



Q1: What is the Ministry doing, both immediately and long-term, to ensure Pacific early learning services can remain viable, retain qualified teachers, keep fees affordable for families, and access fair funding and pay parity settings?

The Ministry acknowledges that increasing operational costs are placing significant pressure on early learning services. These pressures can have effects to service viability, the ability to retain qualified teachers, and the affordability of fees for families. A range of current and planned initiatives are in place to support services, workforce sustainability, and whānau.

1. Early Childhood Education (ECE) Funding System Review

A comprehensive review of the ECE funding system is currently underway, led by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG), appointed by Hon David Seymour. The MAG has completed its discovery phase, engaging widely across the sector to identify challenges and opportunities, including input from Pacific services, leaders, and organisations. A summary of this feedback is publicly available.

Consultation on indicative funding options is scheduled for mid-year. The MAG will provide final advice to the Minister later in the year. This advice may inform future changes to the funding system, with affordability and access identified as key priorities. Final decisions will be made by the Government following consideration of this advice.

2. Targeted Support for Pacific Services

The Strengthening Pacific Early Learning programme has been providing governance and management support to Pacific services since 2020. Initially established as a four-year initiative, it has been extended through to June 2026, with strong uptake across the sector.

In addition, Ministry staff provide direct support to individual services, including advice and connection to relevant supports. Pacific-focused external support networks are also available. Beyond 2026, professional learning opportunities will continue through SELO (Strengthening Early Learning Opportunities) funding.

3. Pay Parity

Pay parity arrangements are being considered as part of the MAG funding system review. Services are encouraged to monitor updates as this work progresses. It is important to note that employment conditions, including remuneration, are determined by the service provider (governance board or licence holder).

4. Retention of Qualified Teachers

Workforce retention remains an ongoing challenge. The Pacific Immersion Teachers' Allowance (PITA) continues to support bilingual and immersion settings by recognising specialist skills and supporting recruitment and retention. This allowance is also being considered as part of the MAG funding system review and you have the opportunity to tell the MAG your views on how it's working.

Additional regulatory changes have introduced greater flexibility, including:

- Increased flexibility in qualification requirements, including for home-based educators
- Amendments to the Person Responsible role
- Regulation 44A changes to support more flexible ratio management

Long-Term Actions

- Continued progression of the funding system review, with advice anticipated through 2026
- Ongoing work to improve affordability and ensure support reaches priority families
- Continued focus on workforce development, including qualifications, professional learning, and leadership pathways

Q2: What is the Ministry's strategy for strengthening the Pacific early learning workforce pipeline?

A dedicated Workforce Insights team within the Ministry collects and analyses workforce data across the sector, including Pacific early learning services, to identify trends and inform strategic planning.

Key workforce supports include:

- **Pacific Immersion Teachers' Allowance (PITA):** Supports recruitment and retention of teachers in Pacific immersion settings. Services may wish to highlight this allowance in recruitment activities.
- **Reliever workforce strategies:** Services are encouraged to develop pools of qualified and unqualified relievers and consider collaboration across providers to improve workforce flexibility.

Financial supports and pathways:

- **Overseas Relocation Grant:** Available to teachers relocating to New Zealand to work in early learning services or schools.
- **TeachNZ scholarships and study support:** Information on teaching pathways, study options, financial assistance, and entry requirements is available via the Education Workforce website.

Ministry support:

Services are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their local Ministry offices and Senior Education Advisers. Termly contact cards provided by the Ministry to services provide direct points of contact.

Q3: How will Pacific early learning leaders, families, and communities be involved in shaping decisions?

The Ministry is committed to ongoing partnership with Pacific early learning leaders, families, and communities. Engagement occurs through continuous and structured processes rather than one-off consultation.

Feedback is gathered through sector engagement, progress reporting, and input from Pacific early learning advisors at both national and regional levels. This ensures Pacific perspectives inform policy development.

Opportunities for engagement include consultation processes on policy, funding, and regulatory changes. However, final decision-making authority rests with Ministers, Cabinet, and Parliament.

Examples of engagement include:

- Participation of Pacific representatives in the MAG funding system review discovery phase and upcoming consultation
- Talanoa-based consultation during the Pacific Service Type development (2022–2023), informing the establishment of Leo o Fanau Moana services and PITA
- Engagement in 2024 informing changes to Person Responsible regulations
- Consultation with Pacific home-based providers leading to increased flexibility in qualification requirements
- Ministry Pacific Advisors connected Pacific early learning leaders with the Ministry for Regulation's review work - to ensure regulatory reviews are culturally responsive

Q4: How is the Ministry managing the transition to ensure continuity of support for Pacific services?

The Ministry remains actively engaged in supporting early learning services. Staff continue to provide guidance, respond to queries, and support compliance with licensing requirements.

Updated online guidance is available through the Ministry website, offering practical examples, assessment prompts, templates, and supporting resources for each licensing criterion.

The proposed transfer of regulatory functions to the Education Review Office (ERO) remains subject to legislative approval. No changes have been implemented at this stage.

Key supports will remain in place, including:

- Curriculum Advisers, who will continue to support culturally responsive and inclusive practice
- Ministry responsibility for funding
- Ongoing roles such as Lead Advisor Pacific Engagement
- SELO providers supporting professional learning and development

Further information will be provided as transition planning progresses. Services are encouraged to remain informed through ECE Bulletins, regional pānui, and local opt in-hui, and to maintain engagement with Ministry contacts.

Q5: What practical work is supporting culturally sustaining transitions from early learning to school?

A range of initiatives support smooth and culturally sustaining transitions for Pacific learners.

- **SELO programmes:** Build teacher capability, particularly in literacy and oral language development
- **Action Plan for Pacific Education:** Supports continuity of learning by valuing language, culture, and identity across transitions
- **Pasifika Early Literacy Project (PELP):** Strengthens collaboration between early learning and primary education providers
- **Tapasā framework:** Supports culturally responsive teaching practice and strengthened engagement with Pacific learners and families. Including professional tools to support induction, appraisal, and professional growth conversations

Additional supports include Learning Support services (e.g., early intervention teachers, psychologists, and speech-language therapists), who assist children with additional needs to transition effectively.

The Ministry continues to strengthen connections between early learning services, schools, and communities to ensure coherent learning pathways. Services are encouraged to engage with Curriculum Advisers for further support.