Appendix A:

# Criteria for Eligibility for BLENNZ Services

## Definitions

### BLENNZ Ākonga

BLENNZ ākonga are children and young people who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision.

BLENNZ ākonga are a diverse group. BLENNZ ākonga range in age from birth to 21 years, and each are either blind, deafblind, or have low vision, some of whom have additional special needs, including physical, cognitive and/or developmental needs.

Ākonga vision may be affected by damage to the front or the back of the eye or the neurological pathways from the eye to the brain. Field loss (what can be seen in the periphery) may also be involved. The condition may be stable, deteriorating or improving. It may have been present at birth or develop later as the result of an hereditary condition, disease or accident.

Enrolment with BLENNZ may commence from birth and continue until the end of compulsory schooling or until the end of the year the ākonga turns 21 years.

### Blind

Internationally, the most widely accepted acuity for legal blindness is <6/60 or a significant field loss of 20 degrees. Touch and hearing may be the primary mode of accessing information.  However some ākonga who are legally blind may also use vision to support access to information and to assist orientation and mobility.

### Deafblind

Ākonga who are deafblind have a combination of vision and hearing loss and may be described as having a dual sensory loss. The degree of loss in either vision or hearing will vary from person to person.  This combination may result in significant communication, developmental and/or educational needs. Ākonga who are deafblind may access learning through visual, tactual and auditory sensory channels.

### Low Vision

BLENNZ ākonga with low vision have visual acuities measuring between 6/18 – 6/60 after corrective lenses are in place.The impact of low vision will vary from ākonga to ākonga. Each ākonga will require an individual approach to facilitate access to information.  Factors such as size, clarity, clutter and contrast, at near and distance may need to be reviewed and modified for accessibility.

### IP

Individual Plan. The IP includes the terms IEP (Individual Education Plan) and ITP (Individual Transition Plan).

## Eligibility for Services

The Ministry of Education-BLENNZ resourcing notice records BLENNZ resourcing for each school year. It also outlines the basis of the resourcing received and sets the purposes for which it can be used.

Ākonga are eligible for BLENNZ services if they meet the following medical and/or educational criteria:

### Medical

There is a written report from an ophthalmologist, optometrist or orthoptist, or other relevant medical specialist, identifying vision impairment as manifested by at least one of the following:

* A visual acuity of 6/18 or less in the better eye after best possible correction;
* A visual field so restricted that it affects the ability of the ākonga to function in an educational setting;
* A progressive loss of vision which may affect the ability of the ākonga to function in an educational setting;
* For ākonga birth to five years of age, bilateral lack of central vision with an estimated visual acuity of 6/18 or less after best possible correction; or documented eye condition as above;
* A diagnosis of cerebral vision impairment which affects the ability of the ākonga to function in an educational setting.

### Educational

There is a written report following a functional vision assessment conducted by an educational professional with expertise in blindness education which identifies at least one of the following:

* Inhibits optimal processing of information through the visual channel; and
* Affects access by the ākonga to regular print resources, black/whiteboards and other learning resources in the educational setting; and
* Requires one or more of the following:

1. Adaptation of the environment
2. Adaptation of teaching and learning approaches
3. Access to materials in accessible formats e.g. collage, Braille
4. Access to assistive technology
5. Access to instruction in the BLENNZ Curriculum
6. Adaptation of the regular curriculum.

## Homai Campus School

The Homai Campus school is established and administered as for all state schools. Enrolment within the school (including satellite and transition programmes) requires a Section 9 agreement.

## Visual Resource Centres

Ākonga are eligible to be enrolled with a Visual Resource Centre if they are assessed as meeting the Criteria for Eligibility for BLENNZ Services.

## Homai Early Childhood Centre

BLENNZ’s integrated early involvement service provides co-ordinated and specialist early childhood teaching for ākonga who are blind, deafblind and low vision under 6 years of age. These services are for ākonga and their families/whanau enrolled in, or referred to, the Homai Early Childhood Centre at BLENNZ,

The Homai Early Childhood Centre has an all day licence for between 10-40 pre-school aged ākonga. The Homai Early Childhood Centre is the base for BLENNZ’s early involvement services.

Ākonga accessing the Homai Early Childhood Centre must be under 6 years of age and:

* Not enrolled in school, and
* Blind, deafblind or low vision, or
* Siblings of blind, deafblind or low vision ākonga, and
* It is determined that the programme will meet the needs of the ākonga and their parents/guardian, and
* A vacancy is available.

## Satellite Classes

Where groups of ākonga with similar educational needs live in close proximity it may be possible to establish a satellite class where this is deemed the most appropriate means of achieving positive educational outcomes.

## Residential Services

### Long Term Residential and Transitional Programmes

Long term residential services are available to all BLENNZ ākonga. The first priority for residential enrolments is for ākonga whose home is outside the Auckland urban area.

The second priority is that from time to time, if supported by their IP, ākonga from within the Auckland urban area may attend the residential facility to enhance their educational programme.

The following admission indicators guide the decision:

* The ākonga’s Individual Plan (IP) identifies that their education needs will best be met by residential placement at that time.
* The placement would not compromise their or the safety of any other ākonga.
* The ākonga is involved in and understands the decision to live away from home to support their education.
* A suitable placement is available.

### Immersion Courses

BLENNZ immersion courses for ākonga and/or their parents are resourced from BLENNZ’s residential services funding and are held nationally and regionally. However the low incidence nature of blindness and vision impairment, and financial prudence, means that the majority of courses are currently held on the Homai Campus.

Ākonga are eligible to attend a short term immersion course if:

* They are currently enrolled for services from BLENNZ
* They would benefit from the more intensive experience of a short term immersion course
* Their need has been identified through a collaborative process involving the ākonga, parents/guardian, RTV and other specialists, that such a programme is considered appropriate e.g. the IP (Individual Plan) process
* Their needs are commensurate with the nature and purpose of each course which will be documented and disseminated throughout the network
* Adequate resources and places are available.

Ākonga are eligible to attend a longer term immersion course if the BLENNZ Homai Campus programmes are identified by the parents/guardian and other IP team members as the most appropriate placement for meeting the educational needs of the ākonga.