



Briefing report

Education Review Office (ERO): Findings from Phase Two of the Awhi Mai, Awhi Atu/Counselling in Schools initiative

Date	25 May 2023
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M23-22
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
Minister of Education	It is recommended that you:	
Associate Minister of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note the attached slide pack on the findings from Phase Two of the evaluation of the Awhi Mai, Awhi Atu/Counselling in Schools initiative. b) Note that the Ministry of Education and ERO intend to proactively release this briefing and summary of findings by mid-June 2023. c) Indicate if you want to discuss this briefing with officials from ERO and the Ministry. d) Agree to forward this briefing and summary of findings to the Minister of Health. 	



Attachments:

***Education Review Office (ERO):
Findings from Phase Two of the
Awhi Mai, Awhi Atu/Counselling in
Schools initiative, Annex A:
Summary of Findings.***

Minister's Office to complete

Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	



ERO Ref: M23-22
MOE Ref:

25 May 2023

Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education

Hon Jo Luxton
Associate Minister of Education

Findings from Phase Two of the Evaluation of Awhi Mai, Awhi Atu/Counselling in Schools

Purpose

1. This briefing updates you on the findings from ERO's Phase Two evaluation of the Awhi Mai, Awhi Atu/Counselling in Schools initiative ('the initiative').

Background

2. Counselling in Schools is a pilot initiative funded through a Budget 2020 package of support.
3. The aim of the initiative is to:
 - i. Increase the provision of mental wellbeing/hauora support to learners in primary, intermediate, and smaller secondary schools.
 - ii. Help learners deal with mental wellbeing/hauora issues they might be experiencing.
4. There are now 215 schools taking part in the initiative, with the majority (84 percent) being primary and intermediate schools and 16 percent secondary schools.
5. Government funded an evaluation of the initiative in primary and intermediate schools to help inform operational improvements and future policy development. ERO is carrying out this evaluation.
6. ERO's evaluation of the Counselling in Schools initiative is being undertaken in three phases.

7. On 16 May 2022, ERO and the Ministry of Education provided Minister Tinetti with a briefing (M22-19) on the findings from Phase One of the evaluation.
8. ERO have now completed Phase Two of the evaluation, which looks at implementation and early outcomes of the initiative, and examples of good practice.
9. This briefing sets out the key findings from Phase Two of the evaluation. A copy of the findings slide pack is attached in Annex A.

Phase Two evaluation of the Awhi Mai, Awhi Atu/Counselling in Schools initiative

10. This phase of the evaluation looks at implementation and early outcomes for learners who have received counselling support.
11. Findings for Phase Two of the evaluation were informed by fieldwork undertaken from November 2022 to March 2023, including:
 - i. Survey of schools in the counselling initiative (school leaders and staff).
 - ii. Surveys of learners and whānau.
 - iii. Survey of counselling providers and practitioners.
 - iv. Case studies of five schools chosen as examples of success (interviews with school leaders/staff, whānau, learners, provider managers, counselling practitioners, and Ministry Lead Advisors (Wellbeing)).
 - v. Analysis of administrative/monitoring data provided to the Ministry by providers and schools.

Key Findings

12. Outcomes and experiences of learners:
 - i. Counselling in Schools is increasingly reaching learners with wellbeing/hauora needs. More than 1050 learners across 134 schools have accessed one-on-one counselling since September 2021. The majority of learners accessing counselling support are Māori (64 percent).
 - ii. The most common reasons for learners being referred to counselling are: behaviour, relationships, and anxiety.
 - iii. The majority of learners who receive counselling support are positive about their experience. They feel listened to, that their practitioner understands their culture and language, and that they are given strategies that work.
 - iv. There are indications that counselling support is having a positive impact on learner wellbeing, engagement, and learning:
 - a. Learners report feeling better in themselves (71 percent), at school (61 percent), and about things outside school (63 percent), such as activities and friendships.

- b. Teachers report 53 percent of learners showed an improvement in participation in classroom activities and 52 percent an improvement in learning after receiving counselling support.
- c. Whānau are similarly positive with 89 percent reporting improvements in their child's wellbeing, 78 percent an improvement in engagement at school, and 83 percent an improvement in their learning.

13. Implementation

- i. Service delivery continues to go well, with schools and providers adopting different models to suit their community and learners' needs, and most holding counselling sessions in a dedicated space onsite.
- ii. Schools are still making the majority of referrals, but there are signs that self-referrals are increasing – and awareness of the initiative among the school community is now high.
- iii. The initiative is being delivered by a range of practitioners, which is supporting learner access and enabling different models of support. However, given the complex and high needs of some learners, we need to ensure practitioner suitability to support these learners.
- iv. There are signs that culturally responsive practice for Māori learners is improving.
- v. Key enablers that support good practice and learner outcomes are:
 - a. a trusting relationship between the school and whānau.
 - b. having a practitioner that is a good fit for the school and learners' needs.
 - c. having a dedicated, safe space, onsite for counselling sessions.
 - d. involving and engaging whānau.
 - e. clear communication between all stakeholders.
- vi. Key challenges to good outcomes and practice are:
 - a. finding a practitioner who is a good fit.
 - b. having enough practitioner hours to meet learners' needs.
 - c. lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities.
 - d. poor communication.
 - e. a reluctance among some whānau to engage.

Next Steps

- 14. We recommend that you forward a copy of this briefing, and the summary of findings slide pack to Hon. Dr Ayesha Verrall in her capacity as Minister of Health.
- 15. ERO and the Ministry recommend that this briefing and the summary of findings are proactively released by mid-June 2023.
- 16. The Ministry of Education and ERO are considering the option of supporting the proactive release with a webinar for schools and providers involved in the initiative.

17. We will work with your office on any media queries and any preparation required for the proactive release, but we do not intend to do a media release.
18. The third and final phase of the evaluation is due for completion in May 2024, and will include examining:
 - i. Practitioner qualifications and suitability to support learners with complex and high needs.
 - ii. The longer-term outcomes for learners.
 - iii. How these compare to comparable programmes.

Recommendations

19. It is recommended that you:

- a) **Note** the attached slide pack on findings from the Phase Two evaluation of the Awhi Mai, Awhi Atu/Counselling in Schools initiative. **Noted**
- b) **Note** that the Ministry of Education and ERO intend to proactively release this briefing and summary of findings by mid-June 2023. **Noted**
- c) **Indicate** if you want to discuss this briefing with officials from ERO and the Ministry. Yes / No
- d) **Agree** to forward this briefing, and summary of findings to the Minister of Health. **Agreed / Disagreed**



Helen Hurst
**General Manager System Delivery
 Ministry of Education**



Ruth Shinoda
**Deputy Chief Executive
 Education Review Office**

NOTED/APPROVED



Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education
 28 / 05 / 2023



Hon Jo Luxton
Associate Minister of Education

~~7/7/23~~

Error above.

Date signed: 07/06/2023