



Proactive Release

Submissions on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

August 2019

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has released the following submission received during its public consultation on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Some of the information contained within this release is considered to not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- Where this is the case, the information has been withheld, and the relevant section of the Act that would apply, has been identified.
- Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes and their reference to sections of the Act:

- **9(2)a** – Section 9(2)(a): to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

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Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy – Submission Template

This document is intended for individuals or groups who wish to make a formal submission on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Please complete this template and email it to: childandyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz

A guide to making a submission is available on the DPMC website <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>

Submissions will close on **Wednesday 5 December**.

Please provide details for a contact person in case we have some follow up questions.

Contact Name:	9(2)□(a)
Email Address:	
Phone Number:	
Organisation Name:	Accent Learning (Victoria Link Limited) Victoria University of Wellington
Organisation description: (tell us about your organisation – i.e. who do you represent? How many members do you have? Are you a local or national organisation?)	<p>Viclink is Victoria University of Wellington's (VUW) commercialisation office, and is a wholly owned subsidiary of the University. Viclink's core purpose is research translation and knowledge transfer through achieving maximum impact from intellectual property. Viclink helps researchers transform their discoveries into products or services that have real benefit to society.</p> <p>Accent Learning, previously School Support Services, was attached to the Wellington College of Education delivering large Ministry of Education (MOE) contracts for over twenty years. Accent has extensive knowledge of the New Zealand education system and provides professional development to schools. Being aware of the barriers students face, including bullying, we searched for an approach to bullying prevention that addressed the New Zealand need and context. The result was obtaining the New Zealand licence for KiVa, a proven bullying prevention approach.</p> <p>In addition, we have three years' experience working in partnership with Ministry of Education and Training in Tonga to develop the delivery capacity of school officers and teacher educators.</p>

Executive Summary:

(Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)

This submission highlights what needs to change, and how, to meet the proposed outcomes. High statistics of bullying for our children and young people (TIMSS¹, PISA²) leave too many feeling unsafe, unhappy, that they do not belong and that no one cares. Frequent absence from school effects children's ability to develop, learn and contribute.

In New Zealand we have KiVa, an evidence-based approach proven to reduce bullying incidents by generating a culture change. In a KiVa school all students are supported. Those bullied learn strategies to communicate, cope and respond. Those who bully learn empathy and a positive approach to relationships. Peers, or bystander groups, learn ways to defend. In all cases increased mental wellbeing results in improved educational outcomes.

An independent assessment by PISA found that "The KiVa programme had a significant impact on reducing the incidence of bullying, and also made a difference in students' attitudes towards bullies and victims".

New Zealand KiVa schools have reported a dramatic reduction in bullying incidents, with consequences that link strongly with the Strategy's outcomes and related focus areas.

KiVa³ ('kind' or 'nice'), making New Zealand a better place for our children.

¹ Trends in Mathematics and Science Studies

² Programme for International Student Assessment

³ KiVa (meaning kind or nice) is an acronym for the Finnish expression Kiusaamista Vastan (against bullying)

Submission Content

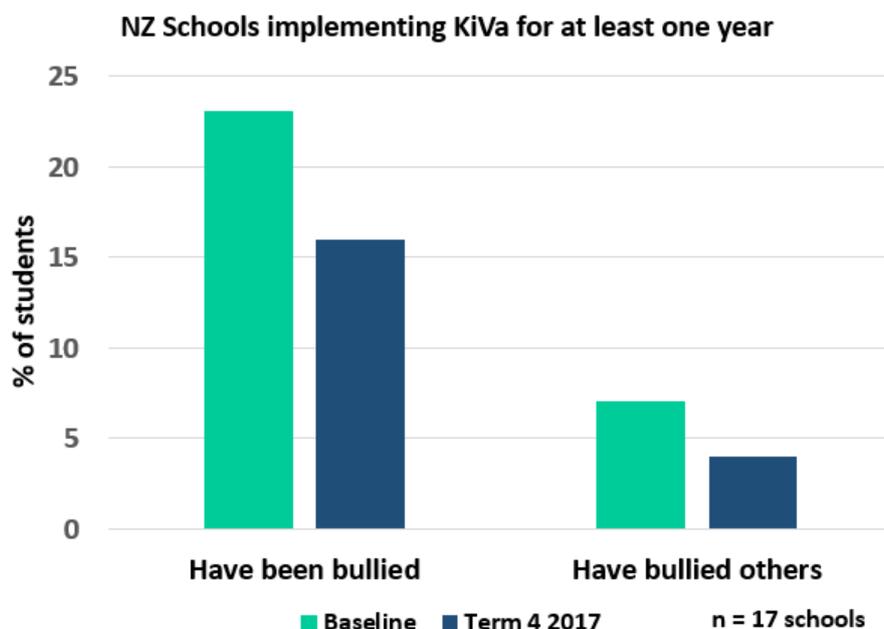
This submission highlights what needs to change, and how it can be achieved, by outlining specific activities required to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in New Zealand.

The effects of bullying on our youth are immediate and long lasting. It is well publicised that New Zealand has one of the highest rates of bullying and youth suicide. Despite the efforts of schools and other organisations our statistics do not improve. In 2015 (TIMSS) there was only one country with worse statistics.

The time and money that goes into seeking solutions, not always proven, could be better spent. We have a proven solution already in New Zealand which is scalable for national implementation. KiVa is an evidence-based approach which has been trialled researched and continues to be evaluated.

“The majority of studies evaluating bullying prevention programmes find a positive impact. But in most cases, the impact is modest. Randomised control trials found that the KiVa programme had a significant impact on reducing the incidence of bullying, and also made a difference in students’ attitudes towards bullies and victims” (*Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2015*)

Dramatic reduction in bullying incidents has been reported internationally (Finland over eight years) with the same results being replicated in New Zealand KiVa schools.



Student survey results so far for 2018 confirm this trend.

The results from KiVa are significant but what we don't have yet is the critical mass of KiVa schools needed to reduce bullying numbers on a national scale. If we worked in partnership

with the Government we could instantly have a clear approach to meet proposed outcomes in the Strategy Framework.

The following statements demonstrate the strong linkage KiVa has with the Strategy's outcomes and related focus areas. We have attempted to avoid repetition but make the point that the philosophy and activities for KiVa often link across outcomes rather than being limited to one outcome alone.

Outcome: Are loved nurtured and safe.

"Hey this year rocks, nobody has bullied me so far. I like this!" (student email)

It is a child's right to be safe at school, outside school and online. KiVa tackles these issues head on through classroom lessons which are child-centred. There are processes in place to support victims of bullying and their peers and to encourage them to tell someone if they are being bullied. This solves one of the unseen problems where children keep it to themselves. Children feel cared for and safe in their community as KiVa works on changing the culture, attitudes and behaviours, which go beyond the school gates.

KiVa also uses a process that ensures bullying incidents are dealt with quickly and safely for all concerned. Children have commented on the difference between the past, when nothing happened, to now when they are valued, taken seriously and listened to.

Outcome: Belong, contribute and are valued

The links here are significant. Children and young people who are bullied often feel isolated and excluded at school. They do not feel valued or that they belong. Those who bully others are often unaware of, or don't care about, their responsibility to others. They misread fear, or a lack of confidence in others, as a kind of respect often resulting in inappropriate decision-making. KiVa lessons build on themes that encourage intrinsic incentives based on the idea that most children do, in fact, think that bullying is wrong. Lessons emphasise the importance of respect and how to communicate that respect in relationships. KiVa works on a shared responsibility, identifying what everyone has to do, to make school a place where everyone feels good and safe. The different roles children have in a group, and how their behaviour impacts on the length and severity of a bullying incident, is explored. KiVa demonstrates how children and young people are valued by being proactive, systematic and structured rather than just waiting for bullying to happen and then responding after the fact.

KiVa supports appropriate decision-making for children about their own behaviour in bullying situations, and what to do if they themselves are being bullied.

Parents, caregivers and whānau are a key factor in the KiVa solution. They are kept informed by newsletters and information evenings to understand how they can assist the KiVa process. They share in online activities that children can log into from home. Changing the social norm within the wider community is the greatest challenge. Whatever the reasons or cause, bullying behaviour is simply unacceptable.

Outcome: Are happy and healthy

Being bullied causes unhappiness and mental stress. Children and young people who are bullied lack positive relationships and supportive networks making it difficult to cope with life's challenges. Numerous studies have provided evidence that the KiVa approach is effective at reducing incidents of cyberbullying, reducing anxiety and depression and improving student perceptions of their peers as trustworthy and supportive.

“So, I got those skills and I realised, I should have told them about this (bullying) way before now because it's just been going along and annoying me each day coming home and feeling sad (and now I feel) really nice coming home”. *Student*

KiVa empowers bullied children to tell about their experiences and to build trust that something will happen as a result. Bystanders, most of whom do not condone bullying, are given strategies and confidence to become defenders. KiVa lessons help students to develop empathy, they learn how to defend the victim, how to understand and appreciate diversity as well as communication skills to support positive relationships within the group. All of these factors increase students' social skills and create happy and healthy classroom interactions.

Bullies learn about the impact of their actions and are given opportunities and support to make changes. For everyone, developing communication skills and understanding group dynamics improves the climate and helps them understand the impact of their behaviour.

An example of a complete change in attitude comes from a Year 7 boy:

“My experience with KiVa was (sic) life changing experience that moved my life in what I think is a better direction. At the start of my KiVa journey I was a bit scared about what the consequences would be. I was soon surprised with the response I got. My school's KiVa leaders were fair towards my actions and helped me realise the weight of my actions. The leaders also helped with a plan towards my future to make sure that incidents like that don't happen again...”

Outcome: Are learning and developing.

To achieve socially and educationally children need to attend school regularly. It is well reported that many students don't because they feel unsafe or feel they do not belong. They look for ways to stay away. KiVa was initially created in Finland because the Finnish government wanted to take students' wellbeing seriously and decided that preventing bullying was a priority. The results there, and here, have been remarkable. Not only has it seen positive changes in bullying attitudes, empathy and constructive bystander behaviours, it has increased school liking, and reduced social anxiety and negative peer perceptions. Through carefully designed activities children, especially those bullied, develop resilience and feel comfortable to attend school more regularly. Those who bully build self-control. In all cases increased mental wellbeing results in improved educational outcomes.

“ I think it definitely is working, people are definitely standing up and people are stopping as well which is great and people are definitely enjoying school a lot more that have been bullied, which is nice”. *Student*

There is some urgency required. We have approximately 750,000 school age children. At least 20% are bullied on a regular basis totalling a staggering 150,000 of our young people who do not feel happy or safe at school. A further sobering statistic consistently emerging from baseline KiVa student surveys is that 23% of those bullied do not tell anyone. That is about 34,500 students under the radar left to cope on their own.

KiVa is a solution that could make a significant contribution to meeting the proposed outcomes of this strategy and realising the aim of making New Zealand the best place in the world for children.

Further Reading

Saarento, S., Boulton, A., & Salmivalli, C. (2014). Reducing Bullying and Victimization: Student and Classroom Level Mechanisms of Change. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, early online.

Hutchings, J., & Clarkson, S. (2015). Introducing and piloting the KiVa bullying prevention programme in the UK. *Educational & Child Psychology Vol. 32 No. 1 49*. © The British Psychological Society, 2015

Green, V., Wegerhoff, D., Woods, L., Harcourt, S. (2017). A preliminary evaluation of KiVa after one-year of implementation in New Zealand. *Victoria University of Wellington*, on request