

Hon Paula Bennett

Accent Learning – Poverty Impacts on Learning Symposium

Friday 24 May 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

The needs of vulnerable children stretch across government, community, and the frontline of our public services.

Those needs are at the center of my work as a Minister – from the Children's Action Plan, to reforming the welfare system and reforming the way government works with groups in the community.

There are clear links between welfare, poverty and poor health.

Around 222,000 children live in welfare-dependant homes and we know they're worse off than children in working households.

Too often, we only hear the cries of vulnerable children after the damage has been done.

Child, Youth and Family deals with hundreds of children and families on any given day.

We now get about 154,000 notifications of concern about children every year.

61,000 require further action – **22,000** findings of abuse are substantiated.

Of that number in 2012:

- 8042 were aged 0-4 years
- 5999 were aged 5-9
- 6787 were aged 10-16

And every year about 2,200 children come into State care.

Social Workers in Schools

October 2011 the Social Workers in Schools expansion was announced.

Government funding has more than doubled since 2011, and **\$21 million** will now be invested each year from July 2013.

The Stage 3 implementation in Term 3 this year will mean **149 extra SWiS Workers** have begun working in schools since mid-last year.

That means a **120%** increase in reach in the last 2 years.

The expansion will be completed in Term Three this year, and all 690 decile 1-3 primary schools and around **142,000** children will have access to a social worker.

Recruitment of the second stage of the expansion has just been completed, with an extra 38 new social workers in decile 1-3 schools.

Stage two covered schools throughout Greater Auckland, Northland, Napier, Hastings and the South Island, and almost 15,500 children in those areas.

This extra support is designed to directly help children and families, and ease the burden on teachers.

The SWiS programme allows teachers need to focus on the learning needs of children first and foremost.

They can also be confident that complex issues faced by children and their families are being addressed by trained professionals.

Feedback from SWiS social workers highlights the many tough issues facing children and families.

Major challenges faced include domestic violence, anger and emotional issues, financial hardship, overcrowded homes, and truancy.

Complex family situations often mean children face a combination of these issues.

Strong partnerships between social workers and the schools they service are vital.

Social Workers in Hospitals

The Social Workers in Hospitals initiative was introduced by National in 2009.

The principle is the same as in schools – frontline professionals working together can pick up on concerns with children and families sooner, and act on them better.

Social workers are now based in **every DHB** in the country.

They are a vital link between CYF and hospital staff.

Like in schools, social workers on the frontlines in hospitals are trained at recognising concerning signs of abuse or neglect.

Multi-agency safety plans are developed around every child or young person admitted to hospital showing these signs before they're discharged.

Their needs will be identified, and the right support measures put in place for when they return back home.

In the six months to March 2013, **7386 discussions** took place between social workers and hospital staff about families they were concerned about - **14%** of cases resulted in a report of concern to CYF.

EdAssist

The Education Assist package introduced in 2011.

The Ed Assist phone line at the core of this.

Ed Assist undertook outbound calls to all decile 1 to 3 schools in New Zealand in 2012 – 783 in total.

During this process we got **14,825** requests for resources from schools.

CYF also saw a 16% increase in notifications from education over 12 months to October last year - down to improved communication and better relationships between CYF and your schools.

Gateway assessments

2011 - Gateway Assessments - a **\$43.7 million** initiative addressing health, mental health and educational needs in children in care.

Early data from teachers shows us they found:

- **25%** of children have literacy problems.
- **24%** have numeracy problems.
- **19%** comprehension issues.
- **11%** have a higher than average level of school absence.

Health issues picked up:

- Five children have received heart surgery following assessment.
- A teenager was diagnosed with epilepsy and is now getting treatment.
- A child with a club foot had orthopaedic surgery and was able to walk 12 months later.

Almost **1,700** children in care have now been assessed, with an average of more than 3 needs per child picked up including educational delays.