support provided by schools, employers and other natural supports to promote and sustain employment for disabled people.

The pilot was situated within a school context and required consultants to engage with school staff in order to connect with and oftentimes meet with learners and whānau. The setting naturally promoted conversations around the learner, as well as bridging the support available to them through the school. The results showed that the selection process (through schools) may have limited enrolments in some ways, notably due to pre-existing views of disability and eligibility, despite the broad definition provided. However, the school approach may have also broadened the range of people that may have otherwise enrolled.

Although there was little evidence in the way of improved support provided by those individuals who were already around the learner, the results clearly demonstrated that the pilot brings together these individuals and engaged learners as part of the service delivery. These individuals include school staff relevant to the learner, as well as in some cases whānau and employers. Although it was unclear the extent to which pre-existing beliefs changed among those individuals who were already around the learner, there were examples of these natural supports supporting the learner.

Any change in limiting views would be important for the success of the pilot and in line with the pilot goal to raise the expectations of those around the disabled learner, helping to promote and even sustain employment in the long term. Research has shown quite broadly the importance of expectations on achievement. For example, teacher expectations of learners can facilitate or hinder their achievement, and specifically:

> "On the basis of different reviews and meta-analyses, the average effect of teacher expectations on subsequent student performance has been found to be relatively small (r=.1 to r=.2; Jussim & Harber, 2005) to moderate (d=0.43; Hattie, 2009). Negatively biased teacher expectations have a detrimental influence on student achievement, whereas positively biased expectations have a positive influence on future student careers (De Boer et al., 2010).[68]

Other research has shown how other people's expectations affect individuals' learning and effort more broadly.[69]

The pilot was coherent and demonstrated multiple examples of the consultant considering options within the school that were available for learners, as well as training

[68] Hester de Boer, Anneke C. Timmermans & Margaretha P. C. van der Werf (2018) The effects of teacher expectation interventions on teachers' expectations and student achievement: narrative review and meta-analysis, Educational Research and Evaluation, 24:3-5, 180-200, DOI: 10.1080/13803611.2018.1550834
[69] Sergio Román, Pedro J. Cuestas & Pedro Fenollar (2008) An examination of the interrelationships between self-esteem, others' expectations, family support, learning approaches and academic achievement, Studies in Higher Education, 33:2, 127-138, DOI: 10.1080/03075070801915882

and employment opportunities more broadly. In some cases, consultants also helped learners realise employment opportunities.

Nevertheless, there is a service gap beyond the pilot period, meaning that consultants are only available for a short period of time in a learners' life. This transition into adulthood is when the learners' plans would be actioned, and the school support would likely stop given the learner would no longer be enrolled. Although the pilot was effective insofar as helping the learners and whānau understand the different pathways, actioning this requires ongoing support and encouragement. Without the continued push from ESiS consultants, the encouragement and solutions-focused approach would again rely solely on the learner and whānau, and potentially other transition services that may not all be available to this specific cohort. This further emphasises the focus on improving the expectations of those around the learner, and the overall resilience and self-belief within the young person.

The Employment Service in Schools supported young people towards achieving their employment-related goals.

The results showed that the pilot was effective for engaged learners. The consultants facilitate opportunities for learners and whānau to be supported along learners' journeys to employment. By building relationships with the learners and the whānau, consultants have the chance to understand the individualised context for the learners. The consultants can facilitate and organise workshops or training sessions for the learners to help them achieve their employment goals. Some consultants often go to meet potential employers either with, or on behalf of, the learners. Consultants also frequently check on learners during work experience placements and can act and communicate as a go-between between learners, whānau and employers.

A key success of the pilot is the continued engagement with nearly all learners across the evaluation period. This means that learners are receiving the specialist support, working towards employment, identifying options and steps towards employment while addressing their specific needs with other supports and finding ways to address barriers, such as digital access and transport.

The consultants worked with the learner and sometimes whānau to work towards employment, with approximately 10% of learners realising some work experience option by March 2022.

The pilot design enables continued support, while the school context may have some limitations.

The pilot was successful in meeting the expectations of the pilot programme. It empowers learners and builds relationships across the pathway to employment. The funding model likely enables continued support for the enrolled learners. The consultants' strengths-based and responsive approach to learners helps learners towards employment.

Nevertheless, operating within a school context had both advantages and disadvantages. School timetables, hours of operation and closure periods meant that

opportunities for meeting were somewhat limited for learners as well as whānau. Further, school staff were involved in identifying the specific learners that may benefit from the pilot. This meant that some eligible learners may have missed out, while other learners were enrolled that may not have otherwise done so. Ensuring access for the range of learners that may benefit from the pilot will be a key next step for the service design.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Approach/Methodology

Our evaluation methodology enabled iterative cycles of learning, including two rounds of fast turnaround analysis and reporting, and made use of evidence available across the full pilot (pictured as 'Across pilot' in the figure below) as well as for a select cohort of learners and schools (pictured as 'Case studies' in the figure below). Considering the evidence twice allowed us to consider change according to the fixed elements set out above (e.g. the key criteria, key evaluation questions) while allowing for an adaptive approach (e.g. indicators and methods) across these two points to build a picture over time.

Figure 13: Overview of the evaluation methodology
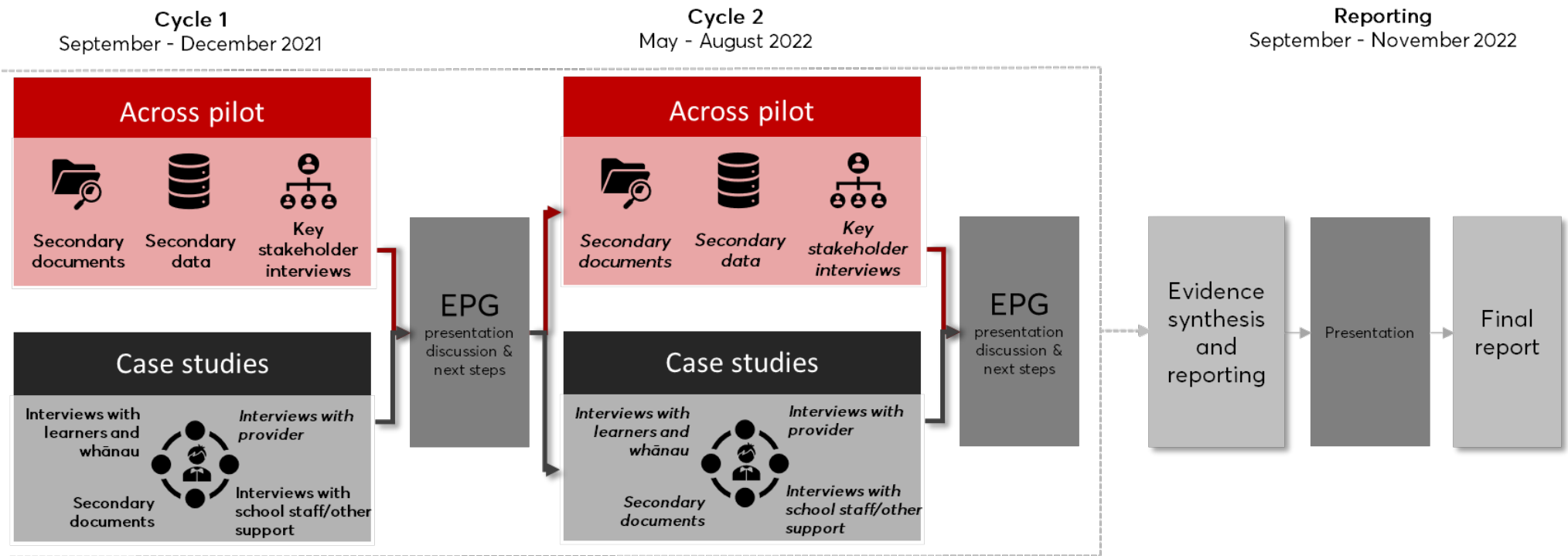
The evaluation actively involved key stakeholders in the evaluation process to maximise use.

The evaluation applied a participatory approach, to engage and empower those potentially affected by the evaluation[70] while also maximising the use of the evaluation throughout delivery. The evaluation team continued to engage relevant teams at the Ministry involved in either the operational, strategic, policy or analytical side of the approach. At the appropriate times we also involved other stakeholders.

Table 2: Stakeholders relevant to the pilot, and their role/interest in the evaluation

Stakeholder	Role/Interest	Involvement
IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS		
MSD, National contracts	**Role:** Funder, contract management **Interest:** Information relevant to design, implementation and outcomes	EPG, data collection (interviews), reporting sessions, final report
MSD, Insights	**Role:** Strategic support **Interest:** Information relevant to design, implementation and outcomes	EPG, data collection (interviews), reporting sessions, final report
MoE national office Sector Enablement & Support (SE&S)	**Role:** Strategic support in relation to schools, learners and whānau **Interest:** Information relevant to design, implementation and outcomes	EPG, data collection (interviews), reporting sessions, final report
MoE regional offices	**Role:** Support in relation to schools, learners and whānau in their region **Interest:** Information relevant to design, implementation and outcomes	Logistics regarding data collection (interviews), reporting sessions
School staff involved in the pilot (e.g. school leaders, teachers, teacher supports, career advisors)	**Role:** Manage enrolment and support within their school **Interest:** Information relevant to design, implementation and outcomes	EPG, data collection (interviews), reporting sessions, final report
Providers	**Role:** Lead enrolments, implementation with learners and whānau **Interest:** Information relevant to design, implementation and outcomes	EPG, data collection (interviews), and all reporting phases, final report
RECIPIENTS		
Learners and their whānau	**Role:** Receiving support **Interest:** Information relevant to their school	Data collection (interviews), final reporting sessions

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[70] Guijt, I. (2014). Participatory Approaches, Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation 5, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence. Retrieved from: http://devinfolive.info/impact_evaluation/img/downloads/Participatory_Approaches_ENG.pdf

Although the original design envisioned the possible inclusion of wider groups around the learner, greater effort was put towards increasing the numbers of learners in the evaluation given the lower-than-expected engagement rates in the first round of data collection.

We established an evaluation partnership group (EPG) dedicated to the evaluation, which supported the design and use of the evaluation.

Working with stakeholders ensures the work is accurate, informed by local knowledge, and confirms a shared understanding across the relevant teams. It is also important to bring together representatives of the different primary user groups dedicated to using the emerging evaluation evidence in order to maximise use. A formal evaluation partnership group (EPG) was established to ensure those with a stake in the success of the pilot have an equal say in the design, implementation and monitoring throughout the evaluation, guiding the processes and sharing power throughout the activity.

The EPG met twice to inform the design of the current evaluation. The EPG also met two more times so key stakeholders could use evidence and so that the evaluation approach remained appropriate and feasible, and provided accurate and useful evidence throughout the evaluation. These later two hui shared and made sense of the emergent findings and maximised use of the evaluation process throughout delivery. The feedback from each hui formed part of the evaluation data and informed the next stage of the evaluation and its report.

The EPG membership included individuals relevant to the design and implementation of the components and overall approach, as well as key contextual experts and those people the pilot sought to support. These perspectives included:

- management of the pilot (e.g. MSD Insights, MSD National Contracts teams)

- management of the pilot within schools (e.g. MoE Sector Enablement and Support Group, MoE Wellington regional office)

- implementation of the pilot (e.g. service providers)

- people with disabilities and their whānau, and those with lived experiences through transition services

- cultural expertise, particularly within a school context.

The EPG worked through collaboration, building upon the discussion to inform advice and decisions relevant to the pilot and evaluation.

A wider reference group was intended to be used to include learners' views more broadly. This was not pursued given the particular challenges of engaging schools and learners during Covid-19 and school timetables early in the pilot.

The evaluation focused on building a picture of progress over time.

A time-series approach allowed us to document progress of the pilot journey and identify learning at different stages of the pilot maturity. Progress was measured and

tracked across the pilot, as well as more deeply within specific schools in one region. The geographic focus of these two approaches is shown below.

Figure 14: Regions involved in the Employment Service in Schools pilot, and those regions included in the evaluation
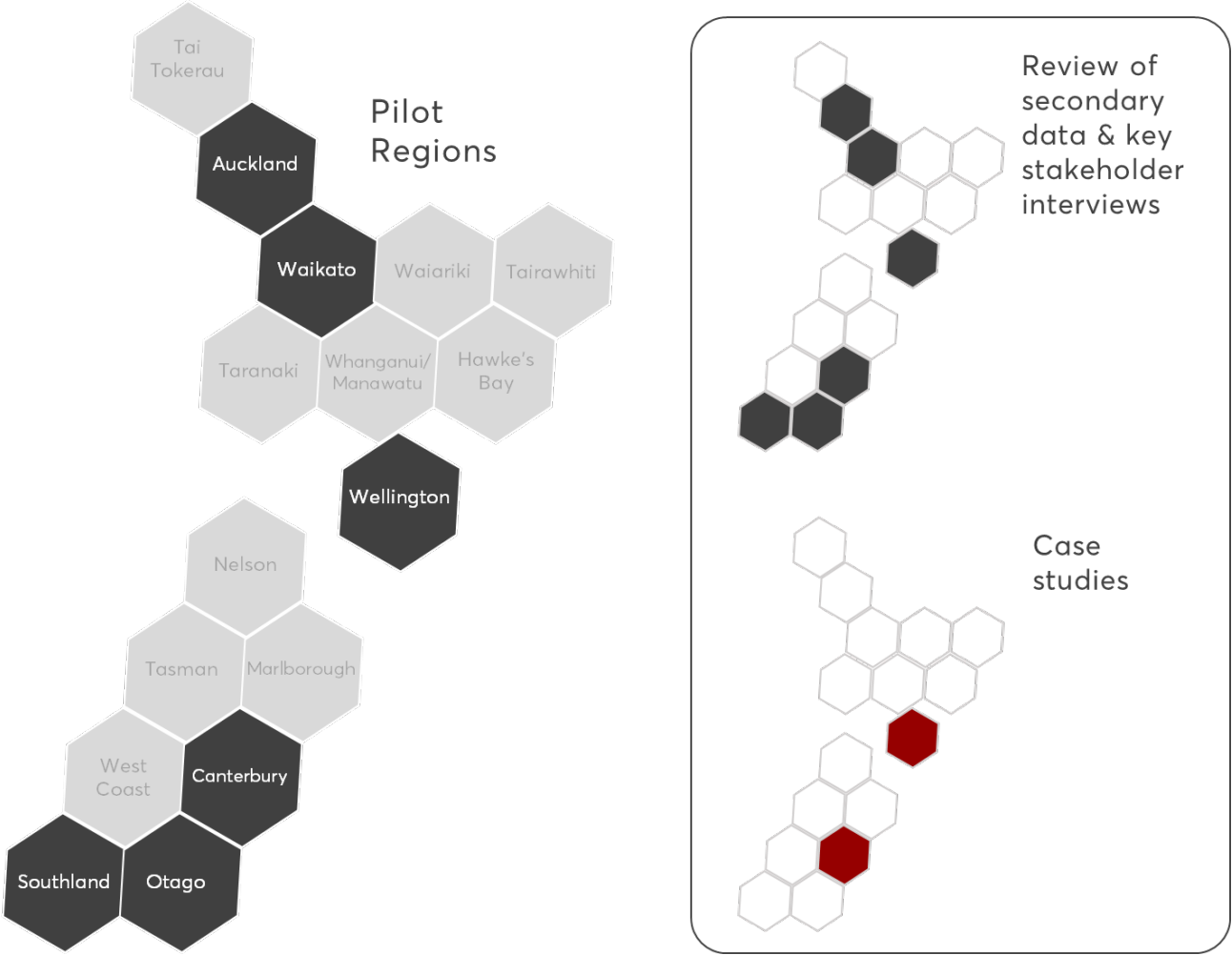
Across pilot data

We reviewed the **secondary data** available about the pilot design, delivery and achievements. The information was used to examine the unique characteristics of the pilot, which included information from MSD, including providers' narrative reports (up to October 2021) and monthly student reports from April 2021-March 2022, and the final report in June 2022. The learner pathways plans were not available, as any such plans are not submitted to MSD. Nevertheless, the monthly student reports provided narrative around learners' pathways for each month.

We also engaged those involved in the design and delivery of services in interviews lasting no more than 60 minutes via Zoom. This included key stakeholders from MSD (e.g. National Contracts), MoE (e.g. SE&S, regional offices) and providers. These same individuals were interviewed in both cycles, where they were available, to help track changes that occurred as the pilot matured.

We also engaged one full-Māori immersion secondary school (wharekura), and specifically the tumuaki kura, to explore the barriers and/or enablers that influence uptake. The kura was selected according to those engaged in the pilot, to support learning in terms of uptake and equity, in consultation with the Ministries of Social Development and Education.

The specific information we sought using these data is outlined below.

Table 3: Indicators and methods relevant to the pilot

Criteria	Indicators	Methods
Context	• Pilot description (e.g. funding, providers by region/uptake) • Schools involved in the pilot, context description (e.g. location, size, decile, type) in relation to New Zealand schooling context in the 5 regions • Demographic description of referrals overall (e.g. numbers, types of disabilities, age) and if possible, comparing other similar services	• Secondary documents and data
To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals to promote employment and employment-related training as 'best options' to disabled learners and their family and whānau?		
Effective	• Ability to identify work experience options	• Student monthly reports
To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals to support disabled people to believe in their ability to obtain employment?		
Effective	• Perceptions/self-belief about employment-related potential	• Student monthly reports
To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals to improve the support provided by schools, employers and other natural supports to promote and sustain employment for disabled people?		
Coherence	• Reported ability to manage pilot activities in line with other activities/capacity	• Interviews with providers, MSD and MoE regional and national staff
Partnership	• Triangulated reports of improved numbers and types of engagements in the core relationships involved in delivery	• Interviews with providers, MSD and MoE regional and national staff
Empowerment	• Ease of accessibility, by region and provider, school type and learner needs • Appropriateness of the pilot for Māori	• Student monthly reports • Interviews with tumuaki kura
Effective	• Numbers of stakeholders recognised as support available to learners in the plan	• Student monthly reports
To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals to support young people to achieve their employment-related goals?		
Coherence	• Alignment to the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) principles of self-determination; beginning early; person-centred; ordinary	• Interviews with partners: providers, MOE regional and national staff, MSD staff (may

Criteria	Indicators	Methods
	life outcomes; mainstream first; mana enhancing; easy to use; relationship building • Understanding of support available to learners and whānau along their journey to employment	include adapted *EGL Self-Review Resource*, c.f. Appendix B) • Student monthly reports
Effective	• Clear employment goals in plans • Clearly documented steps from now to employment	• Student monthly reports
	• Enabled pathway to employment	• Student monthly reports

Case studies

The case study method aimed to sample up to eight learners and their whānau representatives or caregivers (guardians) per region, per time period (November 2021 and April 2022). It further intended to sample each provider and school-based leads (i.e. SENCO, LSC, counsellors etc) responsible for overseeing the ESiS pilot. The methodology aimed to involve face-to-face interviews of up to one hour using open-ended questions relevant to the study criteria and conversation style dialogue (see interview guides in Appendix C). The same interviewer will visit the same schools and regions.

The guidance was to identify different ethnicities and the range of people with disabilities enrolled in the service where possible, and those learners that were engaged in the design of the pilot that occurred in Christchurch.

Permission to tape interviews was sought both from the student and their whānau representative or caregiver (guardian). Likewise, permission to engage in interviews and utilise the data therein would be provided in writing by both the learner and their whānau representative or caregiver. Similar permissions were sought for all other interviews.

The real time interviews and timetable for interviews were modified due to COVID-19. Initial interviews also coincided with school exam periods. Thus, fewer learners and whānau were interviewed in November 2021 than expected. Also, all South Island interviews occurred by Zoom as the Auckland interviewers were in lockdown. In total five learners and five whānau were interviewed in 2002, rather than the expected twelve (each).

The second phase of interviews in 2022 were postponed again due to COVID-19 related interruptions and lockdowns. Interviews occurred in June 2022 but included in excess of the full sample of expected learners across a wider range of schools (21 learners from six schools). Fewer whānau were available in the second time period mostly due to difficulties in lining up interview times within the periods the interviewers were available. One set of interviews involved a group of five learners interviewing together.

The majority of the learners interviewed were New Zealand European (n=4 in 2021 and n=20 in 2022), recruitment of learners was organised by the providers and school

personnel. The range of needs included people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and people with a range of neurodiverse needs and mental health support needs (i.e. anxiety, depression). One learner had attended the February 2021 information meeting, but none were involved in the pilot design.

The specific information we sought using these data is outlined below.

Table 4: Indicators and methods relevant to the learners within the pilot

Criteria	Indicators	Methods
Context	• Description of the schools in the Canterbury regions (e.g. range of sizes, deciles, and type) • Demographic description of referrals across the Canterbury region (e.g. types of disabilities, age range) • Demographic description of demand for services for individuals who live outside the areas with current service options[71]	• Secondary documents and data
To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals to promote employment and employment-related training as 'best options' to disabled students and their family and whānau?		
Empowerment	• Perceived relevance of the pathway to the learner, reflecting where they start and their goals	• Interviews with learner and whānau
Effective	• Ability to identify work experience options • Understanding of a range of employment opportunities or personal goals • Reported mechanisms, context, actions and reasons influencing identified options	• Document review (plans relevant to cases) • Interviews with learner and whānau
To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals to support disabled people to believe in their ability to obtain employment?		
Effective	• Perceptions/self-belief about employment-related potential and expectations of their own abilities. • Reported context, actions and reasons influencing self-beliefs	• Interviews with learners and whānau
To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals to improve the support provided by schools, employers, and other natural supports, to promote and sustain employment for disabled people?		
Coherence	• Reported range of activities within the school in relation to support/activities for people with disabilities • Reported ability to manage support/activities	• Interviews with school staff/leaders, providers • Interviews with learners and whānau

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[71] Email address receiving these requests: Employment_in_Schools@msd.govt.nz

Criteria	Indicators	Methods
Partnership	• Triangulated reports of improved numbers and types of engagements in the core relationships relevant to the learner (the 'natural supports'). • Collective response around the young person	• Interview with school staff/leaders, providers, learners and whānau
Empowerment	• Ease of accessibility for support • Manageable activities for the learner/whānau • Reports of feeling valued	• Data review (uptake for region/school) • Interviews with learners and whānau
Effective	• Belief in the young person's employment-related potential and expectations of their abilities • Perceptions about disabilities and employment • Understanding of the different pathways and support available to young people • Reported mechanisms, context, actions and reasons influencing beliefs about opportunities for disabled people	• Interviews with school staff, support around the young person, whānau
To what extent, and how, is the Employment Service in Schools meeting its goals to support young people to achieve their employment-related goals?		
Coherence	• Understanding of support available to the learner/whānau along their journey to employment	• Document review (plans) • Interviews with partner (school staff) and recipients (learners and whānau)
Effective	• Reported mechanisms, context, actions and reasons influencing understanding of support available to achieve employment goals • Clear employment goals in plans • Clear, documented steps from now to employment • Understanding of steps required to achieve employment	• Interviews with recipients (learners and whānau) • Document review (plans)

Alignment with the EGL principles

As the evaluation took place during an early phase of a comprehensive change, the EGL principles became a guide to designing the areas of focus for this evaluation and associated analysis. Particular attention was given to how learners and whānau experiences reflect the intent of the EGL principles and how emerging practices aligned to the new way of working. Our approach was to consider information gathered in the context of the EGL principles as a primary reference point in the new landscape (c.f. Context section).

Table 5: Enabling Good Lives principles and examples

EGL principles	Examples of EGL aligned approaches:
Self-determination: Disabled people are in control of their lives.	Being learner and whānau led
Beginning early: Invest early in families and whānau to support them to be aspirational for their disabled child; to build community and natural supports; and to support disabled children to become independent, rather than waiting for a crisis before support is available.	Using aspirational approaches and proactive practices
Person-centred: Disabled people have supports that are tailored to their individual needs and goals, and that take a whole life approach rather than being split across programmes.	Customised and joined-up approaches
Ordinary life outcomes: Disabled people are supported to live an everyday life in everyday places; and are regarded as citizens with opportunities for learning, employment, having a home and family, and social participation – like others at similar stages of life.	Community contribution and inclusion
Mainstream first: Disabled people are supported to access mainstream services before specialist disability services.	Accessing universal services and supports
Mana enhancing: The abilities and contributions of disabled people and their whānau are recognised and respected.	Strengths based approaches
Easy to use: Disabled people have supports that are simple to use and flexible.	Clear information, processes and communication Flexibility
Relationship building: Supports build and strengthen relationships between disabled people, their whānau and community.	Prioritising relationship development

Rubrics

The evidence was synthesised by dimensions, pulling together information to make judgements about the worth of the programme for New Zealand in terms of empowerment, partnership, coherence and effectiveness. The following ratings were

used to guide judgements about the merit and worth of the pilot in relation to these key criteria. The process ensured the performance could be assessed objectively.

Table 6: Performance of the programme according to four criteria

Dimension	In development	Achieving expectations	Exceeding expectations
Empowerment	No clear evidence of equitable access and delivery approach, ease of access, manageable activities; choices available to learners and whānau; feeling valued and respected – participation, partnership and protection	Inconsistent evidence	Consistent evidence of ease of access, manageable activities; feeling valued and respected – participation, partnership and protection
Partnership	No clear partnerships evidenced between delivery teams (Ministries + providers); or learners and whānau + providers + school staff + TEO/employers	Inconsistent partnerships evidenced between delivery teams (Ministries + providers); or learners and whānau + providers + school staff + TEO/employers	Consistent partnerships evidenced between delivery teams (Ministries + providers); or learners and whānau + providers + school staff + TEO/employers
Coherence	The pilot is not aligned to the EGL principles; little or no consistent pathway to employment identified; confusion for school staff, learners and whānau in terms of existing activities.	The pilot is aligned to the EGL principles, albeit somewhat inconsistently; pathway to employment demonstrated for some learners, although not consistently; some clarity for school staff, learners and whānau in terms of other activities.	The pilot is consistent in alignment to the EGL principles; plans and feedback consistently demonstrate a clear pathway for learners and whānau; individuals are clear about the pilot.
Effectiveness	No clear progress made in terms of service goals and expectations among learners, whānau, educators and other supports, or progress along the pathway to employment.	Some progress made in service goals, although it is inconsistent across the evaluand.	Clear progress made in achievement for the service goal; clear progress being made along the pathway to employment.

The evaluation evidence was synthesised first, according to these rubrics (subsections in the findings chapter) to more easily inform decisions about the future delivery of the pilot services; and second, as a storyline (bold headings in the findings chapter) to document the progress of the pilot.[72]

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[72] The KEQs are answered in the conclusions chapter.

Appendix B: Information sheet and consent forms

Evaluation of the Employment Service in Schools Pilot for Disabled Young People

Information sheet for key stakeholders (Ministry staff, providers, Kura Kaupapa Māori)

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) funds an Employment Service to support disabled adults into open employment, paid at or above the minimum wage. Budget-20 provided an additional $12.5 million over two years to expand and strengthen this service in response to COVID-19. A proportion, up to $2.5 million a year, is being used to invest in an Employment Services in Schools pilot. The Ministry of Education is a key partner and has been involved in the design and setting up of this pilot.

The pilot aims to promote employment and employment-related training as 'best options' to participants and their whānau, during the last 2 years of secondary school; and to provide individualised support to help young people to achieve their employment-related goals. A range of outcomes are expected, including that more young people enter employment or employment-related training when they leave school.

Why are we doing this evaluation?

An evaluation has been commissioned to help evidence the value of the support for the various groups involved, including students, their family and whānau and other support people, schools, and employers. The evaluation will also seek to understand 'what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects, and how?'. These findings will be especially valuable for designing support that is responsive to the needs of young people in the last years of schooling.

What does the evaluation include?

We'd like to engage those designing and delivering the pilot in an interview or a group interview, as appropriate. Not everyone will be involved in the interviews, but rather individuals will be selected according to those available to take part and in regions that have the best opportunities to support learning.

The interview will help us understand what is being done on-the-ground in terms of delivery and how this design and/or delivery is being adapted for the given contexts.

How will my information be used?

Your information will be used only for evaluation of the pilot. It will help us learn where the Ministry of Social Development might need to make changes to better support people with disabilities and their whānau. It will also inform decisions about if and how the pilot should be provided in the future. The information will be deleted or destroyed 6 months after the report is submitted.

What do I do if I don't want to participate?

Participation is voluntary. If you don't want to participate, this will not affect you in any way. Your employer (or funder, in the case of providers) will not know if you participated or not.

Who is undertaking the evaluation?

The Ministry of Social Development has commissioned two independent research and evaluation companies, Standard of Proof and Standards and Monitoring Services (SAMS), to undertake the evaluation.

Are there any risks from my involvement?

There are minimal risks. The few questions will focus on your context in relation to the pilot, and your experiences with designing and delivering the pilot and other related initiatives. The information and reported findings won't identify you or any individuals who took part. However, in group interviews, it is not possible to guarantee that what you say will not be disclosed by other participants.

Questions, or want to know more?

If you have any questions about the evaluation, you can call Standard of Proof (team@standardofproof.nz) to find out more. You can also ask for a copy of the evaluation report after August 2022.

Privacy Statement

- We are collecting information for the purposes of undertaking a formal evaluation of the Evaluation of the Employment Service in Schools Pilot for Disabled Young People. We will only use this information for evaluating the approach and to enable us to identify improvements and make decisions about the approach.

- The collection, storage and use of personal information will be in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020. Under that Act, individuals have the right to access any personal information that we hold about them and can ask for it to be corrected.

Consent form: Key Stakeholder Interviews

The evaluation will carry out interviews with a selection of individuals designing and/or delivering the pilot. We would like to include you in the interviews. The information will help the Ministry of Social Development make improvements and decisions about how employment support should be provided in the future.

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided, and I am interested in taking part in the interviews in relation to evaluation of the Employment Service in Schools Pilot. I understand that my discussions will be recorded, and this recording will be used for note-taking purposes only.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Evaluation of the Employment Service in Schools Pilot for Disabled Young People

Information sheet for whānau

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) funds an Employment Service to support disabled adults into open employment, paid at or above the minimum wage. Budget-20 provided an additional $12.5 million over two years to expand and strengthen this service in response to COVID-19. A proportion, up to $2.5 million a year, is being used to invest in an Employment Services in Schools pilot. The Ministry of Education is a key partner and has been involved in the design and setting up of this pilot.

The pilot aims to promote employment and employment-related training as 'best options' to participants and their whānau, during the last 2 years of secondary school; and to provide individualised support to help young people to achieve their employment-related goals. A range of outcomes are expected, including that more young people enter employment or employment-related training when they leave school.

Why are we doing this evaluation?

An evaluation has been commissioned to help evidence the value of the support for the various groups involved, including students, their family and whānau and other support people, schools, and employers. The evaluation will also seek to understand 'what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects, and how?'. These findings will be especially valuable for designing support that is responsive to the needs of young people in the last years of schooling.

What does the evaluation include?

We'd like to engage those receiving support as part of the pilot in an interview or group interview, as appropriate. Not everyone will be involved in the interviews, but rather individuals will be selected according to those available to take part in schools that were selected.

The interview will help us understand how the learners and whānau access and receive support, and what changes (if any) have occurred as a result of this support.

How will my information be used?

Your information will be used only for evaluation of the pilot. It will help us learn where the Ministry might need to make changes to better support people with disabilities and their whānau. It will also inform decisions about if and how the pilot should be provided in the future. The information will be deleted or destroyed 6 months after the report is submitted.

What do I do if I don't want to participate?

Participation is voluntary. If you don't want to participate, this will not affect you in any way.

Who is undertaking the evaluation?

The Ministry of Social Development has commissioned two independent research and evaluation companies, Standard of Proof and Standards and Monitoring Services (SAMS), to undertake the evaluation.

Are there any risks from my involvement?

There are minimal risks. The few questions will focus on your context and experiences with any of the support, and any changes that occurred as a result of this support. Although schools and providers will likely know that you have participated, they will not know what you have shared in the interview. The reported findings won't identify you or any individuals who took part. However, in group interviews, it is not possible to guarantee that what you say will not be disclosed by other participants.

Questions, or want to know more?

If you have any questions about the evaluation, you can call Standard of Proof (team@standardofproof.nz) to find out more. You can also ask for a copy of the evaluation report after August 2022.

Privacy Statement

- We are collecting information for the purposes of undertaking a formal evaluation of the Evaluation of the Employment Service in Schools Pilot for Disabled Young People. We will only use this information for evaluating the approach and to enable us to identify improvements and make decisions about the approach.

- The collection, storage and use of personal information will be in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020. Under that Act, individuals have the right to access any personal information that we hold about them and can ask for it to be corrected.

Consent form: whānau

The evaluation will carry out interviews with a selection of individuals being supported by the pilot. We would like to include you in the interviews. The information will help the Ministry of Social Development make improvements and decisions about how employment support should be provided in the future.

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about the evaluation.

- ☐ I agree to my child(ren) taking part in the interviews in relation to evaluation of the Employment Service in Schools Pilot. I understand that their discussions will be recorded, and this recording will be used for note-taking purposes only.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Evaluation of the Employment Service in Schools Pilot for Disabled Young People

Information sheet for learners

Disabled people and their families are able to get a new type of support for getting a job.

SAMS and Standard of Proof want to talk to people. We want to find out what you think.

SAMS is run by disabled people and families

We want to know what you do and what you like.

We want to find out what you think can be done better.

You can choose to talk with us.

No-one else will know what we talk about.

We make sure what we talk about is private. What you say is kept safe.

We mix all the information together. This helps keep things private. And we never use names.

You can ask us as many questions as you like.

The things we learn from everyone helps us understand what is happening now. And what everyone wants.

The interviewer will help you. They will help you understand any questions.

You don't have to answer all the questions.

You can choose to miss some questions out.

The interview will take about 45 minutes.

If you need to talk with anyone about this chat after we have gone. You can call ….

Consent form: Learners
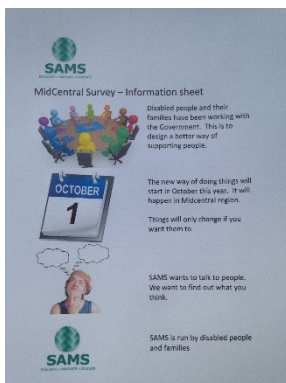
I have read or been told about the chat today

I have been given the information sheet.

I understand what it is saying.

I know I can ask questions any time.

I know I can ring …. if I want to know more about this.

I know that what I say will NOT change the support I get.

I know it is my choice to do the interview.

I can answer questions if I want to.

It is okay to stop at any time.

I can ask for what I say NOT to be used.

I know that if I do this I need to tell ….. before everyone's information is mixed together.

No one but Standard of Proof and SAMS will ever know what I said.

My answers are private and protected.

What I say will be linked with other information about the support I get.

This information is held already by the Ministry of …...

I am happy for … to talk with my family or friends too.

But NOT about me or what I said.

Only about what they think of support services.

I have had a chance to ask questions about this.

I can say NO to using the tape recorder if I want.

I have had a chance to ask questions about this.

I understand this information.

YES

I DO NOT understand this information.

NO

If you understand do you....

Agree to take part in this survey.

YES / NO

If you understand can we also contact a family member / friend for a different survey.

YES / NO

If you understand can we tape our talk with you.

YES / NO

If yes, please give your name.

....

....

Today's date

....

Your signature

....

Interviewers Signature   ....

Appendix C: Interview guides

Key stakeholder interview guide: Time 1

Welcome

- o Welcome and karakia
- o Mihi mihi
- o Kaupapa o te rā: approach and purpose
- o Review the information sheet
- o Provide opportunity to ask any questions
- o Review consent forms
- o Confirm acceptance (or not) of recording

Context and connections

1. If you think of the pilot in terms of a network of multiple relationships, how would you describe the different people relevant in this pilot
   - o Probe to:
     - i. Ministry of Education
     - ii. Ministry of Social Development
     - iii. Provider
     - iv. Employers
     - v. Tertiary Education Orgs
     - vi. Local community groups
     - vii. Whānau / learners
     - viii. Other
2. Describe how information is shared between these groups with you when supporting the learner (does it come directly from them to you, or through another group)?
3. Describe **any lessons learned in terms of connections** to enable employment for participants.

Activities and partnership

4. We understand that the pilot includes staff at both the Ministry of Ed and MSD. What is your role in implementing the pilot (title and responsibilities)?
5. How does your role work alongside MSD/MoE? What **does the process look like?**
6. What activities have been put into place to support collaboration and partnership across agencies (e.g. meetings, shared document libraries, sharing data)?
7. What makes collaboration challenging across agencies?

Activities

8. Describe the range of employment focussed programmes that aim support for people with disabilities in their final two years of schooling.
9. Other than what you described here, what else is available to young people more generally?
   - o How is the pilot unique? Overlap?

10. How does this pilot work alongside the other support available to learners?
11. How are the range of activities managed with your workload?
    o What are the foreseen challenges with regards to any future expansion? Any opportunities?
12. What has been put in place to allow ease of accessibility for learners?

Closing

o Kōrero whakamutunga: confirm next steps and key responsibilities
o Karakia whakamutunga: closing prayer
o Hākari, shared kōrero and aroha.

Key stakeholder interview guide: Time 2

Welcome

o Welcome and karakia

o Mihi mihi

o Kaupapa o te rā: approach and purpose

o Review the information sheet

o Provide opportunity to ask any questions

o Review consent forms

o Confirm acceptance (or not) of recording

Activities and partnership

1. Has your role or responsibilities changed at all in the past six months implementing the pilot?

2. Have other national-level roles and responsibilities changed at all in the last six months? (mgmt., buy-in)

3. How do the national-level roles support young people to achieve their employment related goals?

    o Improving self-belief

    o Improving broader support around the young person

4. Thinking of the future, blue skies thinking, how could these national-level roles further support young people to achieve their employment related goals?

    o **Enable coherence** with government priorities, and activities within the schools and for learners and whānau

    o **Enable partnership**, and strong, reciprocal relationships with communities, providers, learners and whānau – making greater use of existing networks (regional offices, work brokers, LSCs)

- o **Empower** those the pilot seeks to support, in particular for the learners and whānau.

- o **Effectiveness** in terms of building self-belief and improving broader support for learners and whānau.

5. What are the foreseen challenges with regards to any future expansion? Any opportunities?

Closing

- o Kōrero whakamutunga: confirm next steps and key responsibilities
- o Karakia whakamutunga: closing prayer
- o Hākari, shared kōrero and aroha.

Key stakeholder interview guide supplement: additional questions for school leaders

1. If you think of the pilot in terms of a network of multiple relationships, how would you describe the different people relevant to this pilot.
2. How do school staff support or engage with this pilot?
    - o Has this way of working evolved at all since the beginning of the pilot?
3. Describe **any lessons learned in terms of partnerships** to enable employment for participants.
4. What employment-focussed programmes or support is available to young people in your school?
5. Are any of these programmes or support helping people with disabilities in their final two years of schooling?
6. How does this pilot work alongside the other support available to learners?
7. Has there been anything different put into place among your staff to support the pilot, if any?

    Probe to:

    - o Numbers of types of engagements
    - o Meetings
    - o Shared document libraries or shared data
8. How are the range of activities relevant to the pilot managed with your school's capacity?
    - o What are the foreseen challenges with regards to any future expansion? Any opportunities?
9. What has been put in place to allow ease of accessibility for learners?
10. Can you describe **any lessons learned** that could further enable employment for learners with disabilities?

Key stakeholder interview guide supplement: Additional questions for providers

1. If you think of the pilot in terms of a network of multiple relationships, how would you **describe the different people relevant to this pilot.**
2. How does your role work alongside these people (e.g. MSD/MoE, school staff, employers, whānau and learners)?
   o H**as this way of working evolved at all since the beginning of the pilot?**
3. Describe **any lessons learned in terms of partnerships** to enable employment for participants.
4. What employment-focussed programmes or support available **to young people at the schools?**
5. How does this pilot work alongside any other support available to learners?
6. Are there other opportunities for you to work with any other supports available to young people?
7. How is the pilot unique or overlap with other programmes in terms of:
   o Ease of accessibility
   o Service provision along the learner's journey to employment
8. What influences the way you deliver services?

   Probe to:

   o School context
   o Pilot design or the contract
   o Funding
   o Learners interests and needs
9. What are the foreseen challenges with regards to any future expansion? Any opportunities?

School staff interview guide: Kura Kaupapa Māori

Welcome

o Welcome and karakia

o Mihi mihi

o Kaupapa o te rā: approach and purpose

o Review the information sheet

o Provide opportunity to ask any questions

o Review consent forms

o Confirm acceptance (or not) of recording

Context

1. Description of the school context

   Probe to

   o Description of the school community

- o   Learners, and types of disabilities supported in the school

- o   Types of employment-related programmes/initiatives in the school

2. Describe employment opportunities available to the learners with disabilities locally

   Probe to

   - o   the local context influencing the beliefs about work opportunities (e.g. types of disabilities, types of support available, types of employment available)

3. Describe how your school became involved with ESiS
4. What were some of the reasons you decided to take part in this specific initiative?
   - o   Access (e.g. ease of accessibility, by region and provider, school type and learner needs, etc)
   - o   Delivery (e.g. provider approach, delivery within schools, etc)
   - o   Meaningful for Māori and Pacific people
   - o   Outcomes
5. Does the support align to your school philosophy, mana or ethos?
6. How is the provider working with your school?
7. Has the provider built additional connections with your school to support people with disabilities towards employment, or otherwise?
8. Have you seen any changes in your school staff, whānau or students since the support started? This can include very small or big changes, such as their expectations of any disabled people, how they work with them, what they say.
9. How many students are receiving the support from the provider?
10. Have you seen any changes in your learners since the support started? This can include very small or big changes, such as their expectations of self.
11. Have any of your students receiving the support made progress towards their employment related goals?

Closing

- o   Kōrero whakamutunga: confirm next steps and key responsibilities

- o   Karakia whakamutunga: closing prayer

- o   Hākari, shared kōrero and aroha.

Whānau interview guide

Welcome

- o   Welcome and karakia

- o   Mihi

- o   Kaupapa o te rā: approach and purpose

- o   Review the information sheet

- o   Provide opportunity to ask any questions

- o   Review consent forms
- o   Confirm acceptance (or not) of recording

Context

- Describe job opportunities available to your child.

    Probe to

    - o   the local context influencing employment opportunities (e.g. learner-context: types of disability; local-context: types of support available, types of local employment options available; attitudes and beliefs; other)
    - o   changes in understanding of these opportunities available since <insert timeframe relevant to pilot>, and the influencing factors
- Describe work experience or study opportunities available to your child

    Probe to

    - o   the local context influencing work experience or study opportunities available (e.g. types of disability, local employment opportunities)
- Consider the EGL Self review resource

Relevant activities

- Describe the range of activities to support/activities specifically for people with disabilities, and your child
- Describe the activities your child takes part in

    Probe to

    - o   how these are managed in the whānau
- Describe any lessons learned in terms of managing activities to enable employment.
- Describe how the pilot is unique (or not) from these other activities.

    Probe to

    - o   Coherence
    - o   Access (e.g. ease of accessibility, by region and provider, school type and learner needs, etc)
    - o   Delivery (e.g. provider approach, delivery within schools, etc)
    - o   Meaningful for Māori and Pacific people
    - o   Outcomes

Knowledge and Experience: Pathways

- Describe example pathways promoted for your child?
- Describe any desired employment related-outcomes for child
    - o   If outcomes identified,
        - ▪   describe how they can achieve this (steps involved)

    probe to how this knowledge was formed and influenced

- Describe the pathway your child has identified for themselves (if they have identified a pathway)

  Probe to

  o the context that may have rationalised this choice (e.g. types of disability, types of support available, types of employment available, other)
  o the mechanisms that may have influenced this choice (e.g. pilot, other activities, other)
  o the outcome – what was achieved thus far? What are the next steps along this pathway?
- Describe any lessons learned in terms of pathways to enable employment for disabled people.

Connections

- Describe the range of different connections with people/groups that support employment for your child (who and how)
  o Ministry of Education
  o Ministry of Social Development
  o Provider
  o Employers
  o TEOs
  o Local community groups
  o Whānau
  o Other
- Present network map visual. Can you exemplify the specific connections around your child.
- Describe how information is shared between these groups (Refer network map: does it come directly from them to you, or through another group)?
- Describe any lessons learned in terms of connections to enable employment for disabled people.

Closing

o Kōrero whakamutunga: confirm next steps and key responsibilities

o Karakia whakamutunga: closing prayer

o Hākari, shared kōrero and aroha.

Learner interview guide

Welcome

o Welcome and karakia

o Mihi

o Kaupapa o te rā: approach and purpose

o Review the information sheet

o Provide opportunity to ask any questions

- o Review consent forms
- o Confirm acceptance (or not) of recording

Context

- Describe the types of jobs available to you.

  Probe to

  - o the local context influencing employment opportunities (e.g. learner-context: types of disability; local-context: types of support available, types of local employment options available; attitudes and beliefs; other)
  - o changes in understanding of these opportunities available since <insert timeframe relevant to pilot>, and the influencing factors
- Describe work experience or study opportunities available to you

  Probe to

  - o the local context influencing work experience or study opportunities available (e.g. types of disability, local employment opportunities)
- Consider the Youth Employment Survey questions

Relevant activities

- Describe the range of activities to support/activities specifically for people with disabilities, and you
- Describe the activities you are involved in

  Probe to

  - o how these are managed by you, your school and in the whānau
- Describe how the pilot is unique (or not) from these other activities.

  Probe to:

  - o ease of accessibility
  - o feeling valued
  - o collective response around your goals
- Describe any lessons learned in terms of managing activities to enable employment.

Knowledge and Experience: Pathways

- Describe any job ideas or goals relevant to you
  - o If goal identified:
    - describe how they can achieve this (steps involved)
    - probe to how this knowledge was formed and influenced, and changed over time
- Describe the pathway to reach your goal

  Probe to

  - o the context that may have rationalised this choice (e.g. types of disability, types of support available, types of employment available, other)

- o the mechanisms that may have influenced this choice (e.g. pilot, other activities, other)
  - o the outcome – what was achieved thus far? What are the next steps along this pathway?
- Describe any lessons learned in terms of pathways to enable employment for disabled people.

Connections

- Describe the range of different connections with people/groups that support employment for you (who and how)
  - o Ministry of Education
  - o Ministry of Social Development
  - o Provider
  - o Employers
  - o TEOs
  - o Local community groups
  - o Whānau
  - o Other
- Present network map visual. Can you exemplify the specific connections around you?
- Describe if/how these groups help you in achieving your goals
- Describe how information is shared between these groups (Refer network map: does it come directly from them to you, or through another group)?
- Describe any lessons learned in terms of connections to enable employment for disabled people.

Closing

- o Kōrero whakamutunga: confirm next steps and key responsibilities
- o Karakia whakamutunga: closing prayer
- o Hākari, shared kōrero and aroha.

STANDARD OF PROOF

Evaluation Research Strategy