



He taonga te tamaiti Every child a taonga

Strategic plan for early learning 2019-29

Draft for consultation

At a glance

Goal 1: Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards

- 1.1 Regulate new adult:child ratios for infants and toddlers
- 1.2 Require early learning services to support secure and consistent relationships for children
- 1.3 Incentivise for 100% and regulate for 80% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres, leading to regulation for 100%
- 1.4 Develop advice on group size, the design of physical environments and environmental factors
- 1.5 Gazette *Te Whāriki* to support shared expectations
- 1.6 Prevent low quality service providers from opening additional services
- 1.7 Increase monitoring of services

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- 2.1 Ensure equity funding supports children who need it
- 2.2 Co-construct progress tools to support children's learning and wellbeing
- 2.3 Expand the number of early learning services that facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whānau

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- 3.1 Improve the consistency and levels of teacher salaries and conditions across the early learning sector
- 3.2 Strengthen Initial Teacher Education
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- 3.4 Develop a workforce supply strategy

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- 4.2 Provide governance and management support for community-owned services
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- 4.4 Co-design an appropriate funding model with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust
- 4.5 Co-design an appropriate funding model with the NZ Playcentre Federation
- 4.6 Consider setting up state-owned early learning services with an associated research programme (also contributes to Goal 5)

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Foreword

from the Minister of Education

Education is a life-long journey with the power to change lives. This Government's vision is for a high quality public education system, which puts the wellbeing of learners at the centre and provides all New Zealanders with the opportunity to discover and achieve their full potential, engage fully in society, and lead rewarding and fulfilling lives.

A high quality early learning system is a key part of this vision.

Every child and young person benefits from participation in learning contexts that strive for excellence, recognise and celebrate diversity, and are culturally and socially responsive. The success of this system depends on high quality leadership and teaching, the engagement of parents, whānau and communities, and the ability of learners to exert agency in choosing meaningful learning pathways starting from the early years and throughout their life course.

In 2002, the Ministry of Education launched *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, which outlined a shared vision for the future of the early learning sector. Since that time, our knowledge about the conditions under which children prosper has expanded. Children's participation in early learning settings has also grown, with more children attending early learning settings outside their homes at younger ages and for longer hours. It is timely for us to revisit the ways in which we support children's early learning to ensure that they all benefit from high quality provision.

A new plan will set the direction for a stepped approach to strengthening current provision so that it meets the needs of all children and their families and whānau for the next 10 years and beyond.

This draft plan has been developed by a Ministerial Advisory Group made up of independent thought leaders working with a broadly representative Sector Reference Group and supported by the Ministry of Education. The development of the plan has been iterative and collaborative and I have appreciated opportunities to engage with the Ministerial Advisory Group and the Reference Group. Their recommendations are presented here for discussion and feedback. This draft plan is part of the wider Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga taking place (www.conversation.education.govt.nz). I invite you to read this draft plan and consider its recommendations.

Hon. Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

Providing feedback

We welcome your feedback on the proposals in this draft plan by the 15 March 2019.

You can provide this via an online survey or by attending one of the hui to be held across the country.



The **online survey** and information about the hui is available at www.conversation.education.govt.nz

You can also email or write to us.



Email: early.learning@education.govt.nz and put "Strategic Plan feedback" in the subject line



Write to:
Early Learning Strategic Plan feedback
Ministry of Education
P. O. Box 166
Wellington



Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi | the Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand's founding document. Signed in 1840 by representatives of Māori and the Crown, this agreement provided the foundation upon which Māori and Pākehā would build their relationship as citizens of Aotearoa | New Zealand.

Central to this relationship was a commitment to live together in a spirit of partnership and the acceptance of obligations for participation and protection. Te Tiriti | the Treaty has implications for our education system, particularly in terms of achieving equitable outcomes for Māori and ensuring that te reo and tikanga Māori not only survive but thrive.

Early learningⁱ services have a crucial role to play by providing children with culturally responsive environments in which there are equitable opportunities to learn. New Zealand is increasingly multicultural. Te Tiriti | the Treaty is seen to be inclusive of all immigrants to this country, whose welcome comes in the context of this partnership.

ⁱ Early learning services includes all types of licensed and regulated early childhood education provision, eg, education and care centres (including those with special character, such as Montessori and Steiner), kindergartens, ngā kohanga reo, playcentres, home-based education and care, hospital-based services and certificated playgroups.



Aspirations of *Te Whāriki*

The curriculum *Te Whāriki – He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* holds the vision that all children are “competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society”.¹

*Te Whāriki*ⁱⁱ sets out a broad range of capabilities understood to create the foundations for life-long learning, underpinned by principles of empowerment | whakamana, holistic development | kotahitanga, family and community | whānau tangata and relationships | ngā hononga.

Te Whāriki affirms the obligations and opportunities arising from Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It recognises Māori as tangata whenua and assumes a shared obligation for protecting Māori language and culture and ensuring that Māori are able to enjoy educational success as Māori. *Te Whāriki* also recognises the language and cultural aspirations of all New Zealanders, and supports the diversity of the service types valued by parents and whānau.

Te Whāriki views the early learning context as an ecology where different elements must work together in an integrated and supportive manner, to create rich and empowering experiences for children as members of a learning community.

The draft strategic plan proposes ways to strengthen early learning provision to enable the aspirations of *Te Whāriki* to be fully realised.

ii The principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* provide a framework for defining two distinct curriculum pathways: one bicultural and one indigenous, each with its own pedagogy. *Te Whāriki* is used in this report to refer to both *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* and *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo*, unless otherwise specified.

He taonga te tamaiti: every child a taonga

– a vision for this plan



This draft plan begins from the belief that every child is a precious taonga, born with inherent potential for growth and development and with enduring connections to their ancestors and heritage.

This belief is expressed in the whakatauki:

*He purapura i ruia mai
i Rangiātea e kore e ngaroⁱⁱⁱ*

The draft plan recognises the power of early learning experiences to influence children's life trajectories. It also focuses on the 'here-and-now' of children's lives and their right to enjoy a good life as New Zealanders.

For this good life to be a reality for every child there is work to be done to improve the policy settings that support the early learning system. This work should be informed by the best evidence. Education Review Office (ERO) reports indicate that quality across settings is variable,² which means that some settings are more beneficial to children than others. For all children to benefit, the early learning system must be strengthened.

This draft plan sets out the following vision for the early learning system:

New Zealand's early learning system enables every child to enjoy a good life, learn and thrive in high quality settings that support their identity, language and culture and are valued by parents and whānau.

Ko tā ngā whakaakoranga kōhungahunga he whakarite kia tipu ora ai ia tamaiti i ngā wāhi pai rawa e hāpai ana i tōna whakapapa, tōna reo me ngā tikanga, ā, he mea whaihua hoki aua wāhi ki ngā mātua me ngā whānau.

iii A seed sown in Rangiātea will never be lost.



The **context** for this plan

Diverse provision

New Zealand's early learning services are diverse and include education and care services,^{iv} kindergartens, nga kōhanga reo, playcentres, home-based early learning services, hospital-based services and playgroups. Most services grew from community initiatives in response to parents and whānau seeking support in the education and care of their children and in the transmission of language and culture. Early learning provision is not just about providing education for children; it also plays a vital part in supporting parents and whānau in their role as their children's first teachers.

The support parents and whānau gain from early learning provision takes many forms. Ongoing communication between early learning services, parents and whānau, and meaningful regular opportunities for active involvement in decision-making about their child's learning, constitute one form of support. Additionally, most services offer care and education that enables parents and whānau to engage in other activities, such as paid employment, studying, or voluntary work. Early learning services also create potential for parents and whānau to meet other families and develop and grow supportive communities.

^{iv} Education and care can have different names such as crèche, preschool, childcare centre, and include services with different philosophies such as Montessori and Steiner.

Changing societal contexts, including shifting patterns of parental employment, and increasingly diverse cultural and educational aspirations have led to significant adaptations within the early learning sector. Today, early learning services have a range of ownership and governance structures and offer different philosophies, languages and operating models.

Diverse provision is valued in New Zealand because it offers choice to parents and whānau. Early learning services can be run by community^v or private providers.^{vi} All services, regardless of ownership, must meet the same standards which are set out in the regulations.^{vii} The Ministry of Education licences and funds services. The ERO conducts regular reviews to ensure services are well placed to support children's learning.

Te reo Māori early learning services such as ngā kōhanga reo and puna kōhungahunga help to ensure the revitalisation and retention of te reo and tikanga Māori. All services are required to include te reo and tikanga Māori in the curriculum and to enable Māori to achieve success as Māori.

New Zealand is an increasingly ethnically and linguistically diverse nation. In 2017, 657 licensed services used languages other than English for 50% or more of the time. Of these, 506 services used te reo Māori and an additional 151 used other languages. The most common, other than English and Māori, were Samoan, Mandarin, New Zealand Sign language, other sign language, Hindi, Tongan and Spanish. In total, 84 different languages were used some of the time.

In 2017, there were over 5,500 early learning services – an increase of over 30% since 2000.

Table 1 (page 14) shows this expansion.

Figure 1 (page 14) shows the spread of children's participation across service types.

Figure 2 (page 15) shows the participation of children by age groups across service types.

“I love that my child is active in what she wants to learn and discover and that her teachers foster this”

Parent, Kindergarten

Almost all children participate in early learning

Although it is not compulsory, almost all New Zealand children attend an early learning service for a sustained period of time before starting school or kura. Overall participation is increasing for all age groups and children are attending from younger ages.

Figure 3 (page 15) shows the increase in the proportion of the child population (by age group) participating in early learning services since 2005. Although participation by 4 year olds has always been very high, increases are noticeable in younger age groups.

Since 2005, the proportion of children attending for longer hours has increased.

Figure 4 (page 16) shows an increase in the number of children attending for more than 15 hours per week.

Ministry data shows that children aged 3 and older attend for more than 20 hours a week on average. However, approximately 20% of this age group attend for fewer than 15 hours per week. **Figure 5** (page 16) shows that children in low socio-economic areas spend less time in early learning settings than those in high socio-economic areas. For example, children in decile 10 areas on the NZDep Index (low socio-economic) at age 3 attend for on average 5 weeks less than in decile 1 areas (high socio-economic); this reduces to an average of 4 weeks less at age 4.

v A community-based service is a service that is an incorporated society, a charitable, statutory or community trust, or is owned by a community organisation (eg, a city council, church or university). Community-based services are prohibited from making financial gains that are distributed to their members.

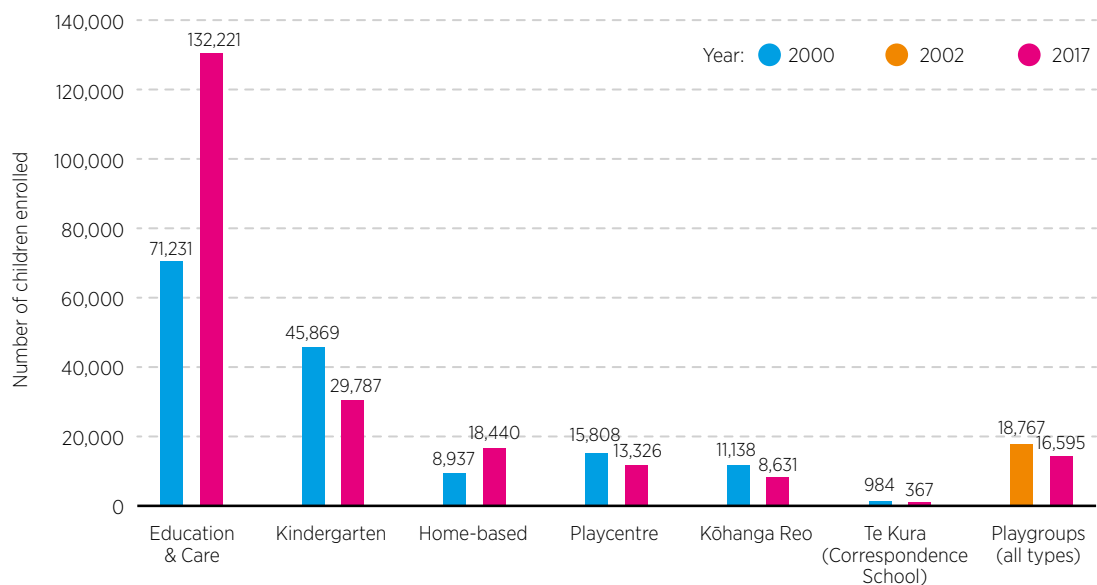
vi Private services include those owned by a private company, publicly-listed company, private trust, partnership or an individual. Private services are able to make financial gains and distribute these to their members.

vii Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412501.html>

Table 1: Number of licensed and certificated services in 2000 and 2017

		2000	2017
Licensed services	Casual Education & Care	45	10
	Education & Care	1,476	2,558
	Home-based	180	476
	Hospital-based	no data	22
	Kindergarten	600	658
	Kōhanga Reo	583	454
	Playcentre	517	421
	Total licensed services	3,401	4,599
Certificated services	Playgroups	773	927
Total of all service types		4,174	5,526

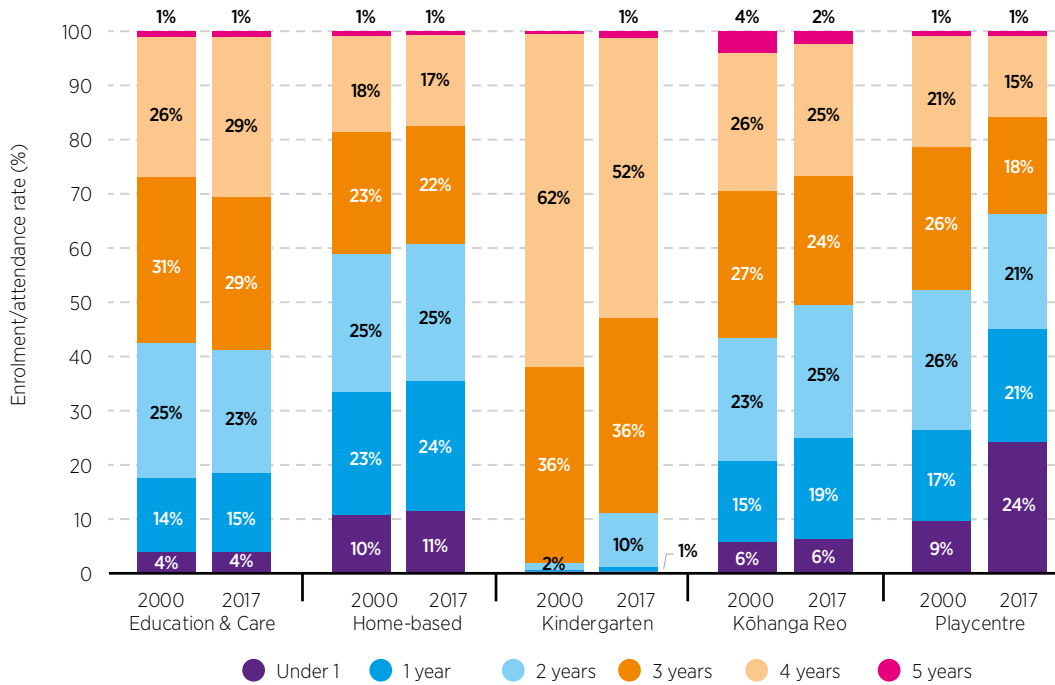
Source: Ministry of Education, Education Counts.

Figure 1. The number of children in early learning services by type in 2000 and 2017

Source: Ministry of Education annual ECE census.^{viii} There will be some overlap as children may be enrolled in more than one service type. Playgroup enrolment data is not available for 2000 so 2002 data has been used instead. Hospital-based service enrolment data is not available.

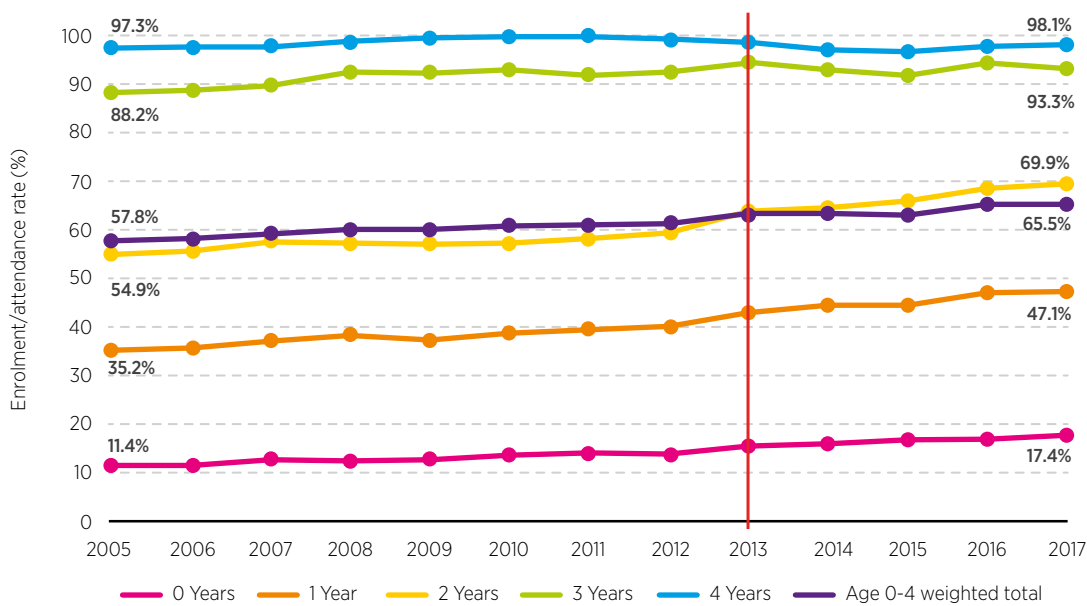
viii The collection method changed in 2014 to include both paper-based forms and electronic roll data. This also meant a change in how children are counted. In the electronic roll data, children are counted if they are present during the survey week. Otherwise, children are counted as long as they are enrolled at a service. Therefore caution must be taken when comparing pre-2014 to post-2014 data.

Figure 2. Percentage of enrolments/attendances of each year of age in licensed services, by service type, 2000 and 2017



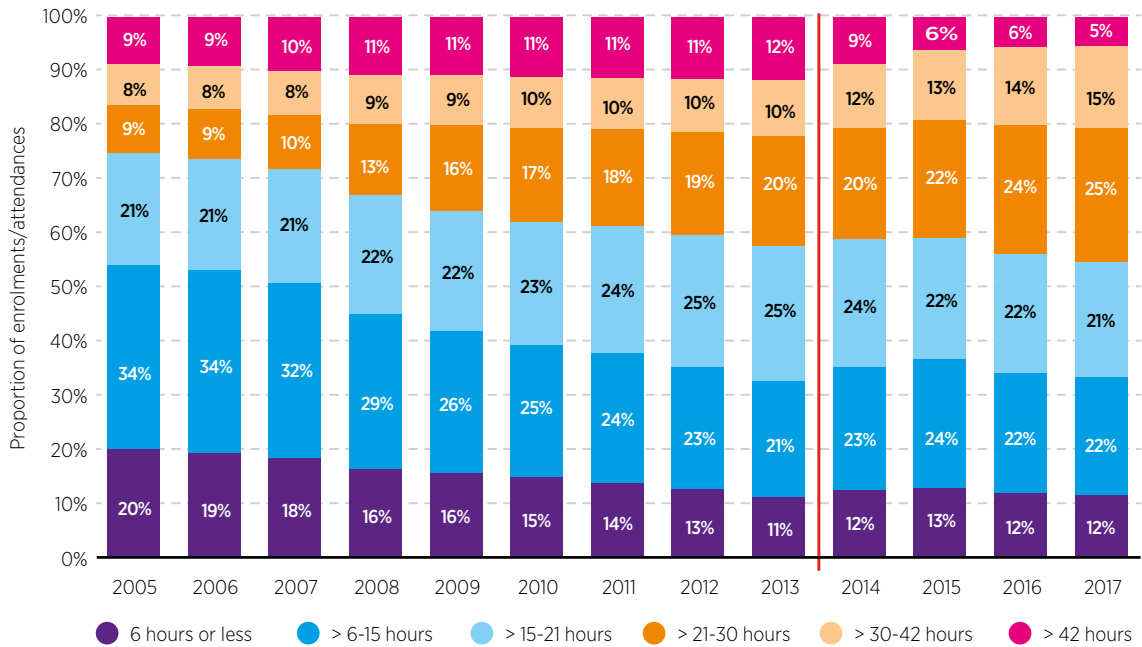
Source: Ministry of Education annual ECE census. Pre-2014 is enrolment, and post-2014 is a combination of attendance and enrolment, depending on the collection method. Hospital-based services and playgroup enrolment data is not available.

Figure 3. Enrolment/attendance rates by age of child 2005-2017 as a proportion of the age cohort in the population (licensed services only)



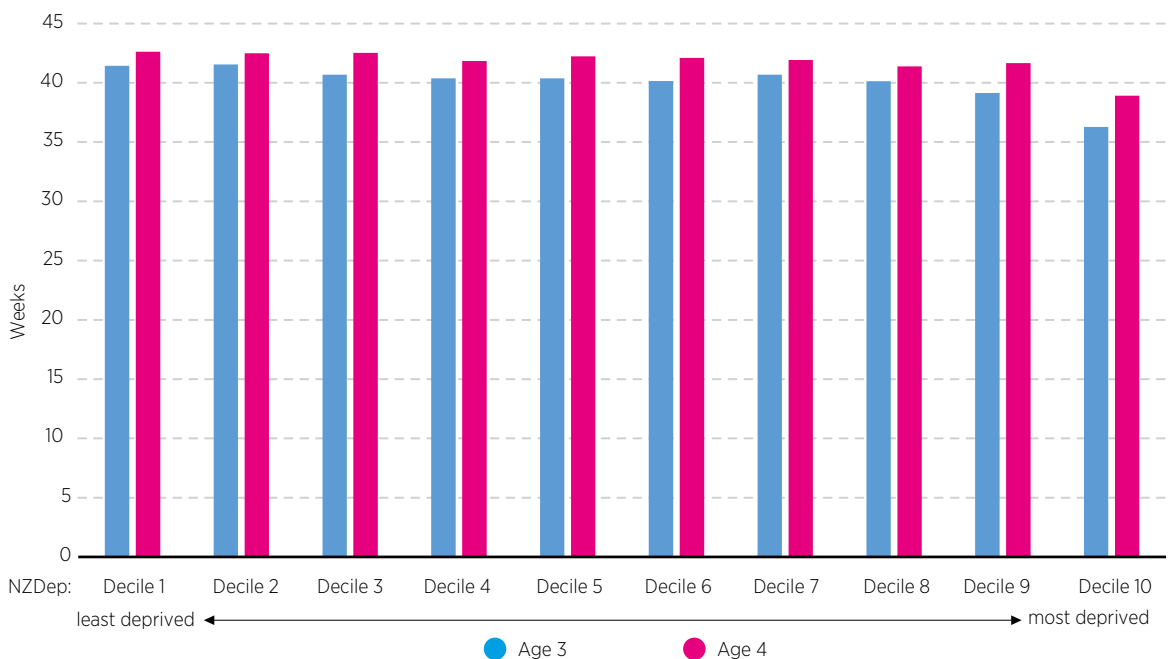
Source: Ministry of Education and Statistics New Zealand. Data collections methods changed after 2013 so pre-and post-2013 data is not directly comparable. Pre-2013 is enrolment data, and post-2013 is attendance data. The red line indicates when the collection method changed.

Figure 4. Percentage of attendances in licensed services by number of hours a week, 2005-2017



Source: Ministry of Education annual ECE census. Data pre-2013 shows enrolled hours and from 2014 shows attendance so it is not directly comparable. Ngā kōhanga reo data is not available.

Figure 5. Average weeks of attendance by age (age in 2016, decile of the last service the child attended)



Source: Early Learning Information (ELI) system, 2016. Data covers children born between 1 January and 28 February 2011 ('age 4') and 1 January and 28 February 2012 ('age 3'). Note data from ELI does not include children enrolled at kōhanga reo or unlicensed playgroups, or those who are not enrolled in ECE.

A changing society

Global societal trends such as increased mobility, population displacements, and the use and integration of technology in our daily lives are having a profound impact on New Zealand as elsewhere.

New Zealand is more ethnically and linguistically diverse and more open to diverse ways of being than in earlier generations. In the longitudinal *Growing up in New Zealand* (2010) study, one in every three children has at least one parent born outside New Zealand⁴ and 24% of children are Māori.⁵ While the biggest range of ethnicities is found in Auckland, increasing diversity is seen throughout the country. The expectations that different groups bring to early learning services have implications for how services interact with families and whānau and jointly weave a local curriculum.⁶

Patterns of labour market participation are different to those we faced less than two decades ago. While paid parental leave is now 22 weeks and will increase to 26 weeks in 2020, participation rates in early learning services show that more children are living much of their early childhood in group settings. This highlights the critical role early learning services have in raising healthy citizens and setting the trajectory of learning for a lifetime.

New technologies are transforming the way we learn, live and work. Young children's access to and use of online devices, digital tools and technologies has increased. The rapid expansion of digital technology has implications for teachers, parents and whānau who need to understand how they can impact (both positively and negatively) on children's learning and wellbeing. There is also a need to upskill the teaching workforce.

While New Zealand is a relatively affluent country, some children continue to live in poverty, insecure housing situations or in families facing complex social and health issues. The prevalence of diagnosed mental health and developmental disorders among children has increased.⁷

The education sector continues to move towards more collaborative models of teaching and learning. In both the early learning and school sectors, this includes 'wrap-around' approaches that make links between social services. Also, different levels of the education system are working together via Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako and other forms of collaboration that take a learner-centred approach.



What this context means

The number of children participating in early learning services has increased, and children are participating at younger ages and for longer. For all children to benefit, the early learning system must provide high quality experiences across the range of provision types valued by parents and whānau.

The ERO continues to identify variability in practice. For example, 31% of services were found to have limited or no focus on supporting children's oral language learning,⁸ and 44% of services had a curriculum that was only somewhat responsive in enabling infants and toddlers to become competent and confident communicators and explorers.⁹ The ERO has also found a lack of responsiveness to Māori and Pacific children in many services.¹⁰

To achieve the vision of this draft plan, changes are needed to policy and practice in the early learning system. These changes involve raising quality, improving equity and enabling informed choice. The concepts of quality, equity, and choice are interrelated, and are described in aspirational terms below. These concepts have guided the proposed initiatives in this draft plan.

Quality

In this draft plan, high quality early learning provision is understood to be the right of every child and of their parents and whānau. High quality early learning settings enable every

“Te Reo as part of the daily routine is a real strength, [as it sets] children up for a bilingual future”

Teacher | Kaiako, Kindergarten

child to experience a rich and responsive curriculum which offers time, space, materials and relationships that enable them to learn and thrive. These settings are characterised by purposeful and respectful interactions between adults and children focused on extending children's interests, capabilities and participation. Respectful partnerships with parents and whānau underpin curriculum design and decision making. In high quality settings, every child is welcomed and included and provision is made to support additional needs and abilities.

Early learning settings such as kōhanga reo are integral to Māori medium education journeys that support te reo Māori development and positive learning outcomes for children and their whānau. All high quality settings establish productive partnerships with whānau, iwi and Māori communities, and ensure that children understand the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua and embrace te reo and tikanga Māori.

Pacific peoples, and their languages and cultures have a significant position in New Zealand that encompasses their cultural links with Māori, and their contributions to this country. We expect all early learning settings to respect and support the right of each child to be confident in their own culture and to understand and respect other cultures. New Zealand is a diverse society and this draft plan includes initiatives to ensure that every child is able to access high quality early learning services that support their identity, language and culture.

High quality early learning settings support children with disabilities, and learning support needs to be present so that all children are able to participate, learn and achieve, regardless of their individual needs or differences.



Equity

The notion of ‘equity from the start’¹¹ is a key value of this draft plan. Where children live in adverse life circumstances, high quality early learning services are a proven tool in helping to mitigate their impact. The aim of reducing disparity for children and their families underpins many of the proposals in this plan.

This plan recognises that not all children and families have equal access to resources within their community and that for every child to thrive, it is necessary to ensure that provisions are in place that respond to specific and variable needs across diverse communities. Among other things this means that access to early learning services needs to be barrier-free. Early learning services also need to work in collaboration with a range of other services to ensure that there is a nimble systemic response to particular needs, to ameliorate children’s life chances. This includes supporting and affirming children with additional learning needs.

Choice

New Zealand’s early learning provision covers a range of different service types which enable parents and whānau to exercise choice, based on their educational and cultural aspirations for their children and the best fit for their wider lives. Choices relate to the philosophy, language and culture of the service, its location and the hours and days children can attend, and the degree of involvement possible by parents and whānau. Parents’ decisions are also determined in part by cost and the degree of cost sharing between families and government. This draft plan sees equity and choice as interrelated and has considered the affordability of early learning provision for families, as well as preserving diversity of provision.

This plan wants all parents and whānau to have choice in selecting services that meet their needs, and to be confident in the high quality of the service they choose. The plan recognises that different types of services — such as parent-led, whānau-led and teacher-led services — need to be supported by government in different ways.



What we expect to see if the plan is successful

We will know we've been successful when:

1. Children are recognised as taonga and as rights holders, including having the right to a good life in high quality settings that support their overall education and wellbeing.
2. All children are able to participate in early learning services that are responsive to family and whānau needs, values and aspirations.
3. All children experience a rich curriculum which supports strong and equitable outcomes, consistent with the aspirations of *Te Whāriki*.
4. Teachers, kaiako and educators are culturally competent and are able to support Māori to succeed as Māori, promote and affirm te ao Māori and support all children's identity, language and culture.
6. Teaching in early learning services is a desired and valued profession.
7. The early learning sector innovates, learns and strives for excellence.
8. Shared understandings about children and their learning facilitate successful transitions to schools and kura.

Overview of the plan

The draft plan consists of five goals which set out our policy intentions for the next 10 years. These goals are viewed as interdependent and support each other to achieve our vision for the system:

New Zealand's early learning system enables every child to enjoy a good life, learn and thrive in high quality settings that support their identity, language and culture and are valued by parents and whānau.

Ko tā ngā whakaakoranga kōhungahunga he whakarite kia tipu ora ai ia tamaiti i ngā wāhi pai rawa e hāpai ana i tōna whakapapa, tōna reo me ngā tikanga, ā, he mea whaihua hoki aua wāhi ki ngā mātua me ngā whānau.

All five goals work together to raise quality, improve equity and enable informed choice. The goals are:

Goal 1:	Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards. (Page 22)
Goal 2:	Every child is empowered through timely access to the resources they need to thrive. (Page 28)
Goal 3:	Investment in our workforce supports excellence in teaching and learning in all services. (Page 32)
Goal 4:	Planning ensures that provision is valued, sufficient and diverse. (Page 36)
Goal 5:	The early learning system continues to innovate, learn and improve. (Page 40)

These goals are supported by 23 recommended actions.



Assumptions

Implementing recommendations in the final Strategic Plan will be contingent on Cabinet agreement to individual proposals and future Budget processes.



Goal 1: Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards

Regulated standards help to create conditions for high quality experiences for children and for teacher practices in early learning services. Standards do not work in isolation; rather they interact to influence quality. In particular, adult:child ratios, teacher qualifications and group size are interdependent.¹² Together, they are linked with improved outcomes for children and contribute towards improving equity, educational achievement and social inclusion.¹³

The importance of the first 1,000 days of a child's life, particularly for brain development, is well-established. Optimal development is conditional on high quality¹⁴ early social and emotional experiences.

These “act to shape the architecture of the brain” and create mental models that act as filters for the way infants see the world and respond to it.¹⁵ Almost half of the infants and toddlers in New Zealand participate in group-based early learning settings and recent ERO^x and other reports indicate that provision is of variable quality.¹⁶ This is of particular concern for children already facing adverse life circumstances.

This draft plan provides an opportunity to raise the bar on quality for all children in early learning services. Improving regulated standards would support equitable access to higher quality services by children and families from diverse communities.

“I feel that to have quality care and education ratios need to be better”

Teacher | Kaiako and manager, Education and Care

Adult:child ratios are the strongest and most consistent predictor of positive caregiving practices in group-based early childhood settings.¹⁷ New Zealand's minimum adult:child ratios for children under 3 years old compare unfavourably with recommendations based on research¹⁸ and with regulated standards in similar OECD countries (see [Annex 3](#)). For example, Australia's minimum standard for children aged 2 years (1:5) requires that there are twice the number of adults to children when compared to New Zealand's minimum standard of 1:10.

Teacher qualifications also contribute to quality practices because teachers' attitudes, beliefs, skills and knowledge are influenced by teacher

education.¹⁹ While higher ratios enable more adult:child interactions, teacher qualifications enable these interactions to be more cognitively challenging.²⁰ Since the previous strategic plan (2002), significant progress has been made towards increasing the proportion of qualified staff.^x Although the current regulated standard is 50%, 67% of the workforce hold a recognised teaching qualification and 97% of teacher-led, centre-based services meet the criteria for 80%+ funding.

In home-based services, only the visiting teacher is required to be a qualified teacher and the educators in the homes are not currently required to have any qualification. A separate review of home-based early learning services is underway. Proposed changes include requiring home-based educators to hold an NZQA recognised Level 4 qualification in early learning. Decisions made after consultation will be included in the final version of this plan.

Small group sizes are also clearly linked to better quality, particularly for younger children²¹ and children living in high risk situations.²² Recent research shows that group size can be influenced by the size and design of built environments.²³ New Zealand's minimum standard for the size ‘activity space’²⁴ compares poorly internationally.²⁵ There are concerns that not all children experience quiet, warm, uncrowded indoor environments and natural, spacious outdoor settings. These aspects are also influenced by the size and design of physical space in early learning centres. This draft plan provides an opportunity to consider how to reduce group size and improve physical environments to ensure that children live and learn in spaces that promote their health and wellbeing.

Research also tells us that children's wellbeing is reliant on secure, consistent and responsive relationships with adults, including during caregiving moments and transitions.²⁷ Since services are currently not required to demonstrate how their practices support these types of relationships within group context, this plan proposes a mechanism to address this (see 1.2).

ix For example, when looking at how early learning centres support infants and toddlers to be competent and confident learners, the ERO (2015) found that nearly half (44%) of services did not have a responsive curriculum and that routines – rather than children's interests – still ruled the day.

x In this context, qualified means holding an early childhood teaching qualification recognised by the Education Council for registration purposes (see regulation 3 in the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008). All persons responsible and 50% of all staff in teacher led centre-based services must be qualified (regulation 44 and schedule 1). The person responsible must also hold a current practising certificate. For the purposes of funding, all teachers counting towards the staff hour count must hold a practising certificate (Ministry of Education Funding Handbook).

Every child deserves a rich and empowering curriculum that is consistent with the intent of *Te Whāriki*. Currently, only the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* are gazetted. Gazetting the framework of principles, strands, goals and outcomes of *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* would help to support consistent curriculum implementation in ECE services and support positive transitions.

The Ministry of Education is currently unable to prevent service providers with a poor history of provision from expanding, provided their service meets licensing standards at the time of opening. This plan provides an opportunity to create a higher bar to expansion so that new licences are only granted to services that are demonstrating high quality and are well placed to maintain this over time.

“Keep on encouraging high levels of qualified staff as qualified teachers are amazing”

Parent, Kindergarten | Playcentre | Education and care | Home-based | Playgroup

In addition to raising the bar for existing service providers looking to expand, we want to ensure that we have a strong system for monitoring compliance with licensing standards. Consideration will also need to be given to the impact of any regulatory improvements on existing licensed services and how to ensure any changes are successfully implemented and adhered to.

To raise the bar on the quality of children’s experiences across all early learning services, we recommend the following actions.

1.1 Regulate new adult:child ratios for infants and toddlers

It is proposed to increase the ratios of teachers to children to 1:4 for under 2 year olds and 1:5 for 2 year olds.

These ratios reflect both research evidence and practices in similar OECD countries. For example, for under the age of 2 years international research recommends a ratio of 1:3²⁸ or a “good enough” ratio of 1:4.²⁹ For 2 year-old children, international research recommends 1:5.³⁰ The proposed 1:5 ratio for 2 year olds matches required ratios in Australia, Finland, Canada and the UK ([Annex 3](#)).

A staged approach is proposed to allow time for services to recruit additional qualified teaching staff. This starts with funding incentives for the under 2 year old improvements before these are regulated, then introduces funding incentives for the 2 year old improvements before regulating. The funding system would be adjusted to take account of increased costs arising from new regulated adult:child ratios.

These recommended changes to adult:child ratios reflect what is achievable over the life of this 10-year plan. A ratio of 1:3 for children under the age of 2 years remains an aspiration in the longer term.

1.2 Require early learning services to support secure and consistent relationships for children

It is proposed to require early learning services to demonstrate how their organisation of teaching staff supports infants and toddlers to experience secure and consistent care. They would also need to show how they support positive transitions for children and their whānau between home and the service; within an early learning service; and between early learning services and schools and kura where reciprocal responsibility for successful transitions is paramount.

Table 2: Current and proposed new adult:child ratios

Age (year)	Under 2	2	3 and over
Current ratios	1:5	1:10	1:10
Proposed ratios	1:4	1:5	1:10

Note: Adult:child ratios are calculated across a licensed centre and do not require that children are grouped by age.



The Ministry of Education would also work with the early learning sector to identify effective practices that support secure and consistent care and positive transitions and share exemplars with the wider sector. This idea aims to ensure that every child experiences consistent, reciprocal and responsive relationships and that no child is overlooked.

1.3 Incentivise for 100% and regulate for 80% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres, leading to regulation for 100%

It is proposed to increase the percentage of required staff who are qualified in teacher-led, centre-based services^{xi} from 50% to 80% by 2022 before moving to 100%. Where children are grouped in separate spaces, at least one qualified teacher would need to be located with each group.

Before regulating for 100% qualified teachers, this change would be incentivised through funding. The funding system would also be adjusted to take account of increased costs arising from regulated improvements.

To help ensure that children in different teacher-led service types have equitable access

to qualified teachers, Goal 3 includes the recommendation (3.1) to establish a mechanism to achieve more consistent salaries and conditions for teachers across the sector (see [Goal 3](#)).

1.4 Develop advice on group size, the design of physical environments and environmental factors

It is proposed to develop comprehensive and integrated advice about the relationships between group size and wider environmental issues, and how to improve quality standards in these areas. This advice would be developed in 2019 and address issues of heating, noise, minimum requirements for the amount of space, as well as design principles that enable children to experience small group interactions, restful indoor spaces, natural outdoor spaces and a rich curriculum. This advice would recognise that contexts for children's learning impact on the quality of children's experiences and may recommend improvements to regulations.

If this advice leads to proposals for regulatory changes, financial implications would need further consideration.

^{xi} Excluding home-based services, ngā kōhanga reo and playcentres since they have separate qualification standards.

1.5 | Gazette *Te Whāriki* to support shared expectations

It is proposed to gazette the full framework of *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa*. The framework includes the principles, strands, goals, and outcomes. This would create clear expectations that every child experiences a rich and empowering curriculum and would support formative assessment and positive transitions.

1.6 | Prevent low quality service providers from opening additional services

It is proposed to require that service providers with existing services apply for an ‘authorisation to expand’. This would mean that service providers with a poor history of provision could not expand until they could satisfy the Ministry of Education that they had appropriate curriculum and teaching capability as well as governance and management expertise.

The exact criteria would need to be designed. The types of conditions likely to apply would include that the service provider had no services with existing licences on either a 1 or 2 year ERO review or that were provisional or suspended. There would also be a restriction on the number of probationary licences a service provider could have at any one time to prevent faster expansion than their systems would cope with. Appropriate regulations may also be needed to ensure that service providers with a poor history could not simply set up a separate legal entity and establish a new service under that body.

1.7 | Increase monitoring of services

It is proposed to introduce a consistent and rigorous programme of monitoring, including unannounced visits by the Ministry of Education or the ERO. Services would also be required to notify parents or guardians when the service is put on a provisional licence, and to explain the issues that led to this licence and how these are being addressed.

Where a service is repeatedly put on a provisional licence, the regulations could be amended to allow the service’s licence to be cancelled. Serious concerns around one service could trigger an automatic review of all of a service provider’s other licences.



“The Government could play a role by looking at group sizes and making sure that there is ample space...”

Teacher | Kaiako | Kindergarten

What success looks like:

- » Infants and toddlers experience improved environments which enable high quality, responsive teaching and caregiving
- » All children in teacher-led services benefit from increased access to qualified teachers and educators
- » Children experience good transitions from home to early learning services, within early learning services, and from early learning to school and kura
- » Children in early learning services have access to quiet, warm, uncrowded indoor environments and natural, spacious outdoor areas
- » Curriculum implementation is improved with all children accessing a rich curriculum
- » Licensing and monitoring supports the growth of high quality early learning services.

Questions for consultation:

Goal 1: Raising quality for children

What do you think about...



What is it about any of these recommendations that you like or don't like?

What do you think we need to consider if we put these recommendations into action?

Any other comments?



Goal 2: Every child is empowered through timely access to the resources they need to thrive

This draft plan begins from the belief that every child is a taonga. The plan is underpinned by the notion of ‘equity from the start’ and recognises that early learning experiences have the power to influence children’s life trajectories.

A fundamental assumption behind early learning policy is that high quality early learning provision guided by *Te Whāriki* makes a major contribution to optimising children’s development and wellbeing, and to meeting national equity goals and outcomes for children. Such provision also benefits parents and whānau and wider society.

Research shows that children who experience disadvantage through inequities gain significant benefits from participating in high quality early learning.³¹ The Government currently provides equity funding and targeted funding for disadvantage to support children to attend high quality services and to gain learning support when needed. Approximately 3% of funding for early learning provision is targeted in this way. Evaluations of equity funding suggest that expenditure, reporting on its use and impact, and planning and review could be more effective.³²



A high quality early learning system requires teachers, kaiako and educators to have culturally appropriate knowledge about positive trajectories of learning and development, to know when these are at risk, and to have access to appropriate ways of intervening. We currently have limited tools for making these informed judgments about children’s progress and about the effectiveness of practices in early learning services. We need some new tools to help us identify developmental barriers which could impede learning and identify where children might need further support (eg, areas relating to health and wellbeing, or language) in order to thrive.

Improved identification of children’s learning and wellbeing needs will require the strengthening of existing early intervention services and supports to meet growing demand. The range of supports available may also need to expand. There are opportunities to explore new models of delivery and evidence-informed services and interventions and the Ministry of Education is currently developing a draft Disability and Learning Support Action Plan.

“Make it so kids that have learning disabilities get picked up earlier..”

Parent, Kindergarten | Playcentre | Home-based

Currently there are a number of early learning services that also facilitate wrap-around support from a range of social services such as counselling and therapy, visits from public health nurses, iwi and Māori engagement for whānau, and budgeting and mental health programmes. To support the wider development of these wrap-around models of service provision, there is an opportunity to share information about how they are organised and what makes them successful.

“The system works well for the majority of children, however it is not working for the most disadvantaged”

Parent

The following actions are recommended to improve the ways that our early learning provision supports children and their family and whānau.

2.1 | Ensure equity funding supports children who need it

It is proposed to review equity and targeted funding to ensure that they best support children to benefit from access to high quality early learning experiences and align with relevant actions in the Disability and Learning Support Action Plan. This includes whether the funding allocation mechanisms and the amount of funding overall are appropriate.

2.2 | Co-construct progress tools to support children's learning and wellbeing

The Ministry of Education would work with the early learning sector to co-construct valid, reliable and culturally appropriate tools for formative assessment³³ of children's learning and development within the framework of *Te Whāriki*. These tools^{vii} would provide appropriate guidance to support children's learning and wellbeing and would also identify when specialist support or other interventions are needed. It is expected that this would involve tools being trialled in different contexts and modified before being made widely available.

2.3 | Expand the number of early learning services that facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whānau

The Ministry of Education would work with the early learning sector and other agencies to identify effective initiatives where early learning services facilitate wrap-around social and health services. The Ministry of Education would share information about how successful integrated approaches operate in diverse communities. The state-owned early learning services described in Goal 4 could also facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whānau.



What success looks like:

- » All children are able to access and experience high quality early learning, regardless of background or circumstance
- » Information about children's progress is available to parents and whānau, and guides teaching practice and approaches to support children's learning and development
- » Effective initiatives that support learning, development and wellbeing are available to those children, families and whānau who require additional support.

xii This work would be informed by the scoping work was carried out between 2011-2013 by the Research Policy Forum Working Group entitled "Strengthening the Learning: Outcomes in Aotearoa New Zealand Early Childhood Education".

Questions for consultation:

Goal 2: Empowering every child
What do you think about...

Ensuring equity funding supports children who need it

Expanding the number of early learning services that facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whānau

Co-constructing progress tools to support children's learning and wellbeing



What is it about any of these recommendations that you like or don't like?

What do you think we need to consider if we put these recommendations into action?

Any other comments?



Goal 3: Investment in our workforce supports excellence in teaching and learning

All children should have equitable access to a well-qualified workforce that mirrors the diverse cultures and genders that constitute Aotearoa New Zealand. This draft plan promotes an integrated approach to recruit, retain, grow and develop our workforce, including reinvigorating progress towards a well-qualified teaching profession.

Qualifications are important and must also be supported by working conditions that enable teachers, kaiako and educators to plan for children's learning, engage with parents and whānau and collaborate with colleagues. Inconsistent salaries and conditions across the sector lead to inequitable opportunities for this planning and engagement and can drive high turnover of staff, which does not benefit children.

Teachers, kaiako and educators also need time and resources to support their continued professional growth and career progression. Sustained professional learning and development (PLD) strengthens the capability and effectiveness of teachers and leaders.³⁴ Sufficient, well-planned, accessible and effective PLD for teachers, kaiako, educators and leaders is a necessary part of this draft plan to strengthen early learning provision.

The proposed changes to regulations that increase the ratios and levels of qualified teachers will require a larger qualified teaching workforce. To attract, qualify and retain this workforce, we will need to employ a range of initiatives.

To ensure that the workforce is able to deliver excellence in teaching and learning, we recommend the following actions.

3.1 | Improve the consistency and levels of teacher salaries and conditions across the early learning sector

This recommendation would involve developing a mechanism that enables government support for more consistent and improved teacher salaries and conditions in the early learning sector. The development of the mechanism will need to explore whether this can be done within the existing employment and early learning regulatory framework or if changes are needed to any of these.

It is likely that a new mechanism would require changes to the early learning funding system, particularly because the current system has played a role in enabling variation in pay and conditions across the sector. The mechanism

would also need to be designed in a way that helps services with high proportions of children from disadvantaged backgrounds attract suitably capable and experienced teachers. These services are not always well-placed to compete for the supply of teachers in the market.

3.2 | Strengthen Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Ensure that ITE enables newly graduated teachers to fully implement *Te Whāriki*, in collaboration with colleagues across education, learning support, and health and social service agencies. There is already work underway to improve the provision of ITE and we would want to see issues of equity of access to qualifications, variable quality of available qualifications,³⁵ multiple pathways to teaching, and teacher diversity addressed. It is recommended that the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand^{xiii} require student placements be undertaken only in high quality services. PLD should also be offered to services to help them provide appropriate support and opportunities for student teachers.



xiii The Education Council's name changed to the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand in September 2018.

3.3 Improve professional learning and development

Develop a sustained and planned approach to PLD that involves a mix of national and local provision. PLD for teachers, kaiako, educators and leaders would be provided by the Ministry of Education and through established, good quality PLD providers. PLD would support curriculum implementation, understanding of te ao Māori and proficiency in te reo Māori, cultural competency and digital literacy. Where possible, PLD would include the opportunity for collaborative learning to be undertaken by the early learning and schooling workforce (as is currently possible within Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako).

The importance of effective pedagogical and positional leadership is central to the provision of high quality early learning.³⁶ A programme of PLD for leaders would be designed taking into account research evidence about effective leadership and the Teaching Council's (2018) Leadership Strategy.

PLD contract processes would be reviewed and simplified where possible, and methods of PLD evaluation would be strengthened.

“Teachers have too little non-contact time to plan and reflect on children’s learning both as individuals and as a group”

Parent, Playcentre

3.4 Develop a workforce supply strategy

The Ministry of Education would develop an early learning workforce supply strategy that aligns with the wider education workforce strategy. The early learning strategy would include a range of pathways to qualification to meet the requirements of the Strategic Plan. It would expand the current scholarship programme that provides fees and allowances for ECE students in undergraduate and graduate ITE programmes and attracts Māori and Pacific students. These students would be drawn from school leavers, people already involved in early learning provision, career changers, parents and whānau.

Since good quality data are a prerequisite, the Ministry of Education would work with the sector to capture, analyse and gain insight from early learning workforce data.

What success looks like:

- » Teacher salaries and working conditions are improved and more consistent across the sector
- » Teaching in early learning settings attracts a wide range of people including Māori and Pacific persons with appropriate talents and dispositions who reflect the diverse population landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand
- » The pool of qualified Māori and Pacific teachers is expanded
- » Newly graduated teachers are equipped to facilitate high quality early learning provision
- » Teachers, kaiako, educators and leaders engage in relevant and valued PLD which strengthens practices that benefit children
- » There is sufficient provision of qualified early learning teachers to meet demand.



Questions for consultation:

Goal 3: Investing in our workforce
What do you think about...

Improving the consistency and levels of teacher salaries and conditions across the early learning sector

Developing a workforce supply strategy

Strengthening Initial Teacher Education

Improving professional learning and development



What is it about any of these recommendations that you like or don't like?

What do you think we need to consider if we put these recommendations into action?

Any other comments?



Goal 4: Planning ensures that provision is valued, sufficient and diverse

Early learning services have expanded rapidly over the past decade in an unrestricted environment. In some areas this expansion may be outstripping local need or may not be the best fit for what is required.

There are some areas where there is insufficient local provision or where provision does not meet the needs and aspirations of parents and whānau. It is timely to consider an expanded role for the Ministry of Education in network planning to ensure there is valued and diverse provision for every child.

The Ministry of Education also has the opportunity to consider its role in supporting community-owned services which do not always have access to the governance and management expertise required to run services. Without providing specific supports, we face the risk that community-run services may not be sustainable, removing an option that is valued by parents.

“A strength of the NZ system is... choice — different philosophies/ language nests and diverse choices to best suit your little learner”

Parent Kindergarten | Playcentre | Education and care | Home-based | Playgroup

Planned provision can strengthen collaboration and transitions across education pathways, eg, by locating early learning services alongside schools and kura. Around 20% of early learning services are currently located on Crown land, many of which are on school sites, and the Ministry of Education sets aside land for this purpose when building new schools. This practice is valued and could be continued and enhanced by clarifying longer term government intentions.

Planned provision would need to recognise the value placed by parents and whānau on all forms of early learning provision. If these forms of provision are to prosper, there will need to be a review of the current funding model to ensure that it adequately recognises the costs of these service types.

In some communities where there are high levels of adversity, parents and whānau may be unable to access affordable, high quality and culturally responsive early learning services that meet their needs. Setting up high quality state-owned early learning services in these communities would help to advance a long term government vision for increased public provision to support equity.

To encourage valued, diverse and sufficient provision we recommend the following actions.

4.1 | Develop and introduce a process to determine whether a new early learning service is needed

The Ministry of Education would take a network planning approach to enabling new services to open. This would include the introduction of a preliminary application process which would mean a provider could only apply for a licence in locations where a new service is needed.

The criteria for deciding if additional services are needed in a locality are likely to include Statistics New Zealand population projections, information about service types and waiting lists elsewhere in the area. The Ministry of Education would work with local government and iwi to develop a local view of the provision that is required. The service provider may need to show evidence of community demand. Particular attention would be paid to ensuring provision is available in te reo Māori and that pathways through to Māori medium schooling and kura are supported.

4.2 | Provide governance and management support for community-owned services

It is proposed to introduce new models of support to assist in building effective governance and management in community-owned services. This assistance would include:

- » expanding the function of Ministry of Education regional offices to provide advice and support
- » engaging a national provider(s) to develop resources and provide training on governance and management
- » brokering appropriate support where a service requires in-depth help with governance or management
- » offering services the choice of contracting a Ministry of Education-appointed manager for an agreed period of time to support improvement (criteria for these circumstances would need to be developed).

“Centres should be connected to schools”

Teacher | Kaiako

4.3 | Support the establishment and maintenance of early learning services on Crown land administered by the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education would formalise its current practice of, where possible, setting aside space for early learning services alongside new primary school sites. This policy could support new community-owned services to develop close connections to schools and kura (see also 5.2).

The Ministry of Education would work with services that are already on school sites to clarify lease expectations, including responsibility for building maintenance. Any impact on funding may need to be considered.

4.4 Co-design an appropriate funding model with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust

Te Kōhanga Reo is a Māori development initiative, aimed at maintaining and strengthening Māori language and philosophies within a cultural framework inspired by Māori elders in 1982. To continue to support this valued provision, the Ministry of Education will co-design an appropriate funding model with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust that is consistent with the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal with respect to their claim.

4.5 Co-design an appropriate funding model with the NZ Playcentre Federation

Playcentre is a uniquely New Zealand model of early learning service that views parents as the first and best educators of their children. Playcentres tend to have lower staffing costs than teacher-led services because parents or whānau are the educators. The administration costs may not be adequately reflected in the current funding model. To continue to support playcentres as a valued form of provision, the Ministry of Education would co-design an appropriate funding model.



4.6 Consider setting up state-owned early learning services with an associated research programme

It is proposed to consider establishing three fully funded, state-owned and operated early learning services. These services would facilitate wrap-around health and social services to support parents and whānau and children's wellbeing. The services could be established in communities where children experience inequity and where there are insufficient services to meet local demand. They would provide education that is connected to local iwi and develop strong relationships with local primary schools and kura with the aim of modelling excellence in transitions. These services would advance the Government's vision for increased public provision to support equity.

A research programme in each of these services could generate further evidence about how to improve integrated service provision to support child and whānau wellbeing, and how best to support seamless pathways across early learning and schooling in New Zealand. The initiative would provide an opportunity to increase knowledge about what it will take to invest in an early learning ecology that contributes to children thriving and living a good life in all-day early learning settings.

What success looks like:

- » Network planning ensures sufficient, valued and diverse provision of high quality early learning services across all communities
- » All children have access to high quality early learning services that are valued by their parents and whānau
- » Valued forms of provision such as ngā kōhanga reo and playcentres are supported by appropriate funding models
- » The location of early learning services supports collaboration and children's successful transitions from early learning services into schooling, including across Māori medium and bilingual pathways.

Questions for consultation:

Goal 4: Planning provision of early learning services
What do you think about...

Supporting the establishment and maintenance of early learning services on Crown land administered by the Ministry of Education

Providing governance and management support for community-owned services

The Ministry co-designing an appropriate funding model with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust

Introducing a process to determine whether a new early learning service is needed

Considering setting up state-owned early learning services with an associated research programme

The Ministry co-designing an appropriate funding model with the NZ Playcentre Federation



What is it about any of these recommendations that you like or don't like?

What do you think we need to consider if we put these recommendations into action?

Any other comments?



Goal 5: The early learning system continues to innovate, learn and improve

The ability to innovate and improve, by drawing on new ideas and evidence of effective practice, is at the core of high quality provision that contributes to equitable outcomes.³⁷ In this draft plan we envisage a broad and connected learning system that is continuously improving to benefit all New Zealand children.

Currently there is limited opportunity for early learning services to access innovation expertise and research partners. More support is also needed for early learning services to participate with schools and kura in collaborative inquiry in Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako.

A research programme could be developed alongside each state-owned service considered in Goal 4 (4.6). This research would contribute to knowledge about how integrated service provision can best support child and whānau wellbeing.

To encourage the early learning sector to grow as a learning system we have developed the following recommended actions (in addition to 4.6).

5.1 | Establish innovation hubs for early learning services

The Ministry of Education would contract the development of innovation hubs. These are visualised as places where services could access innovation expertise and research partners, to enable practitioner-led innovation and research. Research questions would include those of interest, to services and communities, as well as those initiated by government. For example, questions or innovations could include the advancement of a bicultural curriculum and bilingual outcomes, responding to increasing population diversity, transitions and inclusive early learning, or the use of digital technology. Services would apply for support for standalone projects or to participate in wider studies or projects. Innovation hubs could also link up services with similar research interests and would be expected to support shifts in practice which bring about better outcomes for learners.

5.2 | Support early learning services to collaborate with other education services

It is proposed that resourcing is available to support early learning services to participate as equitable partners in cross-service and cross-sector collaboration, including Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako. Collaboration between services is important in sharing good practice. Collaborating with school and kura supports positive transitions. It can ensure greater understanding amongst both schools and kura and early learning services about how the national curricula complement each other and what positive transitions look like.

5.3 | Support robust internal evaluation to ensure ongoing improvement

The Ministry of Education and the ERO would work together to support services to undertake robust internal evaluation that strengthens implementation of *Te Whāriki* and ensures ongoing improvement.

What success looks like:

- » All children experience the benefits of innovative and research-based practice
- » There is increased collaboration within the early learning sector and between the early learning sector and other education services
- » The sector continues to expand its knowledge base about effective practice and this makes a tangible difference to children's experiences and to improving equity. What this means for parents and whānau.



Questions for consultation:

Goal 5: Innovating and improving
What do you think about...

**Establishing
innovation hubs
for early learning
services**

**Supporting
early
learning
services to
collaborate
with other
education
services**

**Supporting
robust internal
evaluation
to ensure
ongoing
improvement**



What is it about any of these recommendations that you like or don't like?

What do you think we need to consider if we put these recommendations into action?

Any other comments?

What this means for parents and whānau

Raising quality

Many of the recommendations in this draft plan aim to improve the quality of care, teaching and learning that children experience in early learning services.

Improving adult:child ratios, increasing the number of teachers who are qualified, and requiring consistent caregiving should result in children experiencing more responsive interactions with the adults that support their learning and development.

Investing in the early learning workforce will help ensure that we have enough capable teachers, kaiako and educators and that they reflect the full diversity of New Zealand society. Improving the consistency of teacher salaries and conditions should help attract and retain teachers. Improved conditions could enable teachers to have more time to meet with parents and whānau and to involve them in curriculum planning and share information about children.

Additionally, by supporting research and innovation we expect that the early learning sector will develop new knowledge about how to better support children, parents and whānau.

Improving equity

Currently the Ministry provides some additional funding to early learning services to support disadvantaged communities. It is proposed to review this funding to ensure that it is adequate and that it best supports children who need it. The recommendation to develop progress tools will help teachers assess children's learning and wellbeing in order to tailor education to their individual needs. Facilitating the expansion of wrap-around social services should also better support children and whānau.

Enabling choice

It is proposed that the Ministry of Education would take a more active role in planning where new services can open, based on population and

the service types that are valued by parents and whānau. It is intended to strengthen provision in te reo Māori to better support children's pathways to Māori medium schooling and kura.

In some cases, the Ministry's decisions about where and what type of services open in particular locations might lead to less choice where a poor quality service is closed or a provider is prevented from expanding.

The recommendations to review the funding for ngā kōhanga reo and playcentres are intended to ensure these valued services are maintained and strengthened. Additional governance and management support for community-owned services aims to better support local parent and community initiatives.

Will this cost parents and whānau more?

The Government currently spends approximately \$1.8 billion a year on early learning provision. This funding is paid to services in the form of subsidies for the hours children attend up to 30 hours a week (6 hours a day). Children over 3 attract a higher level of funding for 20 hours a week ('20 hours ECE'). Most services also charge fees or seek other contributions from parents. While services are regulated and funded by government, they are independent entities which make their own operational decisions.

A number of recommendations within this draft plan would increase the cost of early learning provision. It is the intention of this draft plan that affordability for parents will be maintained, or improved in those cases where affordability is a barrier to attendance. The expectation is that for these recommendations to go ahead, additional investment from government would be required.

The purpose of the draft plan is to test the level of support for each recommendation. Once feedback has been received there will be further work to be done to prioritise and plan the implementation of new initiatives.

Proposed **phasing** of implementation

The goals and recommendations in this draft plan are interdependent and will help to shape the architecture of the future early learning sector. The proposed phasing identifies implementation over the short, medium and longer term which sets us on the course towards fully realising the vision of this plan.

Questions for consultation:

Phasing



Do you have any views about the proposed phasing?

This plan proposes regulating 80% of qualified teachers in teacher-led services by 2022. How achievable is this in your service?

Questions for consultation:

Final comments



Which recommendations will make the biggest difference?

Is there anything missing?

Any other comments?

Early Learning Strategic Plan

Proposed phasing of implementation

	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONGER TERM
Goal 1 Raising quality for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise for 100% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres Develop advice on group size and environments Gazette Te Whāriki to support shared expectations Prevent low quality service providers from opening additional services Increase monitoring of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise then regulate new adult:child ratios for under 2 year olds Require services to support secure and consistent relationships for children Regulate for 80% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres by 2022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivise then regulate new adult:child ratios for 2 year olds Regulate 100% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres
Goal 2 Empowering every child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-construct progress tools to support children's learning and wellbeing Ensure equity funding supports children who need it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the number of early learning services that support wrap-around social service 	
Goal 3 Investing in our workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the consistency and levels of teacher salaries and conditions Strengthen Initial Teacher Education Improve professional learning and development Develop workforce supply strategy 		
Goal 4 Planning provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and introduce a process to determine whether a new early learning service is needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the establishment and maintenance of early learning services on Ministry land 	
Goal 5 Innovating and improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide governance and management support for community-owned services Co-design an appropriate funding model with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust Co-design an appropriate funding model with the NZ Playcentre Federation Support early learning services to collaborate with other education services Support robust internal evaluation to ensure ongoing improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider setting up state-owned early learning services Establish innovation hubs for early learning services 	



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8.1 | Annex 1 How we developed this draft plan

The Ministerial Advisory Group, Sector Reference Group and the Ministry of Education have worked together to develop this draft plan.

In developing this draft plan we drew on the findings of the Education Summits and the National Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga as well as an online survey about early learning provision and other work being undertaken in the education portfolio.

At the summits we heard that people wanted stronger whānau involvement so that they are integrally and authentically part of their child's learning. This could include shared ownership of teaching and learning and the co-design of how success is measured between children, teachers, kaiako, educators and the community.

Responses to the early learning online survey told us that people highly value *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum. It is seen as the key strength of the New Zealand early learning system.³⁸ Other strengths of the system included play-based learning, qualified and passionate teachers, diversity of provision, community involvement, biculturalism and bilingualism.

Survey participants sought improvements to some of the structural settings for early learning services, such as improving adult:child ratios, and increasing government investment as well as the number of qualified teachers.

The Ministerial Advisory Group and the Ministry of Education also received 34 submissions during the time this draft plan was being written, which came from a mixture of individuals and groups.

All of these perspectives were taken into account when preparing this draft plan.

8.2 | Annex 2 Ministerial Advisory Group and Reference Group membership

8.2.1 Ministerial Advisory Group members

Professor Carmen Dalli (Chair)	Victoria University of Wellington
Associate Professor Alexandra Gunn	University of Otago
Professor Margie Hohepa	University of Waikato
Dr Jodie Hunter	(from 6 August 2018) Massey University
Professor Stuart McNaughton	University of Auckland
Dr Tanya Samu	(1 April 2018 – 21 June 2019) University of Auckland

8.2.2 Reference Group members

Name	Organisation
Karen Affleck	Federation of Rudolf Steiner Waldorf Schools in New Zealand
Susan Bailey	New Zealand Playcentre Federation
Sandie Burn	NZEI Te Riu Roa
Margaret Carr	University of Waikato
Thelma Chapman	Christian Early Childhood Education Association of Aotearoa
Kararaina Cribb	Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust
Susan Foster-Cohen	Early Intervention Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (EIAANZ)
Jayne Franklin	Teaching Council
Phil Grady	Early Childhood Leadership Group
Marianne Kayes	Hospital Play Specialists Association of Aotearoa New Zealand
Lealofi Kupa	He Whānau Manaaki Tararua Free Kindergarten Association
Helen May	Otago University
Helen McConnell	Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu
Claire McLachlan	University of Waikato
Anne Meade	ECE Research Policy Forum Consultant
Linda Mitchell	University of Waikato
Keith Newton	Barnardos New Zealand
Raewyn Overton-Stuart	Home Early Learning Organisation (HELO)
Susan Phua	New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Association
Hellen Puhipuhi	Pacific representative ECAC
Lesley Rameka	University of Waikato
Peter Reynolds	Early Childhood Council
Karen Shields	Early Childhood Leadership Group
Charmaine Thomson	NZEI Te Riu Roa
Clare Wells	NZ Kindergartens Inc.
Cathy Wilson	Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand (MANZ)
Kathy Wolfe	Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand

8.3 | Annex 3 International comparisons for adult:child ratios

International comparisons for adult:child ratios		
Age	0 – 2	2 and over 3
Australia	1:4	1:5
England	1:3	1:4
Canada (British Columbia)	1:4	1:4
Finland	1:4	1:4

Source: Relevant legislation or government documents from each country.

Note: Requirements for minimum adult qualification levels differ between countries.

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Kōrero

Mātauranga

Me kōrero tātou

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