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TAMARIKI**
Ministry for Children



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
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TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Estimating the impact of Social Workers in Schools using linked administrative data

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Wellington, September 2018***

Disclaimer

The results in this report are not official statistics, they have been created for research purposes from the *Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI)* managed by Statistics New Zealand.

The opinions, findings, recommendations and conclusions expressed in this report are those of the authors not Statistics NZ, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry for Vulnerable Children Oranga Tamariki or Motu Economic and Public Policy Research.

Access to the anonymised data used in this study was provided by Statistics NZ in accordance with security and confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act 1975. Only people authorised by the Statistics Act 1975 are allowed to see data about a particular person, household, business or organisation and the results in this report have been confidentialised to protect these groups from identification.

Careful consideration has been given to the privacy, security and confidentiality issues associated with using administrative and survey data in the IDI. Further detail can be found in the Privacy impact assessment for the Integrated Data Infrastructure available from www.stats.govt.nz.

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Context

Government agencies facing increased demand for evidence that investment in social services makes a positive difference

New opportunities

The **Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI)** regularly updates and safely holds de-identified linked administrative data from across Government agencies

Expanded to include a wider range of data relating to children

→ **New opportunities** for impact evaluation

And challenges

- administrative data **miss important outcomes** sought by social programmes
- they provide **imperfect proxies** for outcomes sought by programmes
- they have the **potential for bias**
- they are not able to address **why and how**
- there are other sources of **error** eg. errors in data linkage, in administrative recording
- robust impact evaluation **not always feasible**

→ **Just one possible part of
the evaluative story**

**and a need for care in
interpretation**

SWiS

A government-funded community social work service available in selected primary and intermediate schools and kura

Aims:

- to see safe, healthy and socialised children with a strong sense of identity, who are fully engaged in school
- to protect vulnerable children and ensure their safety, wellbeing and educational needs are met

Services:

- individual case work with children and their families and whānau
- group programmes
- community liaison and service coordination

Evolution

Introduced 1999–01:

- 1999: 12 social worker (SW) positions
- 2000: expanded to 66.5 SWs → **171** schools
- 2001: a further 5.5 SWs

2005–07 expansion → 300 schools and kura

- school clusters with at least 60% of students in decile 1-3 schools

2012–13 expansion → 700 schools and kura

- expansion to all decile 1-3 schools and kura

Intensity

Low intensity at the school level

- **one SW : 400 - 700 students.**
- average cost per school or kura served is \$35,000
- annual spending totalled \$21.4 million

Past studies

Previous evaluations and kaupapa Māori studies have found **strong support** for the service from

- schools and kura
- families and whānau
- social workers and provider organisations

Positive change seen as occurring for students across a range of areas

Encouraging results from a preliminary quasi-experimental study assessing impacts on outcomes, **but** some methodological limitations

This study

Estimated the impact of the 2012-13 expansion on selected outcomes using the IDI

Examined whether there were reductions in:

- stand-downs and suspensions from school
- care and protection notifications
- Police apprehensions for alleged offending

Statistical method

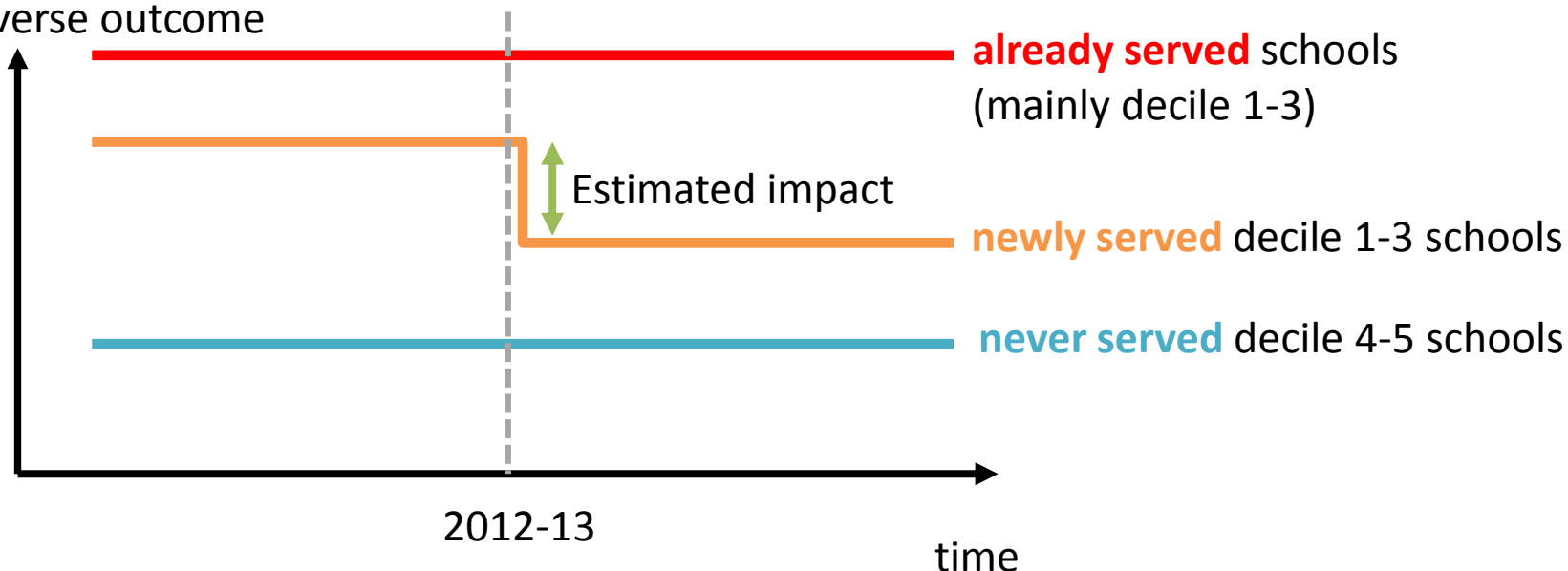
A '**Difference-in Differences**' estimation approach

Were there **differences** in outcomes before and after the SWiS expansion for students in schools and kura that were newly served?

And were these **different** to the differences in outcomes over that time period for students in schools not affected by the expansion?

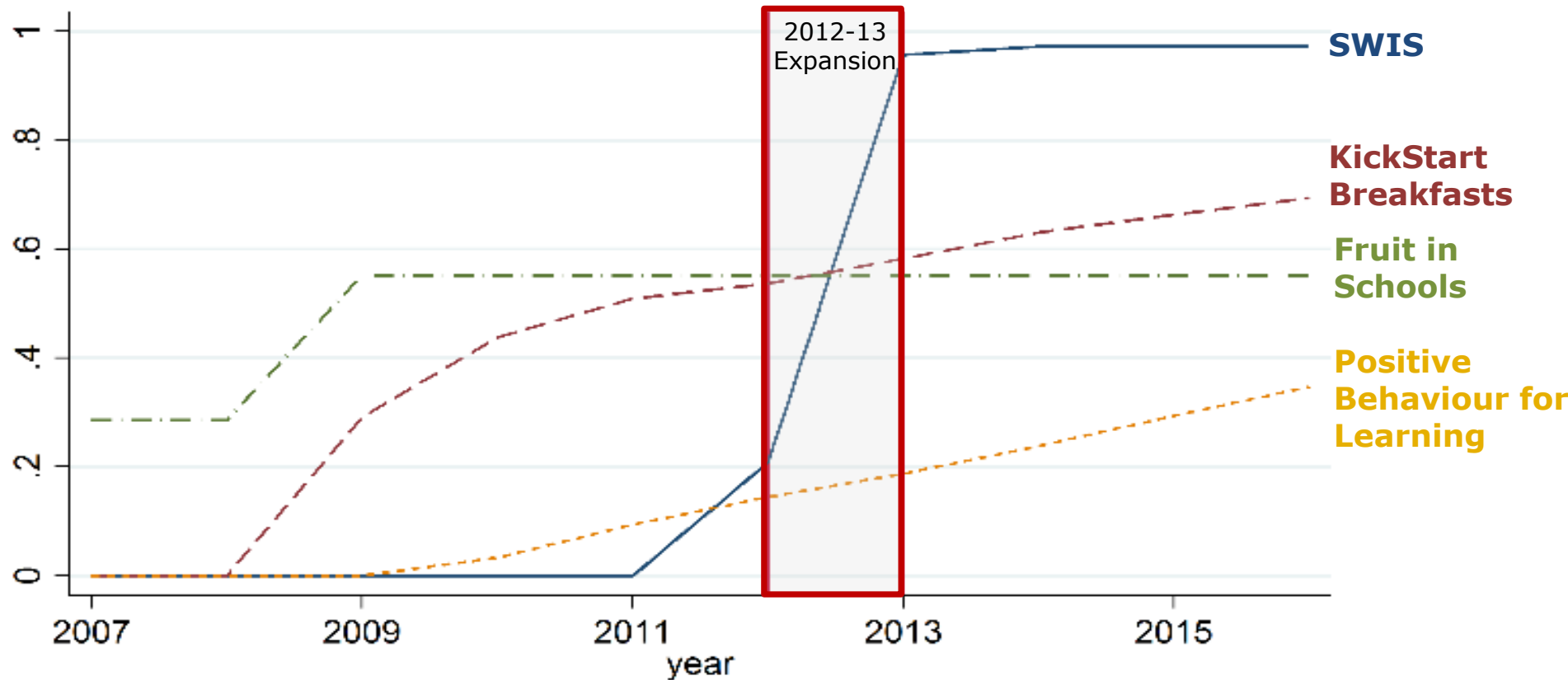
Statistical method

Proportion of students with
an adverse outcome



Newly served decile 1-3 schools

Proportion with selected school-based services:



Estimated impacts

For subgroups of students who would be the most likely to be the direct recipients of individual case work provided by SWIS

we found a general pattern of improvements in outcomes in the schools and kura newly served relative to outcomes for students in comparison schools, some statistically significant

- 16/21 'interaction' coefficients were negative
- 5 of these were significant at the 1 or 5 percent level

Relative to trends for similar students in comparison schools and kura:

- for Māori boys enrolled in the base schools for the social workers, the SWiS expansion was associated with lower rates of **Police apprehensions**
- for Pacific students there were lower rates of care and **protection notifications to CYF**

If SWiS is effective in reducing offending behaviour and reducing child welfare concerns

→ downstream positive effects may be considerable

No statistically significant evidence that the SWiS expansion improved the outcomes for students overall

→ this result is not surprising given the very low ratio of social workers to students overall

Results for kura kaupapa Māori

We found associations between enrolling in a kura and **large improvements** in each of the outcomes we examined, all highly significant

This is **after controlling for other observed differences** (e.g. time supported by benefit and whether notified to CYF before age 5, decile)

These results clearly invite further study - based on our study, we are unable to say whether they reflect the effects of kura on outcomes for their students or **unobserved differences** that we had not controlled for.

Limitations

Complexity of the school service environment makes estimating impacts of one service difficult

Large effects on specific outcomes **would not be expected** given the nature and intensity of the service

Administrative data has limitations

→ this type of study provides only one part of the evaluative story

Conclusions

Based on past studies, SWiS offers a preventive social work service that is **acceptable** to families and whānau, and is **experienced as helpful** by schools and kura

The service is **seen as having a wide range of important benefits** by families and whānau, schools and kura, and social workers

In this study, there are indications of some **encouraging impacts on outcomes** that can be measured using linked administrative data **for the students most likely to be the direct recipients** of the service

“How” – does this happen?

**“What’s missing” – in the data that tells
the story?**

- **New SWiS Evaluation**

To implement

He Awa Whiria methodology

from the start

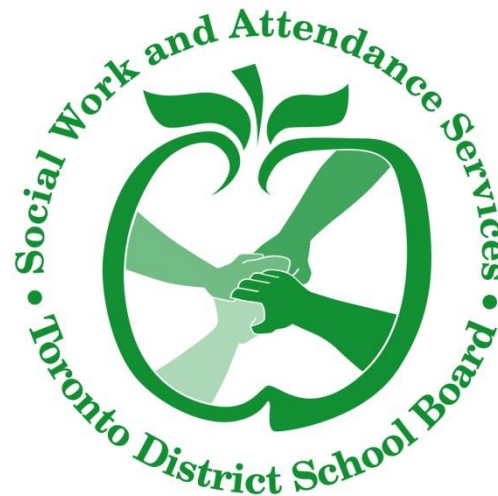
**Developed by *Angus Macfarlane* (2011) as a model for
reconciling western science and Te Ao Māori research and
evaluation perspectives**



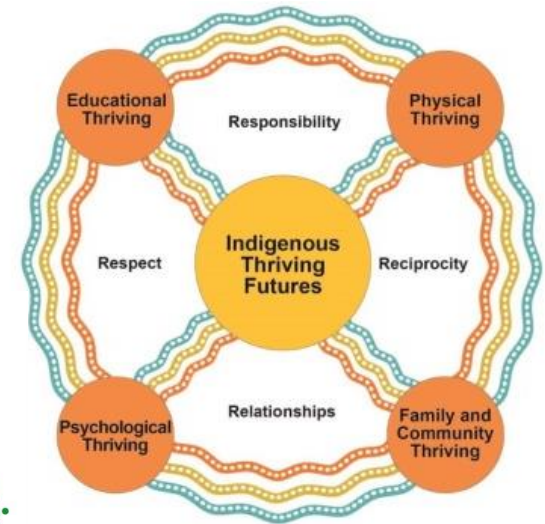
He Awa Whiria may draw on Whanau Ora and International Social Work in Schools programmes



Whanau Ora



International Indigenous SWiS





EVIDENCE CENTRE

TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS

PROPOSED RESEARCH & EVALUATION 2018/19



PROPOSED PROJECT

Following the recent quasi-experimental evaluations of SWiS, conduct new research, re-evaluate, and gather fresh evidence:

- to understand the perspectives of tamariki and their whānau on their experiences, changes and benefits from SWiS
- to revisit what the SWiS model looks like and how it works for schools and kura
- to ensure that we capture the view of SWiS for Māori tamariki and their whānau using kaupapa Māori research methods
- to use culturally appropriate and responsive methods to ensure that a Te Ao Māori viewpoint is maintained throughout



WHAT WE'LL DO

Evidence streams

Revisit the literature:

A 'super-synthesis' of literature on SWiS in New Zealand, SWiS equivalents from overseas jurisdictions, and alternatives/other models being used.

Online email based sample survey:

- Social workers
- School principals and other education professionals
- SWiS providers

Fieldwork - interviewing face-to-face and telephone:

- Tamariki & their whānau
- Social workers
- School principals
- National Office staff
- SWiS providers

Take a look at SDQ scores:

- how well has the implementation worked?
- how meaningful is the SDQ for kura and for Māori tamariki?



EVIDENCE CENTRE

TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

READ OUR RESEARCH:

Check out the Research web page at
<https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/news/category/research>

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