

A Whaikaha–Ministry of Disabled People logo with purple lettering. On the left is a QR code and underneath the words "scan for the NZSL name."



## **New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026-2030**

### **Summary of work to action education priority area**

## Introduction

The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026-2030 (the strategy) has 34 actions across five priority areas of education, employment, health, housing and justice. During 2026:

- 13 actions will be delivered or started (implemented)
- 6 actions will be developed
- 12 actions will be scoped (planned).

This document is a 'change story' to explain:

- the goal for the education priority area and the supporting actions
- when the actions will be done and by which government agencies
- the order for actions and the links between the actions
- the risks and challenges to doing the actions.

A change story for each priority area is on the Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People website.

Employment: <https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2026-2030/delivering-the-actions#scroll-to-2>

Short url: <https://shorturl.at/FJghF>

Health: <https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2026-2030/delivering-the-actions#scroll-to-3>

Short url: <https://shorturl.at/8YIE6>

Housing: <https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2026-2030/delivering-the-actions#scroll-to-4>

Short url: <https://shorturl.at/fiijr>

Justice: <https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/new-zealand-disability-strategy-2026-2030/delivering-the-actions#scroll-to-5>

Short url: <https://shorturl.at/2v9jr>

## **Education change story**

In the education priority area, there is a goal and 9 supporting actions. In 2026, 7 of the 9 actions will be started, 1 will be developed and 1 will be scoped.

The first 8 actions are being led by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and action 9 is led by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

### **Goal for education**

Every learner is supported to attend, participate, and progress in education. There is a high expectation that all learners – including disabled learners – will achieve their potential in the education setting of their choice.

### **Actions for education**

To make progress towards the strategy's goal for education, Government will do the following.

1. Put \$266 million into early intervention services, so children's learning support needs are identified earlier, and families don't have to wait as long for support.
2. Look at new ways to provide targeted and specialist learning support, including working with private providers and community organisations to reduce wait times.
3. Improve the learning support system so it is easier for educators, families and learners to use by:
  - funding a Learning Support Coordinator for all schools with learners in Years 1-8

- making application processes for learning support easier.
4. Invest funding into more specialist school satellite classrooms to provide choice for parents.
  5. Work with the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha to develop improvements in teacher training that support teachers to meet the needs of disabled students.
  6. Work with the Ministry of Disabled People - Whaikaha to look for ways to improve accountability for schools and school boards by reporting on learning and achievement outcomes of all disabled learners.
  7. Use existing funding to support Kaupapa Māori settings to access tools, knowledge and skills so they can meet the needs of their disabled ākonga (students) with high quality programmes.
  8. Work with the Ministry of Disabled People - Whaikaha to look for ways to identify disabled learners in education data so their needs and progress are better understood.
  9. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) will continue monitoring provider progress on implementing their Disability Action Plans. The TEC will consult with disabled student representative groups including the National Disabled Students' Association on how this function is implemented.

## **When and how the education actions are being carried out**

Budget 2025 included \$745 million so learners have the support they need at school. The MoE is already planning how this funding will be spent to support **actions 1 to 4**. This is being done by:

- increasing the number of specialists and extending the Early Intervention Service through to the end of year 1 of schooling
- using MoE and third-party services to give learners the support they need at the right time
- making the learning support system simpler to use
- having learning support co-ordinators in every school with year 1-8 learners to help learners and whānau navigate the system
- creating up to 25 additional classrooms in the specialist school network.

Responsibility for **action 5** is expected to shift to the MoE from the Teaching Council by mid-2026. This is proposed in the Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill.

The MoE is also planning to refresh and roll out standards for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) between 2026 and 2028. These will guide the design of new teaching training programmes by tertiary providers. New Teacher Registration Standards being rolled out by the Teaching Council in 2026 could also affect the training programmes.

There is an overlap between action 6 and action 8. **Action 6** will make reporting requirements for school boards clearer. These requirements include setting, measuring and delivering on strategic goals. **Action 8** to identify disabled learners will also guide improvements in reporting by school boards.

There are also close links between these actions and the actions included in the government's agreement with IHC. For example, both focus on improving data collection and reporting on the progress of disabled learners.

**Action 7** will be scoped further in 2026.

**Action 9** will build on the work TEC has been doing to support tertiary education organisations to develop and strengthen their disability action plans.

## **Risks and challenges for the education actions**

The Government is working on several education reforms, including the changes in the Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill. This means the education sector is going through significant change, including several structural and functional changes. Actions will need to be carefully planned and ordered so the sector can manage the changes.