

Document 1

[Home](#) / He Pānui Kōhungahunga

HE PĀNUI KŌHUNGAHUNGA

COVID-19 UPDATE - 1 MARCH 2022

01 March 2022

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

[Testing positive for COVID-19](#)

[What type of contact are you?](#)

[Recent High Court case regarding vaccination mandates](#)

[Reminder: EAP services](#)

[Help for whānau who are self-isolating](#)

[Discretionary situations](#)

[NELP criteria and how we can help](#)

[Resources to help](#)

[Financial reporting due 30 June 2022](#)

[Home-based educator qualification regulations](#)

FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te ahiahi,

Welcome to the first day of autumn.

As expected, cases of Omicron have grown exponentially. I know that this will be placing additional pressure on you, your staff, tamariki and communities. Thank you for your leadership in volatile times.

Please continue to let your regional Te Mahau teams know when you are informed of positive cases of children, whānau who are volunteers and staff in your service. This information provides all important context for policy and practice responses.

Despite the rise in numbers of cases it is really important that all children who need to, can come to their early learning service. Your leadership and management to enable this is highly valued – thank you.

Ngā manaakitanga,
Iona

Testing positive for COVID-19

If you test positive for COVID-19, everyone else in your household becomes a household contact and you need to isolate together for at least 10 days.

The information covers:

- managing symptoms
- rapid antigen tests (RATs)
- steps to take if you test positive
- what to do when isolating
- support that is available in isolation.

Find further information about testing positive in this brochure:

[Testing positive for COVID-19 \[PDF, 220 KB\]](#)

What type of contact are you?

This graphic will be helpful in identifying whether you are a household contact and what steps you should take:

[Contact tracing – Unite against COVID-19](#)



what type of contact are you?

Recent High Court case regarding vaccination mandates

You may have seen, last week the vaccination mandates for the New Zealand Police and Defence Force personnel were set aside by the High Court.

The Court's decision applies only to affected people who work in these sectors.

The mandates requiring COVID-19 vaccinations for all education staff who may interact with children and students remain in place and are not affected by this judgment.

A claim challenging the education sector mandates will be heard in March and we will let you know when the outcome of that challenge is known.

There is no change for schools, kura, hostels and licenced early childhood services.

Everyone who works for an early learning service who may have contact with children or will be present at a time when children are also present continues to be covered by the mandatory vaccination requirements.

[COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Vaccinations\) Amendment Order \(No 3\) 2021 – New Zealand Legislation](#)

They will need to continue to have their booster by today (1 March 2022) or 183 days after their second shot, whichever is later.

Reminder: EAP services

A reminder that we have extended centrally funded counselling services through EAP Services. All teachers, relievers and support staff in early learning services are able to access these services.

The centrally funded counselling services apply to staff who register as new users from 24 August 2021, and this funding arrangement will continue through to June 2022.

If your service has questions about invoices for services delivered through EAP Services, in the first instance email accountmanagement@eapservices.co.nz.

You'll find further information about these EAP services on our website:

[COVID-19 Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\) – Ministry of Education](#)

Or if you any questions call 0800 327 669/1800 726474 or visit the their website:

[EAP Services Limited](#)

Help for whānau who are self-isolating

If you know any whānau who need extra support while they are self-isolating because of COVID-19, Work and Income may be able to help.

Many people will be able to self-isolate with help from whānau, family and friends, but there is help available for whānau who need it.

If help is needed, they may be able to get:

- money to pay for urgent and essential costs, like food, medicine, and some bills
- things that are needed to be delivered.

Let them know how they can help by using their online form.

[Help while self-isolating – Work and Income](#)

Discretionary situations

A reminder for services and whānau-led kōhanga reo that use discretionary situations: the number of available discretionary situations has increased from five to 10 for each funding period for the November and the March funding periods (October 2021 to May 2022).

For more information, visit the Funding Handbook:

[3-C-2 Quality funding rates for parent/whānau-led services – Ministry of Education](#)

NELP criteria and how we can help

As you know, the National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) licensing criteria came into effect on 1 January 2022. This included adding new criteria to strengthen the quality of teaching our learners receive, ensuring a safe and inclusive environment that is free of bullying and takes account of learners' needs, identities, language and cultures among others.

We understand there have been a number of changes in the COVID-19 Protection Framework impacting services, and that you may not have had time yet to fully engage with the NELP.

At this stage, the Ministry is taking an educative approach to assessing the NELP licensing criteria given these are a recent change.

We know that all the things you do normally to implement Te Whāriki and engage with families to understand what is important for them will have set you up well in terms of the NELP.

You will likely be taking actions under many of the priorities without necessarily making that connection. The criteria change requires you to make the links between your practice and planning and the NELP more visible. A good starting point is to review how the NELP can be woven into your self-review and internal evaluation processes, systems, professional growth cycles and annual plans.

Over time your service will be able to show more in-depth documentation on how you have regard for all NELP that are relevant to early learning.

The Ministry is currently working on developing a suite of resources to assist services to meet the NELP criteria that is likely to include PLD webinars.

Resources to help

[Te Hurihanganui – Ministry of Education](#)

[Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia – Ministry of Education](#)

[Tau Mai Te Reo – the Ministry of Education](#)

[Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030 – Ministry of Education](#)

[Learning Support Action Plan – Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga](#)

[Early Learning Action Plan \[PDF, 3.19 MB\]](#)

Financial reporting due 30 June 2022

Licensed ECE services that have received income of over \$80,000 (including GST) from the Ministry of Education during the financial year ending 2021 and have operated for a full financial year, need to submit audited financial statements along with a copy of the Declaration Form.

[Declaration Form \[PDF, 1.54 MB\]](#)

[Financial reporting requirements \[PDF, 204 KB\]](#)

Send by Thursday 30 June to:

Resourcing Division

Ministry of Education

PO Box 1666

Wellington 6140

or email resourcing@education.govt.nz

Home-based educator qualification regulations

We have published a summary of the feedback on the regulations for home-based educator qualification.

We carried out consultation on these regulatory changes from 27 August to 27 September 2021. Thank you to all who submitted responses to the proposals. The report summarises the survey and written submissions received during consultation and highlights key themes that emerged from responses.

You can read this report hosted on Kōrero Mātauranga:

[Summary of feedback on regulations for home-based educator qualifications \[PDF, 711 KB\]](#)

 Covid bulletin branding

Document 2

[Home](#) / He Pānui Kōhungahunga

HE PĀNUI KŌHUNGAHUNGA

COVID-19 UPDATE - 3 MARCH 2022

03 March 2022

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

[Emergency closure for staffing issues](#)

[When should COVID-19 cases and contacts end their isolation?](#)

[Children returning from isolation as a household contact](#)

[Definition of household contacts and shared care arrangements](#)

[Letter templates for confirmed contacts](#)

[Reminder: Accessing rapid antigen tests](#)

[Mataara: Update your emergency contact details](#)

[Novavax vaccine approved](#)

[First aid unit standards review – survey ends 11 March](#)

FOREWORD

Tēnā hoki koe i ngā āhuatanga o te wā,

It's been an historic week domestically and internationally. Both the events at Parliament and in Ukraine are sobering. Both will have long term effects.

I know these events will have impacted you, your staff and your tamariki directly, and they have also been felt throughout Aotearoa.

As one of our Wellington school leaders said today, the focus is on how we provide for the continued safety, wellbeing and learning of our community.

He tino pai tō mahi, you've done a great job – I encourage you to also take time for your own wellbeing.

In today's bulletin, we have information about cases and household contacts, including template letters for your early learning service if you wish to use them.

Kia kaha,

Iona

Te Tumu Whakarae mō te Mātauranga | Secretary for Education

Emergency closure for staffing issues

We know that staffing is a challenge for many services and is likely to remain so throughout the peak of the Omicron wave.

While it is important that early learning services are open for children who need to attend, there are still bottom-line health and safety requirements that need to be met. This includes having the right ratios of adults, first aiders and Persons Responsible for the number of children attending.

If COVID-19 has impacted your staffing to the point where you're not sure whether you can open safely, contact your local Te Mahau office to discuss your situation.

[Local Te Mahau offices – Ministry of Education](#)

At the 'Red' setting, emergency closure funding may be available for services that are unable to open due to COVID-19 related staff absences.

A reminder that staff are required to self-isolate if they are a household contact of someone with COVID-19 or are showing symptoms of having COVID-19. Those previously considered close contacts are not currently required to self-isolate unless they are showing COVID-19 symptoms.

When should COVID-19 cases and contacts end their isolation?

As you know, a person confirmed to have COVID-19 must currently isolate for a minimum of 10 days and until they are symptom-free. If they are still sick, they should stay home until they are well.

Day zero for isolation is from the date they either developed symptoms or were tested if they do not have symptoms.

Their household contacts, who must also isolate, will be tested on day three and 10 of the case's isolation period. The case does not need to have any further tests after their initial confirmation test (they have already tested positive).

If a household contact tests negative on day three and day 10 and are symptom free, they can return to their early learning service on day 11.

There is a helpful tool on the Unite Against COVID-19 website that calculates a person's isolation period.

[If you have COVID-19 – Unite against COVID-19](#)

You might also find the below graphic useful.

 How to work out your 10 days of self-isolation

Children returning from isolation as a household contact

We've had a number of queries regarding instances where children have completed their required 10 days' isolation but other household members test positive within those 10 days.

Currently there is no legal requirement for household members to remain in isolation beyond the initial 10-day period once they have returned a negative day 10 test.

The same isolation rules that apply to older children and adults also apply for children under the age of five.

[What does it mean if I'm a household contact? – Ministry of Health](#)

If children have returned from isolation and develop symptoms they should stay at home until they are symptom-free and have returned a negative test result.

It's important that anyone with symptoms remains at home until they are symptom-free for at least 48 hours.

Definition of household contacts and shared care arrangements

The Ministry of Health has confirmed that a household contact is someone who:

- shares a house or flat with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (a case) on a permanent or part time basis (that shared custody) and
- spent at least one night or day (more than 8 hours) in that residence while the case was infectious.

Just spending time with someone inside a home or a home-based care setting does not make you a household contact.

If a child has spent a day or night in a home where there is a shared care arrangement, and someone in that home was infectious at the time, they are considered to be a household contact.

If they move to the other home during their required period of self-isolation, they must continue to isolate when in that other home.

A reminder that they cannot return to early learning until they have finished their period of isolation and have received their day three and day 10 test results.

[Household and Close Contacts – Ministry of Health](#)

Letter templates for confirmed contacts

We've had a number of requests for letter templates to be used when there is a COVID-19 case in your early learning service.

We have two templates attached:

The first letter can be used for the general early learning service community advising families / whānau of a COVID- 19 case in the early learning service.

[Template letter for the early learning community about a confirmed case of COVID-19 \[DOCX, 20.5 KB\]](#)

The second letter is for whānau of potential contacts of the case. It advises where the case was in the early learning service and allows you to customise it for the infectious period.

[Template letter for contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 \[DOCX, 17.6 KB\]](#)

Reminder: Accessing rapid antigen tests

As in our bulletin on 22 February, we have been allocated a supply of rapid antigen tests (RATs) to support the close contact exemption scheme.

If you are seeking exemptions for one or more of your staff, RATs are available through our Te Mahau offices – do not approach the Ministry of Health.

[Accessing rapid antigen tests – Early Learning Bulletin 22 February](#)

To make sure you're eligible for RATs under the scheme, please complete this checklist:

[Rapid antigen test checklist \[DOCX, 51.0 KB\]](#)

Rapid antigen tests should only be used as a last resort, where you otherwise wouldn't have enough people available onsite to supervise children who need to be there.

Mataara: Update your emergency contact details

If your emergency contact person for your centre has changed, ensure you update your regional education adviser at your local Te Mahau office with the new emergency contact details.

[Local Te Mahau offices – Ministry of Education](#)

These details are used to text you from Mataara if we need to contact you in an emergency.

A reminder that emergency messages from Mataara will come from the number 8707 and should always start with 'Message from Ministry of Education' or 'Message from MOE'. They may request a response, but this will not incur a charge.

[Mataara emergency contact tool – Ministry of Education](#)

Novavax vaccine approved

On 1 March the Government announced that the Novavax vaccine has been approved for use for people over the age of 18.

The Ministry of Health is working on the delivery schedule and roll-out start date.

The Pfizer vaccine still remains the preferred vaccine for most New Zealanders.

We will update you when we have further information.

First aid unit standards review – survey ends 11 March


Toitū te Waiora is the new standard setting body for first aid unit standards.

A review is underway of the following unit standards:

- 6400 Manage first aid in an emergency situation
- 6401 Provide first aid
- 6402 Provide basic life support
- 25459 Provide first aid for young children.

If you want to provide feedback on the unit standards please complete survey that closes Friday 11 March.

[First aid unit standards survey – Toitū te Waiora](#)

 Bulletin branding

Document 3

[Home](#) / He Pānui Kōhungahunga

HE PĀNUI KŌHUNGAHUNGA

COVID-19 UPDATE - 8 MARCH 2022

08 March 2022

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

[Temporary changes to operating conditions](#)

FOREWORD

Tēnā koutou katoa – greetings to all.

As expected COVID-19 case numbers continue to surge, fortunately in the vast majority symptoms are relatively mild, however, absences and isolations will be taking their toll.

In today's bulletin, an update on temporary changes to operating conditions.

Heoi anō tāku mō nāianeī,

Iona Holsted

Temporary changes to operating conditions

We understand that COVID-19 is having a big impact on staffing at the moment, and that it's tough to get relievers.

While you may consider using the Close Contact Exemption Scheme to bring back critical staff who are asymptomatic household contacts, you should only do this if there are no other options for caring for those children who need to attend.

There might be some other things you could do – like reduce your operating hours or ask some families to keep their children home for a period of time if they can – so you can continue to offer care for those who need it. If you operate two centres close by, you could combine together on one site.


If you are making temporary changes to your operations like this, you need to contact your local Te Mahau office. A phone call or an email setting out the reasons and the likely timeframe for the changes is fine as a starting point. We won't make changes on your licence at this time, but it is important that we're aware of what's happening.

As always, you will need to do a risk assessment to determine what's best for your situation. The safety and wellbeing of children continues to be paramount. If the impact of COVID-19 measures on your staffing means you can't open safely then you will be eligible to apply for Emergency Closure funding.

[Emergency Closure funding – Te Mahau](#)

In all cases we encourage you to talk to your local Te Mahau office about your situation and what options are available to you.

[Local Te Mahau offices – Ministry of Education](#)

 Bulletin branding

Document 4

[Home](#) / He Pānui Kōhungahunga

HE PĀNUI KŌHUNGAHUNGA

COVID-19 UPDATE - 10 MARCH 2022

10 March 2022

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

[New commencement date for ECE network management approved by Cabinet](#)

[Changes to isolation requirements](#)

[Cases of COVID-19](#)

[Household contacts](#)

[General advice](#)

[Advice for anyone who is unwell](#)

[Support tamariki and staff to return](#)

[Letter templates](#)

[Novavax now available](#)

[First aid qualifications](#)

FOREWORD

Kia ora koutou,

In this bulletin we focus on the recent changes for isolation and provide you with updated letters for your community if you wish to send them.

We understand the volume of information coming out at the moment can be overwhelming, so we will be reducing the number of bulletins and will publish one bulletin every week, starting next Tuesday 15 March.

Nāku, nā,
Iona

New commencement date for ECE network management approved by Cabinet

Cabinet has agreed to defer commencement of network management by six months to 1 February 2023. (This will require an amendment to legislation currently going through the parliamentary process.)

The new network management process is intended to ensure high-quality, diverse, and sustainable early learning provision that meets the needs of communities across New Zealand. Government is concerned that there is an oversupply of early learning services in some areas, while other communities remain underserved.

From 1 February 2023, all prospective early childhood service providers will be required to obtain network management approval from the Minister before applying for a licence.

Cabinet's decision to defer the commencement date of network management comes in response to concerns from the sector that the ability to prepare for the new requirements had been reduced due to building delays in the context of COVID-19 and the Delta and Omicron outbreaks.

The introduction of network management is one of the most significant changes for the early learning sector in over a decade.

For further information about network management, visit the dedicated network management webpage or contact your local Te Mahau office.

[Network management – Ministry of Education](#)

[Local Te Mahau offices](#)

Changes to isolation requirements

From 11:59pm tomorrow Friday 11 March isolation requirements for positive cases of COVID-19 and their household contacts will be reduced from 10 to seven days.

This change has been made due to up-to-date public health advice: there is a decline in infectiousness of Omicron over time and in most cases, transmission occurs within seven days.

This reduction in the isolation period will ensure we maintain a balance between controlling the outbreak effectively and minimising the impacts of isolation requirements on people's lives.

Evidence also shows that the risk of re-infection within the first three months after someone has Omicron is very low. For this reason, recovered cases will no longer need to isolate again if they become a household contact within 90 days of having the virus. This has been extended from 28 days.

From 11.59pm Friday 11 March, all cases and household contacts who are currently isolating can end their period of isolation after Day 7. Those currently in isolation will not have to complete their Days 8, 9 and 10 of isolation.

See the information below for changes that will be in effect from Saturday 12 March.

Cases of COVID-19

Anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate for seven days.

Day 0 is the day symptoms began or the day the test was taken (whichever came first). Cases will isolate for a full seven days and are free to return to normal activities on Day 8, if they are not symptomatic.

See 'Support tamariki and staff to return' further below for more information.

Household contacts

Household contacts are required to isolate for the same seven days as the case.

They can return to their normal activities on the same day as the first case in their household, so long as all test results have been negative, and they are not symptomatic.

Household contacts should continue to self-monitor for symptoms up to Day 10.

Household contacts must take a self-administered rapid antigen test (RAT) test on Day 3 and Day 7 of the positive case's isolation period.

If symptoms develop at any time during isolation:

- the usual advice remains in place to undertake an additional RAT test
- if the test is negative, and symptoms persist or worsen, test again 48 hours after that negative test

- if symptoms resolve, there is no need for a further test, until the required Day 7 RAT test. If this is negative, they can return to daily life on Day 8.

If a household contact has new symptoms on the day of release:

- they should undertake an additional RAT and stay at home while unwell
- if that test is negative, and symptoms persist or worsen, test again after 48 hours. If symptoms resolve, there is no need for a further test.

If a household contact has finished their period of isolation they do not need to return to isolation if a new case is identified in their household. However, this only applies for a period of seven days following their leaving isolation.

Should a new household member be confirmed as a case eight or more days after the household contact has left isolation, then they must start a new period of self-isolation for seven days.

General advice

Anyone that has had COVID-19 or who is a contact of someone who has COVID-19 should avoid attending high-risk settings until ten days have passed since they were infected or exposed to the virus. These will include, for example, aged-care facilities, correctional facilities and hospitals (unless the individual is requiring care).

As always, undertake a RAT if symptomatic. If it is negative and symptoms persist or worsen, you should test again 48 hours after the negative test. If symptoms resolve, there is no need for a further test.

Advice for anyone who is unwell

- Anyone who is sick should stay home until they are well.
- When a child has respiratory symptoms, the advice is to stay at home and seek advice from their GP or Healthline. Staying home is key to controlling spread of any virus in an early learning service setting.
- Many children will have a long-lasting runny nose or cough after viral infections. If it is over 10 days since the onset of COVID symptoms and they are no longer feeling unwell, they are very unlikely to be infectious and can therefore return.

- However, if they are continuing to feel unwell or their symptoms are worsening after 10 days, they should not return and a GP review, or a call to Healthline, is recommended.

Support tamariki and staff to return

You cannot require evidence from cases or household contacts to support their return following their period of isolation.

In Phase 3, cases and household contacts will not be provided with an official release notification following the end of their period of isolation.

You also cannot require evidence of a negative RAT or PCR test for household contacts (and cases will not be tested again, following their initial positive test).

Children and staff who test positive for COVID-19 are not required to self-isolate past seven days under public health regulations, but they should not return to an early learning service if they are still feeling unwell.

Letter templates

In the event there is a case of COVID-19 in your service, we have updated the letter templates you can choose to use.

There remains no obligation to undertake contact tracing when we are at Phase 3 of the Omicron response.

[Letter template: Confirmed case of COVID-19 in an early learning service \[DOCX, 21.2 KB\]](#)

[Letter template: Contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 \[DOCX, 17.9 KB\]](#)

Novavax now available

The Novavax COVID-19 vaccine (Nuvaxovid) vaccine is now available for those aged 18 and older who cannot receive the Pfizer vaccine, and for people who would like a different option. Currently, Novavax is not approved in New Zealand as a booster vaccine.

[Novavax vaccines – Ministry of Health](#)

From today, those wanting the Novavax vaccine will be able to book their appointment to receive the Novavax through Book My Vaccine.

[Book My Vaccine – Ministry of Health](#)

Note, when Novavax is selected, the site will show a list of vaccination centres where Novavax can be given. Not all sites are equipped to deliver this vaccine.

First aid qualifications


If you or your staff are currently booked into first aid courses, we urge you to continue with those plans as much as possible. Many first aid providers are continuing to provide courses, and some are offering courses online.

However, we acknowledge that some courses are being cancelled and staff may not be able to attend due to COVID-19 illnesses.

On Thursday 10 March, the Secretary for Education exercised her power under Regulation 39A(3)(g) to allow a first aid certificate that expired on or after 10 March to be considered current/valid for the purposes of first aid requirements in the licensing criteria until Friday 10 June.

This is in recognition of the difficulty in accessing first aid refresher training course requirements of HS25 for centre-based services and ngā kōhanga reo, and HS22 for home-based services.

Service providers do not need to contact the Ministry for approval to access this exemption, however they must attest in writing to the current first aid knowledge of these staff and retain this documentation.

 Bulletin branding

Document 5

[Home](#) / He Pānui Kōhungahunga

HE PĀNUI KŌHUNGAHUNGA

UPDATE - 15 MARCH 2022

15 March 2022

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

[Health and safety planning around vaccines](#)

[Temporary medical exemptions from booster requirements for those that have recently had COVID-19](#)

[Temporary changes to funding subsidies](#)

[Recalculating March advance funding: Teacher-led centre-based services](#)

[Protection of funding bands: Teacher-led centre-based services](#)

[Protection of funding bands: Quality-rate services and Kōhanga reo](#)

[Playgroup funding](#)

[COVID-19 website information has moved](#)

[New look: Learning Management System](#)

[New compliance tool: Written direction](#)

[Change to Education Sector Login for early learning providers](#)

FOREWORD

Ngā mihi o te Rātū,

As promised, we will reduce the number of bulletins sent to you and have a weekly bulletin every Tuesday.

Thank you for your continued feedback, it's valuable in helping us adapt our process to provide what you need.

I know you are all flat out responding to the challenges of staff and children's absence, but as you are probably aware there are discussions underway around when and how vaccination mandates may be lifted. It is timely to think about planning for that as you will need to make your own health and safety policies.

Kia kaha,
Iona

Health and safety planning around vaccines

In the event the vaccination mandates in education are lifted, early learning services will be required to take the implications of this into account in decisions about their own health and safety settings:

[Risk assessment and planning for COVID-19 – Te Mahau](#)

This will help you to monitor and review health and safety policies around COVID-19, as you re-assess these in consultation with your staff and the wider schooling community.

Early and meaningful engagement with your staff will be of critical importance as you consider future policy settings.

Your Te Mahau advisors are available to provide advice and support regarding health and safety planning.

Temporary medical exemptions from booster requirements for those that have recently had COVID-19

We understand this is an area of concern for services at present and wanted to let you know that the Ministry of Health has now updated the process for those recently recovered from COVID-19 and seeking a temporary exemption to the booster requirement.

This includes the ability for a PCBU to submit a group application on behalf of multiple staff members:

[Temporary medical exemptions – Ministry of Health](#)

The Ministry of Health recommendation on the time frame to wait for a booster after infection with COVID-19 has also been clarified:

[COVID-19 vaccine: Advice for different health circumstances – Ministry of Health](#)

Temporary changes to funding subsidies

We have introduced some changes in the current funding period to support early learning services whose staffing levels and attendance has been impacted by Omicron.

We have also prepared a table showing the current funding settings we have in place to help early learning services.

[Funding settings under the new traffic light system – Te Mahau](#)

Recalculating March advance funding: Teacher-led centre-based services

For services that have dropped out of the 80-99% or 50-79% funding band for October 2021 to January 2022 washup, you will now receive the same funding band for the March advance as you were on for your November advance funding.

Any additional payments due to this recalculation will be made on 1 May 2022.

Teacher-led centre-based early learning services include kindergartens, education and care services and hospital-based services.

Protection of funding bands: Teacher-led centre-based services

Funding band protection has been guaranteed for the February to May 2022 washup. This means that for this period you will receive a wash up at the same band as your advance funding payment from the March 2022 funding round.

This protection applies to all funding bands, including those on 100%.

Teacher-led centre-based early learning services include kindergartens, education and care services and hospital-based services.

Protection of funding bands: Quality-rate services and Kōhanga reo

Funding band protection has been guaranteed for all quality-funded home-based education and care services, Kōhanga reo and playcentres.

Services that were on the quality rate on 1 February 2022 will remain on the quality rate for the February to May period.

From 1 June 2022 a new funding period will start, and the usual rules will apply.

Playgroup funding

We are introducing a Notional Roll scheme to help playgroups manage low attendance and sustainability while we are under the 'Red' and 'Orange' settings.

For the 1 January to 30 June 2022 funding period, if your roll has declined you can use the average number of children attending from the previous period.

You should contact your local Te Mahau office to discuss your playgroup funding.

[Local Te Mahau offices – Ministry of Education](#)

COVID-19 website information has moved

As you know, Te Mahau is a part of Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | The Ministry of Education and provides localised services and support.

[Visit the Te Mahau website](#)

The COVID-19 information and guidance previously housed on our main Ministry of Education website has been moved to the Te Mahau website.

Pages related to COVID-19 on our main site will be automatically redirected to the COVID-19 landing page on Te Mahau.

New look: Learning Management System

We are pleased to announce the new Learning Management System will be available from Wednesday 16 March.

[Learning Management System – Ministry of Education](#)

New features available include:

- access to learning content via a catalogue
- new classifications to enable filtering of learning content
- easier access – you can now use your Education Sector Logon (ESL) to login.

New compliance tool: Written direction

Following tranche one of the Early Learning Regulatory Review, new regulations have been put in place that introduce the ability for us to issue written directions to early learning services.

[Early Learning Regulatory Review – Ministry of Education](#)

The written direction allows us to focus on safe and healthy environments for all children all times, to:

- respond more swiftly
- require services to remedy any immediate health and safety risks promptly
- ensure the timeframe to remedy a risk will never exceed 10 working days.
- before we can issue a written direction, we will need to be satisfied the risk can be remedied safely while the service continues operating.

The written direction states the conditions a service must meet by the specified due dates. If a service does not meet the conditions of the written direction, its licence may be reclassified as provisional or suspended. Visit our website for more information about our compliance tools:

[Compliance tools – Ministry of Education](#)

Change to Education Sector Login for early learning providers

In late March, we are making the electronic 'delegated authoriser' (DA) functionality for Education Sector Login (ESL) accounts available to early learning providers.

This means you will be able to stop using paper forms to manage new users' accounts.


The electronic functionality will mean DAs:

- will no longer have to complete paper forms for users
- will be able to create and manage accounts in ESL in a timely manner

- will be able to give users access to applications such as Te Rito and Hapori Matatu.

Note, paper forms will still be required for access to ELI, ERS and the Secure Data Portal.

Existing DAs in ESL will be contacted to complete a training module to assist with this transition.

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Document 6

[Home](#) / He Pānui Kōhungahunga

HE PĀNUI KŌHUNGAHUNGA

EARLY LEARNING BULLETIN - 22 MARCH 2022

22 March 2022

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

[Second round: Applications for relief teacher costs now open](#)

[Household contacts and testing positive at different times](#)

[Upcoming regulatory changes for home-based education and care services](#)

[Investigating an incident that involves a child](#)

[Complaints](#)

[Incidents](#)

[For your interest: Aotearoa New Zealand's histories](#)

[View the final national curriculum content, supports and resources](#)

FOREWORD

E ngā ringa raupā, kei ngā whare ako puta noa i te motu, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Greetings and acknowledgements to all of you working hard in your learning environments.

Amongst everything else going on, Tāmaki Makaurau and Tai Tokerau have also had to combat heavy storms and rain over the last few days. I know some have been heavily impacted by this, so I hope today finds you safe.

In today's bulletin we've provided upcoming changes for home-based education and care services, the second round of funding applications for costs incurred hiring relief teachers and an update on Aotearoa New Zealand histories for your interest.

Although we had the very best of intentions to move to one bulletin a week, you'll know that tomorrow there are announcements being made by Cabinet on the COVID-19 Protection Framework, My Vaccine

Pass requirements and vaccination mandates. We'll send a bulletin with guidance on any changes which impact you and any other COVID related matters.

Hei āpōpō,
Iona

Second round: Applications for relief teacher costs now open

Early learning services may be eligible for additional support payments to fund part of the employment process costs incurred due to staff not meeting the vaccine mandate requirements. The costs must relate to relief teachers that were hired during paid notice periods.

Applications for funding have also been extended to include relief teacher hours for terminations due to staff members not having boosters.

The second round will close on Friday 15 April.

Eligible applicants will receive a payment on 1 May 2022.

Information about eligibility criteria and the application form are available on our website.

[Funding settings under the new traffic light system – Te Mahau](#)

If you have any questions about the fund or the application process, contact covid19.ecereliever@education.govt.nz

Household contacts and testing positive at different times

The Ministry of Health has provided further clarity on when household contacts should isolate.

[What does it mean if I am a household contact? – Ministry of Health](#)

For households where someone has COVID-19, the Ministry of Health recommends you apply the following guidance.

- If someone becomes a confirmed COVID-19 case, then that case and all other people in their household must isolate for seven days.
- If someone else in the household then tests positive for COVID-19 during those seven days:
 - the isolation period for that person only re-sets – that person must isolate for an additional seven days from the day they test positive or symptoms begin
 - other household contacts who do not test positive are still able to leave isolation after the original case has completed their seven days isolation.
- For the next 10 days after a household completes seven days isolation, evidence shows that due to their exposure to COVID-19 they are less likely to catch or transmit the virus. This means:
 - if someone else in the household tests positive within those 10 days, the whole household will not have to re-isolate, only the positive case
 - if someone else in the household tests positive and it has been more than 10 days since the household completed isolation, household contacts should re-isolate along with the new case for seven days.
- Any person who has had COVID-19 within the last 90 days/three months will not need to isolate as a household contact unless they become symptomatic and test positive again. This is because reinfection rates for people who have had COVID-19 are low for the three months after they have the virus.

Remember, Day 0 for isolation is the day symptoms began or the day the positive test was taken (whichever came first). You should then count your seven days from there.

Upcoming regulatory changes for home-based education and care services

As outlined in the 14 December bulletin, there are some changes coming on Wednesday 1 June for home-based education and care services as a result of the Education (Early Childhood Services) Amendment Act (No 2) 2021.

[Delays to new qualification requirements – Early Learning Bulletin 14 December](#)

We wanted to remind you about these changes and will be providing further advice and guidance over the coming weeks to help you get ready.

[Home-based staff qualifications – Ministry of Education](#)

Investigating an incident that involves a child

Tranche one of the Early Learning Regulatory Review has enabled us to reclassify a service's licence as provisional, following an incident involving a child that the Secretary for Education considers warrants investigation.

Early Learning Regulatory Review – Ministry of Education

A provisional licence for this reason will not necessarily mean a service is non-compliant with the regulations. Instead, the service provider will be required to conduct a satisfactory investigation and provide us with a detailed investigation report by a specified date, usually within 10 working days.

We have developed optional investigation report templates for both complaints and incidents for services to consider adapting or incorporating into their existing processes.

Visit our website to access the report templates and for more information about our approach to managing complaints and incidents.

Complaints

[Complaints – Ministry of Education](#)

[Investigation report template: Complaint \[DOCX, 68.2 KB\]](#)

Incidents

[Incidents – Ministry of Education](#)

[Investigation report template: Incident \[DOCX, 68.2 KB\]](#)

For your interest: Aotearoa New Zealand's histories

Last week the final Te Takanga o Te Wā and Aotearoa New Zealand's histories curriculum content was launched for schools and kura to begin implementing in Term 1 2023.

We know there is much interest and excitement in this new curriculum content, and we want to make sure you know where to find additional information on our national curriculum.

The new curriculum embraces the histories of all the people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand and encourages schools and kura to develop local curriculum and marau ā-kura that reflect the histories of

their communities. This is to ensure that all ākonga in our schools and kura learn how our histories have shaped our present day lives.

View the final national curriculum content, supports and resources

Te Takanga o Te Wā, part of learning under the Tikanga ā-lwi wāhanga ako of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa:

[Te Takanga o Te Wā | Kauwhata Reo - Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga](#)


Aotearoa New Zealand's histories, part of the social sciences learning area of The New Zealand Curriculum:

[Aotearoa New Zealand's histories – Ministry of Education](#)

To find out how we created the new curriculum content and who we worked with:

[Introducing Aotearoa New Zealand's histories – Ministry of Education](#)

For any questions, contact AotearoaNewZealandHistories@education.govt.nz

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Document 7

[Home](#) / He Pānui Kōhungahunga

HE PĀNUI KŌHUNGAHUNGA

CHANGES TO THE COVID-19 PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

23 March 2022

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

[Overview of key changes](#)

[COVID-19 Protection Framework, My Vaccine Pass and vaccination mandates](#)

[Red](#)

[Orange](#)

[Green](#)

[Guidance on mandatory vaccination requirements](#)

[Why this change has been made](#)

[Implications for your employment processes](#)

[Other changes to the COVID-19 Protection Framework](#)

FOREWORD

Tēnā koe i tēnei ahiahi,

This morning the Prime Minister announced changes to the COVID-19 Protection Framework which will take effect from 11.59pm this Friday 25 March, and to vaccine mandates and My Vaccine Pass, which will take effect from 11.59pm Monday 4 April.

These changes reflect the science and public health advice, and where New Zealand has moved to in our Omicron response. Overall, we are now a highly vaccinated country. While cases remain high, the timing for change reflects that New Zealand is moving into a post-peak phase and our hospitalisations are anticipated to be in a similar position very soon.

New Zealand remains at Red. However, Cabinet will review the framework colour level on Monday 4 April.

We know that for some in your community, these changes may cause some angst. As the Prime Minister noted, everyone is safer as a result of New Zealand's COVID-19 response, but everyone is tired and fatigued.

We will continue to support you to have conversations with your community starting with further information below about how these changes will impact you.

The details of the changes will be confirmed through a Health Order. If there are any changes that occur through the order we will update you through future bulletins.

In discussion with education sector representatives this morning, Minister Hipkins passed on a message of thanks to you. He noted how well you have adapted to the changes and challenge.

I echo this message. Thank you all for your continued focus on keeping children and young people engaged in learning and as safe as possible.

Ngā mihi maioha,
Iona

Overview of key changes

COVID-19 Protection Framework, My Vaccine Pass and vaccination mandates

- The removal of vaccination mandates for education workers will take effect from 11.59pm Monday 4 April.
- On the same date, removal of the My Vaccine Pass from the COVID-19 Protection Framework (traffic light system).
- There is no requirement to display QR code posters (although we encourage you to retain them) or have other processes, other than your regular processes, to support people to check-in. This system may need to return if case numbers rise.

Red

- There is no change to masks in the early learning settings where mask wearing is not required by adults or children. Masks will continue to be required for visitors (including parents) when indoors.
- For all New Zealanders, including school and early learning settings, masks will not be required outdoors.
- Capacity limits will be removed for outdoor events and activities.
- Indoor capacity limits for extra-curricular activities increases to 200 people, or a maximum capacity on the maximum number of people who could occupy the space if each person was one metre apart (whichever is lower).

Orange

- As at Red, there will be no mask requirements when outdoors.
- There will be no outdoor capacity limits.
- Indoor capacity limits are also removed.

Green

- There will be no face mask requirements and no capacity or gathering limits in any setting, indoors or outdoors.

Guidance on mandatory vaccination requirements

From 11.59pm on Monday 4 April, all workers in early learning services, schools and kura will no longer be required to be vaccinated to work with children or students, or to work on site where children and young people might be present.

Volunteer workers and those living in a home where licensed home-based education and care takes place will also no longer be required to be vaccinated.

Why this change has been made

The high level of vaccinations has been effective in keeping our tamariki in early learning services, schools and kura protected from COVID-19.

The vaccine mandates have been central in getting us to this point, but mandates need to be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are proportionate to the risks, as well as reflecting the other safety measures that are in place.

The Government's decision is based upon the assessment that the mandates are no longer appropriate given where New Zealand is at in our Omicron response.

With this change it is timely for you to review your current risk assessments and health and safety policies around COVID-19. Guidance to support you in this:

[COVID-19 Protection Framework for early learning services – Te Mahau](#)

[Risk assessment and planning for COVID-19 template – Te Mahau](#)

MBIE and WorkSafe are also updating their guidance to reflect the removal of vaccine mandates to support your risk assessment process. We will provide that updated information to you as soon as it becomes available.

It is important that you work with your staff and their representatives when considering the health and safety measures that are required to mitigate COVID-19 risks and communicate with parents and caregivers to provide confidence in the systems you have in place.

Implications for your employment processes

The vaccine mandate removal has implications for your employment practices. Once the mandatory vaccination requirements are removed any employment processes, which are underway because an employee is not vaccinated should cease.

If your service is currently involved in such an employment process seek advice from your employment advisor.

We acknowledge that it will be a difficult period as we move away from the vaccination requirements.

To help with this we have provided answers to anticipated questions about the management of staff when vaccinations are no longer mandatory.

[Vaccination mandate update – Te Mahau](#)


Other changes to the COVID-19 Protection Framework

My Vaccine Pass requirements will be removed from the framework at 11.59pm Monday 4 April.

This means that certified playgroups currently operating as close proximity services will not be required to use My Vaccine Pass to operate at the 'Red' and 'Orange' settings. Mask wearing requirements remain. Those playgroups currently under the education mandate should still follow those requirements.

[Vaccination mandate update – Te Mahau](#)

We will provide further information on these changes once the Health Order amendments are confirmed and Government advice is updated for businesses and services in regard to removal of My Vaccine Pass from the framework.

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Document 8

[Home](#) / He Pānui Kōhungahunga

HE PĀNUI KŌHUNGAHUNGA

UPDATE - 31 MARCH 2022

31 March 2022

IN THIS BULLETIN ISSUE

[Pay parity revenue and expenses survey extended](#)

[New curriculum strategies launched](#)

[TESSOL further study awards](#)

[Deciding whether you need extra mitigation measures in your COVID-19 safety plan](#)

[What risks should you consider when you make your plan?](#)

[WorkSafe and Employment New Zealand guidance](#)

[You need to take time to get this right](#)

[Parents whose children have COVID-19](#)

[Letter template to support attendance](#)

FOREWORD

Ahiahī mārie,

This week we have entered the latest phase of Aotearoa New Zealand's response to COVID-19. Although the new Red is a more simplified version than what we knew last week, it's a good time to remember that we are still in Red.

Although South Island numbers are continuing to climb, it is good to see the overall decline. But with winter approaching, there is, however, potential for more pressure on the health system, not just from COVID-19, but from the flu and other diseases such as RSV and measles.

Please encourage your communities to get their boosters, to get flu vaccinations, and to make sure childhood immunisations such as MMR are up to date.

Kia maiea tō rā,
Iona

Pay parity revenue and expenses survey extended

On 3 March we sent the 2022 pay parity revenue and expenses survey to education and care and home-based services.

Several services have requested an extension of the submission date due to the challenges faced by the COVID-19 Omicron surge, so we have moved it to Tuesday 19 April.

If you haven't responded to the survey yet, we encourage you to do so as your contribution is valuable and will inform the pay parity funding review.

New curriculum strategies launched

'Hei Raukura Mō te Mokopuna' and the 'Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy' were launched on Friday by Associate Minister of Education Jan Tinetti.

Find further information about the strategies and the launch:

[Literacy and communication and maths strategies – Ministry of Education](#)

Developed by Te Poutāhū | Curriculum Centre, these strategies pave the way for strengthening:

- te reo matatini and pāngarau in and through te reo Māori with Hei Raukura Mō te Mokopuna
- literacy and numeracy through the 'Literacy and Communication and Maths Strategy' for English-medium settings.

We will now work collaboratively with the sector to develop action plans for these strategies that will guide early learning services within the framework of Te Whāriki.

[Communication – Te Whāriki Online](#)

TESSOL further study awards

We are pleased to offer additional awards for further study in the Teaching English in Schools to Speakers of Other Languages (TESSOL) field.

[TESSOL further study awards – Ministry of Education](#)

These awards are targeted at teachers who:

- have successfully done the TESSOL scholarship funded courses of a New Zealand TESSOL qualification but who have not completed it, or
- teachers who have completed a TESSOL qualification and wish to do further study.

Teachers in early learning services are invited to apply for an award to study at a graduate or postgraduate level and are open until Sunday 22 May.

[TESSOL online awards applications – Ministry of Education](#)

Deciding whether you need extra mitigation measures in your COVID-19 safety plan

The COVID-19 Protection Framework sets out various public health measures that apply at each stage of the traffic light framework.

We are currently in the Red setting. At any setting, early learning services can choose to apply additional mitigation measures that they believe are appropriate for their context.

[COVID-19 Protection Framework for early learning services – Te Mahau](#)

While the mandatory requirement for workers (paid and unpaid) in early learning services to be vaccinated will end from 11.59 pm on Monday 4 April, it is important to remember that this will not change the fact that we have a highly vaccinated workforce.

Getting vaccinated and boosted remains one of the best protections against COVID-19 and is still strongly encouraged by the Ministry of Health. In addition to this your other protective mechanisms, such as staying home when sick, spending more time outdoors and increasing ventilation indoors remain important.

What risks should you consider when you make your plan?

We know that young children generally experience less severe illness from COVID-19 than those in older age groups. Serious illness and hospitalisations are rare, but they do happen.

It remains important to do what we can to minimise COVID-19 infections in early learning settings to protect those who are more vulnerable to poor outcomes, and to reduce overall pressure on the health system.

The Unite Against COVID-19 website describes some of those that are higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This includes infants under one month old and children under the age of two who were born premature (less than 37 weeks).

[Prepare and stay safe – Unite Against COVID-19](#)

Just as adults will be, young children can also be vectors for transmission in their households. You should consider the demographics of your wider community, including vaccination levels in the population as part of developing the risk profile for your early learning service. You should also revisit your plans for vulnerable workers as part of your health and safety risk assessment.

We provided some guidance for this risk assessment and planning for COVID-19 template, but WorkSafe and Employment New Zealand have also updated their guidance in light of the changes to vaccination mandates.

[COVID-19 risk assessment and planning – Te Mahau](#)

WorkSafe and Employment New Zealand guidance

We strongly recommend you engage with these tools and information as you work through the risk assessment process for your service.

[COVID-19 Employer vaccination requirements and other measures – WorkSafe](#)

[Vaccines and the workplace – Employment New Zealand](#)

It is important to note that now Omicron has entered the community, outside of those sectors still covered by Government vaccine mandates (such as the health sector), WorkSafe considers that few workplaces will be able to justify an employer vaccination requirement for health and safety or public health reasons.

For those who can, this would likely be only for specific roles. Employers should first consider the controls that are least intrusive to employees before requiring vaccinations.

You need to take time to get this right

While the new legislative framework will give early learning services the ability to make their own decisions on vaccination requirements going forward, it is important that you carry out a robust

assessment process and involve your employees and early learning community.

The time required to carry out appropriate consultation may mean you need to effectively continue operating with your existing health and safety plan from Tuesday 5 April, until decisions are made on the suitability of vaccination or other mitigation strategies in your early learning service. It is important not to preempt any outcomes.

There may be quite differing views in your community about the importance of vaccinations, masks or other measures. We recommend you seek legal advice to support you with this process.

[Vaccine mandate update – Te Mahau](#)

Parents whose children have COVID-19

There is helpful information for parents on the KidsHealth website that clearly explains the symptoms of COVID-19 in children and outlines how to care for an unwell child at home.

There are visuals and videos as well as clear written guidance for parents around COVID-19 prevention as well.

[COVID-19 – KidsHealth NZ](#)


KidsHealth is a joint initiative between The Paediatric Society of New Zealand and Starship Foundation, supported by the Ministry of Health.

Letter template to support attendance

We have drafted a letter templates to support your communications with your community, which can be edited to meet your needs.

[Update to parents and caregivers – English \[DOCX,14 KB\]](#)

[Update to parents and care givers – te reo Māori \[DOCX,16 KB\]](#)

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