

Non-teaching spaces in schools for Oranga Tamariki-funded social and youth workers

Information Sheet (August 2020)

Background

School-based social and youth workers include those funded by Oranga Tamariki and delivered by a range of NGO providers. These Services in Schools are:

- Social Workers in School (SWiS)
- *Tauwhiro Taiohi*: Youth Workers in Secondary Schools (YWiSS); Multi-Agency Support Services in Secondary Schools (MASSiSS).

All three services use rooms within schools where they undertake social/youth work practice. These spaces vary widely in size, type and quality.

This information sheet has been prepared by the Services in Schools team at Oranga Tamariki National Office to provide practical information and advice on how best to provide suitable spaces for in-school social work practice. It is intended for providers, Team Leaders, managers and individual social workers, as well as for Principals of participating schools of the three services.

This information is to allow greater collaboration to, where possible, improve the physical spaces where this valuable mahi is undertaken.

The Ministry of Education (Education Infrastructure Service) has reviewed this document.

Comment on it can be emailed to:
marten.hutt@ot.govt.nz



Social Workers in Schools

Te Hunga Tauwhiro i te Kura



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

What information is currently available?

This information sheet has been produced to respond to requests from providers and Principals for information additional to the statements in existing Service Specifications and Partnering Agreements for all three services on non-teaching spaces and what is required for effective social work practice with tamariki and rangatahi.¹

This information sheet will inform collaboration between Services in Schools providers and Principals

The information in this paper will allow:

- more informed provider-Principal discussions
- providers to understand regional property processes
- Principals to have a better sense of what spaces work best for social work mahi (which will be different to the clinical/hygiene needs of nurses for instance)
- negotiation of actions under the relevant section of Partnering Agreements which Principals and providers are signatories to
- Principals to have information they need to potentially raise with their Boards of Trustees on what improvements could be made to non-teaching spaces.

A good space for social work practice matters

As well as the skill of individual social workers and support from teachers, we know that a good physical space makes practice more effective in working with vulnerable tamariki and rangatahi. Often small, low-cost changes can make a big difference. Fixing a window to make it non-draughty and having a floor with carpet and a private, quiet environment can be low-cost but high impact.

When social or youth workers engage with often sensitive issues, it is not ideal for social work interactions being held in halls, playgrounds or in small rooms off the staffroom or in high traffic areas with limited privacy.

It is acknowledged that budgets are tight for non-teaching spaces and there will always be competing priorities.

¹ Partnering Agreements for all three services only state that schools "... must provide a private and appropriate room or non-teaching space (or shared room/space)...[which]...must be able to support therapeutic activity as well as being suitable for meeting with rangatahi and families/whānau when at the school."

Understanding the context for property for Principals/schools

It is important all Services in Schools providers understand the terminology and processes used by the Ministry of Education, Principals and Boards of Trustees relating to property, if they wish to submit desired improvements to the non-teaching spaces that their social/youth workers operate in.

Schools get a **Property Maintenance Grant** as part of their operational funding for general maintenance work. This is likely to be the main area to focus on when discussing social worker needs with Principals as to what might be possible, as it will cover repairs or works that cost under \$5k which may have a high-impact on the quality of the room.

The Ministry of Education provides schools with capital funding to upgrade, modernise, or replace existing buildings. This is for significant work needed to maintain or upgrade essential infrastructure, such as re-roofing.

Schools also have a **10 Year Property Plan**. This sets out the school's long-term capital and maintenance plans. If any significant upgrades are desired by a Services in Schools provider, then it is important that this is discussed with the school. If not on the Property Plan already, social worker-required improvements can be the basis of conversations:

- Upgrades could be staggered, or prioritised or some other solution found.
- Not all improvements need to be on the Property Plan but anything of substantive cost needs to be, such as dividing a room more permanently or adding a window or removing a door.
- Once on the Plan there is, of course, no guarantee it can be actioned immediately, but it is now officially recorded.

Specific instances/FAQ

What happens if a social or youth worker moves office within a school, or wants to?

All schools have a "space entitlement" and space which is above its entitlement is "surplus space". The Ministry of Education tries to accommodate SWIS in schools that have surplus space. This "surplus space" then becomes "legitimate space", and the Ministry of Education provides the school with additional capital funding to pay for the ongoing property costs associated with hosting SWIS. In specific instances:

- A school could decide, ideally with provider/social worker input, to use its surplus space (such as an old dental clinic or unused classroom) to provide services like a SWIS.

As a result, schools would, assuming agreement by Board and Ministry of Education, receive additional capital funding.

- Simply moving an office within their school would not change the level of capital or operational funding a school receives. At present the Ministry of Education website notes that "additional funding" is not available for such as an intra-school move. However, schools can use existing operational funding if the Board of Trustees agrees.

Hasn't there been a recent (2019/20) investment in school infrastructure so that all schools have additional funding?

Yes. The recently announced investment package seeks to accelerate works that would otherwise be deferred due to lack of capital funding. Schools are moving now to select projects that are already part of their existing Property Plans. Schools may therefore choose to use the investment package to upgrade, for instance, a SWIS office room or block if the project is already part of their Property Plan.

This emphasises how important it is to discuss any improvements your social workers might want with the school to be considered as part of their Property Plan.

What if a provider and/or schools wishes to reconfigure space for a "hub" for linked-in services?

Schools that have "surplus space" may decide to use this to provide different services. They would need Ministry of Education approval to do this. This could include a single hub-type space for housing multiple support staff as well as an existing Services in Schools social or youth worker.

This provider/school-driven innovation may be entitled to additional capital funding. As long as schools operate within their space entitlement, and have approval for such a move, then they would receive the appropriate capital funding.

What if I want more information or clarification?

You should work with your Principals. Schools can contact their Ministry property advisor to discuss their property needs, including what a Services in Schools provider may require.