



# He taonga te tamaiti Every child a taonga

Early learning action plan 2019-2029

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# Foreword Minister of Education

**High quality early learning is essential to achieving the Government’s vision for the broader education system, which has 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.**

High quality early learning services benefit children, families and whānau. They support parents and help children in their early years to enjoy a good life, learn and thrive. The Government recognises that the success of these services depends on good governance, leadership and teaching, and on the engagement of parents, whānau and communities. Success also depends on parents having opportunities to choose meaningful learning pathways for their children.

In April 2018, I appointed a Ministerial Advisory Group and a sector Reference Group to give me the best advice from a range of voices on the future of the early learning system to promote these success factors. These groups developed *He taonga te tamaiti – Every child a taonga: Draft strategic plan for early learning 2019-29* (draft strategic plan) with the support of the Ministry of Education.

This final plan, *He taonga te tamaiti – Every child a taonga: Early learning action plan 2019-2029* (action plan) has been developed on the basis of extensive public feedback on the draft strategic plan.



In the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy the Government has set the bold vision that “New Zealand be the best place in the world for children and young people”. This vision is aspirational and will require concerted effort. We know that participation in high quality early learning is an important part of supporting young children’s wellbeing and life opportunities.

This action plan recognises there is work to be done to ensure every child can experience high quality early learning. The plan provides a stepped approach towards reaching a vision for early learning for the next 10-years and beyond. It sets out five objectives supported by short, medium and long-term actions that work together to support quality, equity, and parent and whānau choice.

Some of the changes in this action plan will be challenging. Some changes are happening already and others will need to be staged over time. Changes will be worked out with the sector and resourced from future government budget decisions. This action plan will continue to be reviewed, and further actions are likely to emerge over time.

I am committed to leading the improvements set out here for our early learning system, so it enables all of our children to learn and thrive and experience a good life as New Zealanders.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Chris Hipkins'.

**Hon. Chris Hipkins**  
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

<b>Objective 1:</b>	<b>Objective 2:</b>	<b>Objective 3:</b>
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## 10-year objectives for education

<b>Learners with their whānau at the centre</b>	<b>Barrier-free access</b>	<b>Quality teaching and leadership</b>
Learners with their whānau are at the centre of education	Great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner	Quality teaching and leadership make the difference for learners and their whānau

## Early learning action plan objectives

<b>Children and whānau experience environments which promote their wellbeing and support identity, language and culture.</b>	<b>All children are able to participate in quality early learning and have the support they need to learn and thrive.</b>	<b>Teaching staff and leaders are well qualified, diverse, culturally competent and valued.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Improve the ratios of adults to children under the age of 3 years in teacher-led centre-based early learning services. <b>(1.1)</b></li> <li>» Require teachers to be organised among groups of children in ways that support secure and consistent care, language learning pathways, and positive transitions for children and whānau. <b>(1.2)</b></li> <li>» Develop advice about group size, centre design and wider environmental factors, and how to improve quality standards in these areas. <b>(1.3)</b></li> <li>» Support parents and whānau to navigate their choices of education and language learning pathways through better access to information. <b>(1.4)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Review equity and targeted funding to ensure that they best support children to benefit from access to high quality early learning experiences. <b>(2.1)</b></li> <li>» Develop advice to facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whānau to engage in early learning and ensure that it is clear who holds key responsibility for co-ordinating learning support in each early learning service. <b>(2.2)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Incentivise for 100 percent and regulate for 80 percent qualified teachers in teacher-led centres, leading to regulation for 100 percent. <b>(3.1)</b></li> <li>» Raise the levels of home-based educators' qualifications. <b>(3.2)</b></li> <li>» Develop an early learning teacher supply strategy that aligns with the wider education workforce strategy. <b>(3.3)</b></li> <li>» Implement a mechanism that improves the levels and consistency of teachers' salaries and conditions across the early learning sector. <b>(3.4)</b></li> <li>» Improve Initial Teacher Education to ensure that teachers are well-qualified to implement the curriculum in collaboration with other professionals. <b>(3.5)</b></li> <li>» Develop a sustained and planned approach to professional learning and development. <b>(3.6)</b></li> <li>» Develop innovation and research hubs for early learning services. <b>(3.7)</b></li> <li>» Support early learning services to participate as equitable partners in cross-service and cross-sector collaboration. <b>(3.8)</b></li> <li>» Support the workforce to integrate te reo Māori into all early learning services. <b>(3.9)</b></li> </ul>

Objective 4:	Objective 5:
<p><b>Future learning and work</b></p> <p>Learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives</p>	<p><b>World-class inclusive public education</b></p> <p>New Zealand education is trusted and sustainable</p>
<p><b>Children develop capabilities that are valued by their whānau and community and support them to be competent and confident learners.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Gazette the curriculum framework, <i>Te Whāriki</i>, to support engagement with the principles, strands, goals and outcomes when designing local curricula. (4.1)</li> <li>» Co-construct a range of valid, reliable, culturally and linguistically appropriate tools to support formative assessment and teaching practice. (4.2)</li> <li>» Support services to undertake robust internal evaluation that strengthens implementation of <i>Te Whāriki</i> and ensures ongoing improvement. (4.3)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Early learning services are part of a planned and coherent education ecosystem that is supported, accountable and sustainable.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Introduce a managed network approach to ensure high quality, diverse and sustainable early learning provision (5.1)</li> <li>» Identify options to address supply of early learning services in under-served communities. (5.2)</li> <li>» Set aside space for early learning services alongside school sites, where possible. (5.3)</li> <li>» Strengthen governance and management support for Pacific language and other community early learning services. (5.4)</li> <li>» Introduce a consistent and rigorous programme of monitoring and licensing. (5.5)</li> <li>» Improve transparency of funding for parents, teaching staff and government. (5.6)</li> <li>» Co-design an appropriate funding model with Playcentre Aotearoa New Zealand. (5.7)</li> </ul>

**Government's Education Work Programme of relevance to the early learning action plan includes:**

**Education Workforce Strategy**

**Learning Support Action Plan 2019-25**

**Ka Hikitia and Tau Mai Te Reo**

**Action Plan for Pacific Education**

**Curriculum, Progress and Achievement programme**

**National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP)**

*For more detail see Annex 1*

**Have your say about the future of education.**



# Te Tiriti o Waitangi

**The Government is committed to honouring the Crown's commitments arising from Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It recognises both the tino rangatiratanga of Māori and the kawanatanga of the Crown in the design and delivery of the education system, and acknowledges the vital interest of whānau, hapū and iwi in the system's effectiveness for Māori.**

Giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires a system that enables access to high quality Māori-medium educational pathways. It also includes the obligation to protect and actively promote the use of te reo Māori in all settings, recognising iwi Māori as kaitiaki of this taonga.

The early learning curriculum, *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo and Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa (Te Whāriki)*, is an expression of biculturalism.<sup>i</sup> It recognises Māori as tangata whenua, and assumes a shared obligation for protecting Māori language and culture, and for ensuring that Māori are able to enjoy educational success as Māori. All early learning services are expected to include te reo and tikanga Māori in the curriculum.

This plan sets out ways in which the Government and the early learning sector will work together purposefully to grow the cultural capability of leaders, teachers and educators in early learning services. This will ensure they are able to build genuine partnerships with Māori to support the identity, language and culture of Māori children.

At the time of the launch of this action plan, the Crown is working with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (TKRNT) to co-design a sustainable funding model consistent with one of the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal regarding the Trust's claim.

Kōhanga reo are a vital resource in the revitalisation of te reo and tikanga Māori through intergenerational transmission to young children and their whānau.

<sup>i</sup> 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.





# Vision for early learning

This action plan starts 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 whakataukī: He purapura i ruia mai i Rangiātea e kore e ngaro.<sup>ii</sup>



The plan holds 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 that 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.*

High quality early learning services enable children to enjoy a good life, learn and thrive, and are effective in supporting 'equity from the start'.<sup>1</sup> They also play a vital part in supporting parents and whānau in their role as their children's first teachers.

ii A seed sown in Rangiātea will never be lost.



## The **context** for this action plan

### Diverse provision

New Zealand's early learning services are diverse and include education and care services,<sup>iii</sup> kindergartens, nga kōhanga reo, playcentres, home-based early learning services, hospital-based services and playgroups.

Early learning services have a range of ownership and governance structures and offer different philosophies, languages and operating models. These differences have emerged over time in response to changing social contexts, cultural and educational aspirations, parental values and employment patterns. Diverse provision is valued in New Zealand because it offers choice to parents and whānau.

Early learning services can be run by community<sup>iv</sup> or private providers.<sup>v</sup> All services, regardless of ownership, must meet the same standards which are set out in the regulations.<sup>2</sup> The Ministry licences and funds services. The Education Review Office (ERO) conducts regular reviews to ensure services are well placed to support children's learning.

In 2018, there were over 5,400 early learning services – an increase of over 30 percent since 2000. Table 1 in [Annex 2](#) shows this expansion.

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

iv 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 (e.g., a city council, church or university). Community-based services are prohibited from making financial gains that are distributed to their members.

v 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.

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

Parent, Kindergarten

New Zealand is an increasingly linguistically diverse nation. In 2018, 655 licensed services used languages other than English for 50 percent or more of the time. Of these, 502 services used te reo Māori and a further 153 used other languages. The most common languages used, other than English and Māori, were Tongan, Samoan and Mandarin. In total, 82 different languages were used at least some of the time in early childhood education (ECE) services in 2018.

### Almost all children participate in early learning

Over time the Ministry has collected data about children’s participation in early learning, and this shows that children are attending from younger ages (see [Annex 2](#), Figure 1) and for longer hours (see [Annex 2](#), Figure 2). Although it is not compulsory, almost all 3 and 4 year-olds participate in early learning settings, with increasing numbers participating in education and care services (see [Annex 2](#), Figure 3).

Because we know the benefits of early learning are associated with regular and sustained participation, the Ministry has developed new measures of the intensity of 3 and 4 year-olds’ participation.<sup>vi</sup> These new measures are focused on children’s participation for 10+ or 20+ hours per week throughout the year. In the future, this data will provide insights into participation to help better understand what is needed to support equity. Early data suggests that children in low socio-economic areas are attending for fewer hours a week compared to the total population (see [Annex 2](#), Table 2).

### 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 diverse and more open to diverse ways of being than in earlier generations. In 2010 the *Growing up in New Zealand* study reported that one in every three children aged under-3 had at least one parent born outside New Zealand<sup>3</sup> and 24 percent of children were Māori.<sup>4</sup> While the biggest range of ethnicities is found in Auckland, increasing diversity has been 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.<sup>5</sup>

Patterns of labour market participation are different to those of 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.

vi These measure are based on demographic data from the Early Learning Information system (ELI).



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.

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.<sup>6</sup>

The education sector continues to move towards more collaborative models of teaching and learning. Both the early learning and school sectors include '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.

### Case for change

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.

ERO continues to identify variability in practice. For example, in 2017, 31 percent of services were found to have limited or no focus on supporting children's oral language learning,<sup>7</sup> and in 2015, 44 percent of services had a curriculum that was only somewhat responsive in enabling infants and toddlers to become competent and confident communicators and explorers.<sup>8</sup> ERO has also found a lack of responsiveness to Māori and Pacific children in many services.<sup>9</sup>

Raising the quality of provision across the early learning system will require a comprehensive approach, including improving regulation and implementing actions to strengthen practice across the sector.



Children and whānau living in low socio-economic areas spend less time in early learning settings than others (see [Annex 2](#), Table 2). To better support equitable life outcomes and to implement a comprehensive approach to sustaining participation, we need to improve our understanding of barriers and enablers to regular participation. Early learning services can struggle to attract and retain qualified staff and to respond to complex challenges associated with poverty. Improving equity will require a more differentiated approach to resourcing and support than is currently the case.

While the number of early learning services has grown significantly, there are some areas where there is insufficient local provision of the service types valued by parents and whānau, including language pathways for Māori and Pacific. There are also concerns about the over-supply of some service types, impacting sustainability. It is timely to address the role of government in planning and managing the early learning network to ensure that there is valued provision for every child.

To achieve the vision of this action plan, changes are needed to policy and practice across the early learning system to raise quality, improve equity and enable choice. The concepts of quality, equity and choice are inter-related and are described as goals for the early learning sector below.

### **Quality of provision**

In this action plan, high quality early learning provision is understood to be the right of every child. High quality early learning settings enable every 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 and whānau experiences manaakitanga, is welcomed and included.

High quality settings establish productive partnerships with whānau, hapū and iwi, and ensure that children understand the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua and embrace te reo and tikanga Māori.

Pacific peoples, their languages and cultures hold a significant position in New Zealand society, including those from the three realm nations of Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau. Many Pacific families have lived in New Zealand for generations and their members have the right to equitable opportunities to thrive as citizens of this nation. We expect all high quality 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. High quality early learning settings support children with disabilities, and learning support needs to be available as of right so that all children are able to participate, learn and achieve, regardless of their individual needs or differences.

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

Teacher | Kaiako, Kindergarten

### **Equity from the start**

The notion of 'equity from the start' is a key value of this action plan. Where children live in adverse life circumstances, high quality early learning services are a proven tool in helping to mitigate negative impacts. The aim of reducing disparity for children and their whānau underpins many of the actions in this plan.

This action plan recognises that not all children and whānau 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. Among other things, this means that access to early learning services needs to be barrier-free and free from racism, discrimination and stigma. Early learning services also need to work in collaboration with a range of other services, to ensure a nimble systemic response to particular needs to improve children's life chances. This includes supporting and affirming children with disabilities or additional learning needs.

### Choice of service types

New Zealand's early learning provision covers a range of different service types which enable parents and whānau to exercise choice and mana tikanga<sup>vii</sup>, 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 action plan sees equity and choice as interrelated and it considers the affordability of early learning provision for families, as well as preserving diversity of provision.

The Government wants all parents and whānau to experience whānau tangata through services that meet their needs, confident in the high quality of the service they choose. The action plan recognises that different types of services need to be supported by government in different ways.

### What's happened so far and what you told us

In 2018, a Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) developed a draft strategic plan *He taonga te tamaiti - Every child a taonga: Draft strategic plan for early learning 2019-29*. The MAG worked with a broadly representative sector reference group and was supported by the Ministry. The draft strategic plan outlined five interdependent goals and 23 recommendations intended to work together to raise quality, improve equity and enable choice.

Consultation on the draft strategic plan ran from 19 November 2018 to 15 March 2019. The Ministry held 44 public hui around the country, and received 2,264 online survey responses and 219 written submissions during the consultation period. The Ministry also commissioned three parent focus groups in Auckland, Christchurch and Whangarei to capture parent voice during the consultation phase.

Broadly speaking, there was a high level of agreement with the recommendations of the draft strategic plan. Most highly ranked were

the recommendations to improve adult:child ratios and to move towards 100 percent qualified teachers in teacher-led services. Feedback was substantive and included further ideas and suggestions, as well as questions and advice about how implementation would occur. As a result, the recommendations from the draft strategic plan have been refined and expanded.

The consultation feedback is summarised in two reports: *Kōrero Mātauranga: Draft early learning strategic plan submission analysis, April 2019* and *Draft early learning strategic plan consultation: Parent focus groups*.

### What happens now?

The Government has considered the wide feedback on the draft strategic plan and developed this action plan. The Ministry will now work with the early learning sector, parents and whānau, hapū, iwi, communities and agencies to implement the actions in this plan. Implementation will take a stepped approach over the next 10 years.

As some actions require significant financial investment, implementation will be contingent on Cabinet agreement to individual actions and future Budget processes.

A number of actions will require changes to one or more aspects of the regulatory framework that governs early learning services. The regulatory framework for early learning services includes the Education Act (1989), the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, and Criteria that are used to assess how services meet standards set out in the regulations. Parts of this framework are already being reviewed to ensure that regulation is clear and fit for purpose. Some of the changes needed to implement this action plan will be incorporated in this ongoing review, while others will occur later in the life of the plan.

The actions set out in this action plan requiring regulatory change should be understood as statements of intention, pending any necessary public consultation within the regulatory change process.

vii In this plan 'mana tikanga' is defined as the provision of an education system where Māori knowledge and experience is valued, legitimised and provided equitable space. The identity, language and culture of Māori learners will be fostered, and participation and achievement in education will be supported. Māori learners have a right to acquire the Māori language and Māori language in education should provide for breadth and depth in provision.



# The objectives of this plan

The plan is framed by five objectives and includes 25 actions that work together to achieve systemic change. It provides a stepped approach towards reaching the 10-year vision for the early learning system.

This plan's objectives align with the Government's 10-year objectives for the wider education system.

Objective 1:	Objective 2:	Objective 3:	Objective 4:	Objective 5:
<b>10-year objectives for education</b>				
<b>Learners with their whānau at the centre</b>	<b>Barrier-free access</b>	<b>Quality teaching and leadership</b>	<b>Future of learning and work</b>	<b>World-class inclusive public education</b>
Learners with their whānau are at the centre of education	Great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner	Quality teaching and leadership make the difference for learners and their whānau	Learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives	New Zealand education is trusted and sustainable
<b>Early learning action plan objectives</b>				
<b>Children and whānau experience environments which promote their wellbeing and support identity, language and culture.</b>	<b>All children are able to participate in early learning and have the support they need to learn and thrive.</b>	<b>Teaching staff and leaders are well qualified, diverse, culturally competent and valued.</b>	<b>Children develop capabilities that are valued by their whānau and community and support them to be competent and confident learners.</b>	<b>Early learning services are part of a planned and coherent education ecosystem that is supported, accountable and sustainable.</b>

Reforms and actions across the wider education sector will shape a stronger education system for New Zealanders (see [Annex 1](#)).

Once finalised the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) and the Tertiary Education Strategy will express how the Government's system-level vision and outcomes apply as priorities for practice in places of learning. The NELP will apply to early learning services.

Areas of the wider education work programme of relevance to the early learning action plan include the Education Workforce Strategy, Learning Support Action Plan 2019-25, Ka Hikitia and Tau Mai Te Reo, Action Plan for Pacific Education, and the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement programme.



## Objective 1:

Children and whānau experience environments which promote their wellbeing and support identity, language and culture

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 positive early social and emotional experiences and consistency of care.<sup>10</sup> A guiding principle of *Te Whāriki*, *ngā hononga*, places relationships at the core of children's learning. In group-based settings, good adult:child ratios, small group sizes and consistent and responsive relationships with well-qualified adults provide a context for these positive experiences.<sup>11</sup> High quality physical environments also provide a context supportive of children's wellbeing, including for those with additional learning needs.

**To support parents and whānau in their role as their children’s first teachers, early learning services must be responsive to children’s mana tikanga, their identity, language and culture, and be of a type that is valued by parents and whānau.**

Some parents need more information about the types of early learning services available in their area, including how their children can follow particular pathways, such as Māori-medium or Pacific language immersion. Also, they need more information about what parents can expect of services and how they can participate.

**ACTIONS:**

**1.1 Improve the ratios of adults to children under the age of 3 years in teacher-led centre-based early learning services**

The following new adult:child ratios for early learning centres will be introduced over the life of this plan.<sup>viii</sup> These ratios will help to create contexts supportive of infants’ and toddlers’ wellbeing and development, including their language development. A ratio of 1:3 for under 2 year-olds will remain an aspiration in the longer term.

Age	Under 2 years	2 years old
Current ratios	1:5	1:10 <sup>ix</sup>
New ratios	1:4	1:5

Since there are interdependencies between improving adult:child ratios and improving the proportion of qualified teachers in some service types (action 3.1), and attracting and retaining qualified teachers (actions 3.3 and 3.4), a staged approach will be taken. This staged approach will allow time for services to recruit more teachers. The staged approach will include:

- » In the medium term, teacher-led centre-based services with adult:child ratios of 1:4 for under 2 year-olds and/or 1:5 for 2 year-olds will attract a higher funding rate.

viii This action does not apply to hospital-based or home-based services.

ix For children 2 years and over, the requirement is for 1 adult for the first 6 children, 2 adults for 7-20, and thereafter a 1:10 ratio

x It is recognised that hospital based services operate differently from other early learning services and this difference will require consideration and specific provision during the review of the licencing criteria

- » In the medium and longer term, adult:child ratios of 1:4 for under 2 year-olds and then 1:5 for 2 year-olds will become requirements for teacher-led centre-based services. Once in place, higher funding rates will reflect the increased costs to services of these regulated ratios.

The Ministry will work with the sector to understand implementation considerations, and to support services with operational advice that identifies a range of ways to implement new ratios and age bands.

**1.2 Require teachers to be organised among groups of children in ways that support secure and consistent care, language learning pathways, and positive transitions for children and whānau**

To help make sure that infants and toddlers experience secure and consistent care and, with their whānau, experience positive transitions, there will be new expectations about how teachers are organised to work with children individually and in groups.

**“ Lower [better] ratios will mean that teachers have time to have quality interactions, and support learning opportunities with all the children all the time”**

Consultation feedback

The Ministry intends to review the licensing criteria to require service providers to develop policies about how teachers’ responsibilities for children are organised to meet individual needs within a group context.<sup>x</sup> These policies would show how the distribution of adults in services supports secure and consistent care for children throughout the day. Policies would also show how the organisation of staff supports positive



transitions for children, including transitions between home and an early learning service, within early learning services, and between early learning services and schools and kura.

The ways that teachers are organised across groups of children should be culturally appropriate and responsive to each service's community. Policies would be regularly reviewed in consultation with the service's community.

This action acknowledges the role of early learning services' management in deciding how teaching teams structure their day within services or across a group of services. The Ministry would work with early learning services to develop guidance to support implementation. Improving adult:child ratios (action 1.1) will also help services organise teaching teams in ways that support children's wellbeing.



### 1.3 Develop advice about group size, centre design and wider environmental factors, and how to improve quality standards in these areas

The Ministry will develop comprehensive, integrated and culturally appropriate advice about the relationships between group size, centre design and wider environmental factors, and how to improve quality standards in these areas. To develop this advice, the Ministry will work with the early learning sector and a range of experts. This work will focus on how centre design supports curriculum implementation, children's identity, language and culture, and health and wellbeing.

Advice will identify factors that enable children to experience small group interactions, active play indoors and in natural outdoor spaces,<sup>xi</sup> and warm indoor spaces that support rest as well as noisy or boisterous activity without unduly impacting on other areas or children. The Ministry will also review requirements on environmental health standards, such as noise and heating. The concept of services operating solely in outdoor spaces (similar to 'forest kindergartens') will also be explored as part of this work.

People whose expertise will support this work include teachers, owners, architects, researchers, cultural experts, including those involved in Māori medium and Pacific language early learning services and in relevant agencies such as District Health Boards.

A set of design principles will be developed based on this advice and shared with early learning services and relevant government agencies, including the Ministries of Health, Social Development, Business, Innovation and Employment, Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, Worksafe, and local government.

Expert advice may lead to new standards for heat, noise, activity space, the organisation of groups, or group size in early learning services. The Ministry will consult with the sector if any regulatory changes are advised, including about operational and financial implications.

xi It is recognised that hospital based services operate differently from other early learning services and this will be considered in the advice developed.

#### 1.4 Support parents and whānau to navigate their choices of education and language learning pathways through better access to information

The Ministry will talk with parents, whānau and communities to identify information gaps and current information that could be presented in more accessible and culturally responsive ways.

A focus of this action will be on ensuring all parents have the information and support they need to choose an early learning service for their child and navigate the system. In particular, the information provided will support:

- » Māori parents and whānau to identify early learning options, including Māori-medium pathways
- » Pacific parents to identify services that promote Pacific identities, languages and cultures
- » parents and whānau who have children with learning support needs to access this support
- » all parents to be aware of the early learning curriculum *Te Whāriki*, how they can participate in their chosen early learning service, and what they can expect of this service.

**“Parents need to know more about the education system... [we need] information in our own language, that way we can help in our children’s journey and in their success.”**

Pacific Fono series 2018 – Kōrero Mātauranga

We know that information for parents and whānau could be more easily available through websites or other media that they can readily access and navigate. Parents who prefer an in-person or phone option will continue to be able to contact the Ministry’s regional offices for information.

The Ministry will also look at other communication channels, such as social media, print, television and radio, including in te reo Māori and in Pacific languages. A communications strategy will be developed



in consultation with agencies such as the Ministry of Health and the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and local government.

Cross-agency work aimed at improving enrolment in early learning has already started as part of the DIA life event services, including through the SmartStart initiative. The Ministry will continue to contribute to this work, and look for other opportunities through the Government’s Digital ICT Strategy to link and integrate information.

Information from the network profiles (action 5.1) may be used to enhance information to families and whānau about service availability, type and quality. Actions in this plan that support equitable access and wrap-around social services (actions 2.1, 2.2) will also help parents to navigate education pathways.

The Ministry is responsible for a number of initiatives to support parents and whānau to be first teachers for their tamariki at home, and to access early learning services. These include Poipoia te Mokopuna, Engaging Priority families, Pacific Power Up and HIPPPY. Over the life of this plan, the Ministry will continue to monitor the support needed by parents and whānau, including through the provision of information about early learning services.



## Objective 2:

All children are able to participate in early learning and have the support they need to learn and thrive

**This plan is underpinned by the knowledge that high quality early learning experiences have the power to positively influence children's life trajectories. Guiding principles of *Te Whāriki*, whakamana and kotahitanga, empower children to learn and grow holistically through their participation in early learning services that support children's diverse learning needs. There is an opportunity to ensure that our funding system supports children who need it to participate fully in high quality early learning services.**



**To realise ‘equity from the start’, health and social issues that impact on children’s early learning will be better addressed through a cross-agency response. The Government’s Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy will enable such a response and the Ministry will work with the sector and other agencies to deliver on this strategy.**

In addition, the Learning Support Action Plan 2019-2025 (LSAP) sets out actions that will strengthen support for children and young people, including children in early learning services. The LSAP includes actions that will lead to more systematic approaches to identifying children’s learning support needs, including exploring with the Ministry of Health universal health checks for 3 year-old children. It also includes actions to strengthen early intervention so that waiting lists are reduced and families and whānau are able to access support in a timely manner. Flexible supports will be provided for neurodiverse children and to meet the needs of gifted children.

Learning Support Coordinators, working across clusters of schools, will support children’s seamless transitions from early learning into schools or kura. The LSAP has a focus on teacher professional learning and development (PLD) to improve practice with children who need learning support. This focus is also reflected in this Early learning action plan (action 3.6).

## **ACTIONS:**

### **2.1 | Review equity and targeted funding to ensure that they best support children to benefit from access to high quality early learning experiences**

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 Learning Support Action Plan. This includes whether the funding allocation mechanisms and the amount of funding overall are appropriate.

### **2.2 | Develop advice to facilitate wrap-around health and social services to support children and their whānau to engage in early learning and ensure that it is clear who holds key responsibility for co-ordinating learning support in each early learning service**

The Ministry will support policies and initiatives arising from the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* and contribute to cross-agency responses that address health, social support gaps, and issues that impact on children’s early learning. Work will be undertaken with agencies such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Development, and Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children to integrate health and social services for children in early learning settings. Options could include supporting increased collaboration, resource and information sharing, creating clear referral pathways and co-locating services. Wrap-around services will also be informed by, and inform, network decisions (action 5.1) to ensure parents can access services that meets their needs.

Some early learning services are already facilitating wrap-around support from a range of other services, for example, visits from public health nurses and speech language therapists. There are kaupapa Māori models of wrap-around service provision such as marae-based social services. The Ministry will encourage sharing examples of good practice across services, agencies and communities, including at the regional level. In addition, the Ministry will work with the sector to make sure that people are identified who have key responsibilities for co-ordinating learning support within each early learning service.

The Ministry will also work on ways to increase workforce knowledge and expertise in early identification and response to learning support needs as part of implementing the LSAP. Actions to support quality teaching (actions 3.5 and 3.6) will help to increase workforce knowledge. One benefit of developing new tools for formative assessment (action 4.2) will be that they will assist teachers, parents and whānau to notice when a child’s learning progress suggests there is a need to adapt teaching practices or to provide further support. (Also see action 5.2, *Identify options to address supply of early learning services in under-served communities*).



## Objective 3:

Teaching staff and leaders are well qualified, diverse, culturally competent and valued

All children should have equitable access to a well-qualified early learning workforce that mirrors the diverse cultures and genders that constitute Aotearoa New Zealand. Teaching staff need to be culturally competent and able to support Māori to succeed as Māori and to support all children's mana tikanga, identity, language and culture. An integrated approach is needed to recruit, retain, grow and develop our early learning workforce, including progress towards a well-qualified teaching profession.

Since the 2002 strategic plan, *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, significant progress has been made towards increasing the proportion of qualified teaching staff in teacher-led early learning centres. Currently, 96 percent of these services sit in the 80+ (qualified) funding band,<sup>xii</sup> and 68 percent of the workforce are qualified teachers.

Teaching qualifications are important because teacher education influences teachers' attitudes, beliefs, skills and knowledge and supports teachers to apply principles of kotahitanga, mana tikanga, and whakamana. Initial teacher education (ITE) equips teachers to effectively implement the early learning curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, for all children. Teacher registration and certification provide ongoing assurance that teachers are meeting the Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession and maintaining current knowledge of theory and practice.

Teaching qualifications need to be supported by working conditions that enable all teaching staff to plan for children's learning, engage with parents and whānau, and collaborate with colleagues. Induction and mentoring of provisionally certificated teachers, to enable new teachers to complete their training, is necessary. Time and resources to support continued professional growth and career progression are also important to strengthen teachers' and leaders' capabilities and effectiveness.

The ability for teachers and leaders 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. In this plan, the Government envisages a broad and connected learning system that is continuously improving to benefit all New Zealand children. This means that teaching staff in early learning services need access to PLD, innovation expertise and research support. More support is also needed for early learning services to participate with schools and kura in collaborative inquiry and sharing effective practices in Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako.

**“Early childhood education, like all other education sectors, needs fully qualified teachers. Learning begins in these early years and requires a strong foundation.”**

Consultation feedback

### ACTIONS:

#### 3.1 Incentivise for 100 percent and regulate for 80 percent qualified teachers in teacher-led centres, leading to regulation for 100 percent

The Government will increase the proportion of qualified teachers in teacher-led, centre-based early learning services.<sup>xiii</sup> The Ministry will work with the sector to understand teacher supply and demand and how to encourage uptake of ITE to increase the proportion of qualified teachers. Steps to support this will include:

- » In the short term, the introduction of a higher funding rate for teacher-led, centre-based early learning services that have 100 percent qualified teachers.
- » In the medium-term, regulation change to require 80 percent of teaching staff in all teacher-led services to be qualified teachers and, where children are grouped in separate spaces, at least one qualified teacher will be located with each group.

Issues of consistency between the regulatory and funding requirements will also be addressed to ensure that regulatory and funding rules align as any changes are introduced.

Actions to attract and retain a diverse range of teachers will help to increase the number of Māori and Pacific teachers who can teach in English-medium, Māori-medium, or Pacific language settings, consistent with the wider Education

xii Eligibility for funding bands is based on the number of staff hours required to meet adult:child ratios (known as regulated ratio hours) and the proportion of these hours worked by certificated teachers.

xiii This action applies to centre-based services only and not to hospital-based or home-based services.



Workforce Strategy (EWS). As funding incentives and regulatory changes are implemented specific attention will be given to the impacts on language pathways including the ability of services to retain competent language speakers within their wider workforce. The EWS will include a focus on growing the diversity of cultures and genders and on reducing barriers to people with disabilities entering the teaching workforce.

### 3.2 Raise the levels of home-based educators' qualifications

From 2019, cost adjustments to the funding rates for home-based early learning services will only be directed towards quality funding rates. All educators within quality rate services must hold a Level 3 ECE qualification or credits towards the Level 4 ECE qualification.

Eventually, all home-based educators will need to hold, or be in training towards, a Level 4 ECE qualification, or Te Ara Tuarua, or hold a higher ECE or kōhanga reo qualification.

Educators who already hold a Level 3 ECE qualification will be grand-parented, with this qualification recognised as equivalent to the Level 4 ECE qualification.



**“I love the idea of improving teacher salaries, as it is what we deserve. It will likely help keep us in the profession, and attract people to work in an industry that is often undervalued and underappreciated by the general public.”**

Consultation feedback

### 3.3 Develop an early learning teacher supply strategy that aligns with the wider education workforce strategy

New investment will encourage enrolment in early learning ITE programmes and focus on attracting school leavers, people already involved in early learning provision, career changers, and parents and whānau to these programmes.

In the short term, a teacher supply strategy will also attract overseas trained teachers into early learning teacher roles to support the sector through some of the changes in the action plan. In the medium to long term, a range of scholarships and grants aimed to support the unqualified early learning workforce to gain ITE qualifications will help to grow the early learning teaching workforce. Targeted support will also be designed to attract Māori and Pacific enrolments in ITE qualifications.

Improved pay and conditions (action 3.4) and better adult:child ratios (action 1.1) will also help to provide a context in which early learning teaching is viewed as an attractive profession.

### 3.4 Implement a mechanism that improves the levels and consistency of teachers' salaries and conditions across the early learning sector

The Ministry will develop a mechanism that promotes more consistent and improved teacher salaries and conditions in the early learning sector. This will also aim to ensure that services can provide equity for children by attracting capable and experienced teachers to communities that have been traditionally harder to staff due to non-financial factors.

It is likely that the new mechanism would require changes to the early learning funding system. The Ministry will begin by developing an appropriate mechanism that relies on sector information to gauge the potential costs of implementation. This will enable a staged implementation that ensures the approach is sustainable.

### 3.5 Improve Initial Teacher Education to ensure that teachers are well-qualified to implement the curriculum in collaboration with other professionals

The Teaching Council of Aotearoa (Teaching Council) has reviewed the provision of ITE and developed new requirements which represent a shift in its expectations. These changes will help to make sure that ITE graduates are ready to teach and well equipped to continue their progress to full certification. Also, providers must enable flexible pathways to increase diversity and grow the future workforce while safeguarding teaching quality.

The Council's work reflects changes suggested in the draft plan. For example, ITE providers will need to show evidence that graduates are equipped with the theory and reflective abilities that will enable them to practice in the unfamiliar contexts where they might ultimately be employed. Graduates will also be able to meet the Teaching Council Standards (in a supported environment) before graduation and uphold the expectations outlined in the Teaching Council Code. This will include respecting the diversity of the heritage, identity, language and culture of all learners and their families and whānau.

All ITE providers are now required to have new ITE programmes developed through authentic partnerships and their communities, including iwi and schools, and approved by January 2022.

The Teaching Council will undertake formative evaluation of this change, including analysis of the difference the new requirements make to new programmes.

The Ministry, ERO and the Teaching Council will continue working together to develop a set of key measures towards meeting this action, and evaluate progress over the life of the plan.



### 3.6 Develop a sustained and planned approach to professional learning and development

PLD appropriate to the needs of the early learning service is integral to maintaining and strengthening practice that contributes to children's learning and wellbeing. The Ministry will introduce a planned and coherent national programme of PLD to support the design and implementation of local curriculum within the framework of *Te Whāriki*. All PLD will include a focus on identity, language and culture and the inclusion of children with disabilities or additional learning needs. This programme of PLD will reference *Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners* and *Tapasā: Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific learners*.



A national programme of PLD will also be designed to grow the leadership capability of teachers, kaiako and educators in leadership roles. The content of this will be informed by research evidence about effective leadership and the Teaching Council's *Leadership Strategy for the teaching profession and Educational Leadership Capability Framework* (2018).

The Ministry will review its current PLD design and delivery, funding and uptake with the sector. The review will inform the design of locally delivered PLD that is responsive to the aspirations of mana whenua and Pacific communities, and support equitable access across services.

### 3.7 | Develop innovation and research hubs for early learning services

At the core of effective pedagogy is an ability to innovate and improve by drawing on new ideas and best practices as they emerge. The Ministry will contract the development of innovation and research hubs that enable early learning teachers and services to access expertise, partners and resources. These hubs will be accessible online to mitigate barriers to participation, and will be designed to promote cross-service and cross-sector collaboration.

It is anticipated that teacher, community, early learning service and government priorities will inform research questions or innovations. For example, these could include promoting equitable outcomes, the advancement of a bicultural curriculum and bilingual outcomes, responding to increasing population diversity, transitions, inclusion, or the use of digital technology.

### 3.8 | Support early learning services to participate as equitable partners in cross-service and cross-sector collaboration

Collaboration between services is important in sharing good practice, and early learning services collaborating with schools and kura support positive transitions for children. Collaboration across the learning pathways helps greater understanding about how the national curricula complement each other and what positive transitions look like.

Currently around one-third of early learning services are members of Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako. The Ministry will continue to support cross-sector collaboration. It will also explore ways to build and enhance authentic engagement between early learning services, schools and kura including Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako.





**“I like that there will be increased collaboration with other sectors of the education system. This will give the ECE teachers similar status to other teachers, no matter the age group they are working with.”**

Consultation feedback

Collaboration across clusters of early learning services with shared interests and priorities will also be supported through the implementation of other actions in this plan. One example is by creating innovation and research hubs (action 3.7); another is by providing governance support to small groups of services (action 5.4). Further options to share learning between services and to create collaborative networks across sectors will be explored in the short to medium term.

### 3.9 Support the workforce to integrate te reo Māori into all early learning services

*Te Whāriki* sets out expectations that all early learning services integrate te reo and tikanga Māori in their curriculum and enable Māori to enjoy educational success as Māori.

To help support and strengthen Māori-medium services, and to expand the use of te reo Māori across all early learning services, the Ministry's planned review of current PLD delivery (action 3.6), will consider how to ensure a strong focus partnership with mana whenua in the design of local PLD initiatives.

PLD will also be supported by implementation of Te Ahu o te Reo Māori – Fostering education in te reo Māori. Te Ahu o te Reo Māori is a PLD initiative which aims to grow and strengthen an education workforce that can integrate te reo Māori into education settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. This initiative supports the Government's vision that te reo Māori will be a part of all ākonga and students' education by 2025.

New requirements designed by the Teaching Council will also help integrate te reo Māori into all early learning services. In particular, the Teaching Council now requires that students in English-medium ITE programmes are assessed by the ITE provider on their competency in te reo Māori.



Together, these actions will help to develop a workforce capable of growing the use and quality of te reo Māori across all early learning services.



## Objective 4:

Children develop capabilities that are valued by their whānau and community and support them to be competent and confident learners

The early learning curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, 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”. The kaupapa whakahaere encourage mokopuna to stand strong, proud in the knowledge that they embody all who have gone before them.

**“Culture and identity create the base of learning. If your base is not strong you can’t build on it... never mind being the best someone else, our tamariki need to be the best them! To do this they need to know who they are, what their tūpuna have done for them ...”**

Consultation feedback

**Te Whāriki is made up of principles, strands, goals and learning outcomes. In high quality early learning services, teachers and educators engage with the whole framework when implementing a local curriculum that reflects the learning that is valued by their children, whānau and community.**

High quality early learning also requires teaching staff to have appropriate knowledge, including cultural knowledge, about positive trajectories of learning and development that reflect kotahitanga, holistic development. This includes deciding when and how to positively influence children’s learning trajectories. Tools that support the formative assessment of children’s progress within the framework of *Te Whāriki* will help teachers and educators decide what practices and approaches to use to assist this progress.

A critical theme through the development of the draft plan and consultation has been how to ensure that all services are focused on continuous improvement, and that there is greater clarity about quality of provision. This action plan provides an opportunity to better support early learning services to ensure ongoing improvement.

## ACTIONS:

### 4.1 Gazette the curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki*, to support engagement with the principles, strands, goals and learning outcomes when designing local curricula

Each of the four parts of *Te Whāriki*<sup>xiv</sup> plays a different role in effective curriculum implementation:

- » The principles describe four fundamental expectations of early learning provision that form the foundations of curriculum decision making and guide every aspect of pedagogy.
- » The strands describe five areas of learning and development that focus on children developing the capabilities they need as confident and competent learners.
- » The goals support teaching practices. They describe the characteristics of facilitating environments and pedagogies that are consistent with the principles and that support children’s learning and development across the strands of the curriculum.
- » The learning outcomes are broad statements of valued learning. They are designed to inform curriculum planning and evaluation and support the assessment of children’s progress.

The legal framework currently comprises:

- » the principles – empowerment | whakamana, holistic development | kotahitanga, family and community | whānau tangata, and relationships | ngā hononga, and
- » the strands – wellbeing | mana atua, belonging | mana whenua, contribution | mana tangata, communication | mana reo, exploration | mana aotūroa.

The principles and strands are gazetted<sup>12</sup> as the curriculum framework that applies to early childhood education services under regulation 43 of the **Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008**.<sup>xv</sup>

xiv *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa.*

xv This does not apply to ngā kōhanga reo, which have a distinct curriculum pathway, *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo*.



**“We have the opportunity to design unique and fit-for-purpose tools, embedded within the social and cultural, teaching and learning context of Aotearoa New Zealand”**

Consultation feedback

In 2020, it is intended that the goals and learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki* <sup>xvi</sup> will also be gazetted as part of this curriculum framework. Inclusion of all four parts of *Te Whāriki* within the legal framework will help clarify its status and its role in supporting curriculum design.

Through the provision of PLD, the Ministry will work with the sector to embed effective practices that enable a rich curriculum, which is locally designed to reflect community values (action 3.6).

#### 4.2 Co-construct a range of valid, reliable, culturally and linguistically appropriate tools to support formative assessment and teaching practice

Children progress in both similar and divergent ways, developing their own learning trajectories. They also have increasing capacity to assess their own progress and set goals for themselves. Teachers and educators attend to progress in order to identify ways to deepen or strengthen children’s learning. Teachers also monitor their own practice and seek to improve it.

In the short to medium-term, the Ministry will collaborate with early learning researchers and practitioners to develop tools and formative assessment practices within the framework of *Te Whāriki*, drawing on national and international research evidence. To ensure valid, reliable, culturally and linguistically appropriate practices, these researchers and practitioners will have expertise in formative assessment, including in kaupapa Māori and Pacific contexts.



**“We need more support for internal evaluation, so that centres know what to do and how do it and what it looks like. Internal evaluation is the best way for centres to improve themselves and their practices – major support is needed here.”**

Consultation feedback

During the co-design process, tools and resources will be trialled in different contexts and modified before being made more widely available. PLD will be provided to support implementation. As a result, better formative assessment practices will enable teaching staff and parents to appreciate how the curriculum may be adapted to advance child wellbeing and learning, and to seek support from others where necessary.



### 4.3 Support services to undertake robust internal evaluation that strengthens implementation of Te Whāriki and ensures ongoing improvement

ERO's Quality Framework/Nga Ara Whai Hua allows evaluations to be differentiated according to service maturity and performance. ERO initially undertakes Assurance Reviews and provides services with tools to monitor and review their compliance with regulatory standards.

Services that are found to be meeting regulatory standards will be subsequently reviewed through a Quality Evaluation approach that focuses on quality and continuous improvement. ERO has updated its indicators of quality for early childhood services as part of a wider programme of methodology review and development. The indicators are central to both external and internal evaluation that focuses on quality improvement. They provide a tool for services to evaluate their own performance and develop a quality improvement plan that supports ongoing improvement.

ERO intends that all services be required to develop and implement such a plan linked to the indicators. Assessment of these plans and progress against them would be part of ERO's quality evaluation process for individual and groups of services.

Services that demonstrate innovation and excellence may also be the subject of a case study evaluation designed to disseminate exemplary practice nationally and internationally. The development of innovation and research hubs (action 3.7) will also support improvements in practice.

xvi Refers to Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa.





## Objective 5:

Early learning services are part of a planned and coherent education ecosystem that is supported, accountable and sustainable

**It is timely to consider the role of the Ministry in managing the early learning network so that there is an adequate supply of provision valued by parents and whānau to meet present and future demand. This provision will include Māori-medium and Pacific language services and will focus on the growth of high quality services that are accountable and sustainable.**



### Planning will acknowledge tino rangatiratanga – Māori rights to exert agency and authority in the design and delivery of the education system.

Operating an early learning service is complex, regardless of philosophy or operating model. As well as effective child and whānau-centred teaching practice, providers need good governance, financial and people management skills to deliver sustainable and high quality services.

The **Regulatory Framework for early learning** helps to ensure that structural features of quality provide facilitating conditions for high quality experiences for children. Some actions in this plan will mean changes to current regulated standards, for example, by improving adult:child ratios or the percentage of qualified teachers.

Along with these changes, the Ministry will focus on developing a stronger monitoring and licensing system that sets clear expectations and assures high quality delivery. This will include raising the bar for existing providers wanting to expand and looking at options to ensure under-served communities have access to high quality services.

Government funding needs to support diverse service types appropriately, and funding should be transparent so that parents, teachers and educators can understand how this funding contributes to the running costs of the service their child attends.

#### ACTIONS:

##### 5.1 Introduce a managed network approach to ensure high quality, diverse and sustainable early learning provision

The Ministry licences, monitors, funds and supports early learning services but does not actively engage in network planning. While this approach has enabled rapid expansion of early learning services over the past decade, some communities are still under-served while some areas have experienced service growth beyond demand. This impacts on service viability and parent choice. More active management of the

**“Having a process to assess what type of ECE services are needed in an area is a great way to stop oversupply...”**

Consultation feedback

network will help to ensure all children have access to quality early learning settings and prevent unintended consequences of over-supply.

The Ministry will take a staged approach to developing a network function. It will begin by developing network profiles to provide information to support early learning providers in decisions around opening new services. The profiles will be based on the existing National Education Growth Plan (NEGP) methodology,<sup>xvii</sup> taking into account the differences between early learning services and schools. Improving knowledge, such as better information about population trends, current services and their quality, will help the Ministry and the sector with planning.

**“Tino rangatiratanga by Māori, for Māori according to tikanga and mātauranga Māori. Māori achieving as global citizens. I want to see a system that supports this kaupapa.”**

Kōrero Mātauranga

The Ministry, as part of its current early learning regulatory review, will look at regulatory and legislative changes that are needed to enable more active management of the network. Work on these changes will occur at the same time that the network profiles are being developed.

<sup>xvii</sup> The NEGP is the Ministry's response to population growth to ensure that sufficient capacity in the school network is delivered as the right type, in the right place and at the right time. It includes profiles of schools' capacity and population growth, and growth plans for high growth areas.

The Ministry intends to introduce a two-step licensing approach:

- » Step 1 would require service providers to indicate their intention to establish or expand a service (before acquiring land or building); it may also require existing providers wishing to expand to apply for authorisation to do so. Decisions on whether to grant the licence would be based on the Ministry's assessment of whether the proposed new service would meet an existing or future need, as well as on the demonstrated quality of an applicant's existing services. This stage would give service providers more certainty before going through the consent and building processes.
- » Step 2 of the new licensing approach would be the full licensing application. As currently occurs, a licensing application would be assessed before a probationary licence was granted. This step would ensure the service meets the regulated standards and other requirements for licensing.

The criteria to guide licensing decisions at Step 1 would be developed in consultation with the sector as part of the regulatory review. Consideration would also be given to ways of preventing and managing situations where licences change hands or are moved to another legal entity to get around any imposed restrictions on expansion.

Once profiles are developed and licensing regulation is in place, the Ministry could use the network profile information to manage the network more actively. The Ministry would aim to maintain choice so that parents can access a service that meets their needs in relation to opening hours, age range, philosophy, language and availability of wrap-around health and social services. Active network management would support the provision of high quality Māori-medium, bilingual and Pacific language pathways.

The network profiles will enable the Ministry to make informed, transparent decisions to achieve a good match between future demand and supply, including deciding where extra provision is not needed.

Other actions in this plan, focused on improving and promoting service quality and strengthening governance and management, will be integral to supporting the sector to respond to demand.

## 5.2 Identify options to address supply of early learning services in under-served communities

As an extension of the network management function, the Ministry will investigate options to ensure children in under-served communities have access to quality early learning services that support their identity, language and culture.

These options will include considering different ways the Government can support service provision in communities where there is insufficient supply. Setting up state-owned services, as proposed in the draft plan, will be looked at in this context. This option will be considered for communities where children experience barriers in accessing services that are responsive to their needs.

Other options under this action, such as funding incentives, approaching preferred (high quality) providers, and calling for expressions of interest will also be considered. For example, the Ministry could ask for expressions of interest for potential providers to establish services in particular areas.



(See also action 2.2 Develop advice to facilitate wrap-around health and social services to support children and their whānau to engage in early learning and ensure that it is clear who holds key responsibility for co-ordinating learning support in each early learning service).

### 5.3 Set aside space for early learning services alongside school sites, where possible.

The provision of early learning services on school land enhances connections between early learning children and their whānau, communities, schools and kura. Where possible, the Ministry will enable land on school sites to be used for the provision of early learning services. The Ministry will supply the land and charge a ground lease. Early learning services will own the building and be responsible for all building elements including insurance and maintenance.

Land put aside to develop early learning provision will mostly be on primary school sites. However, some high school communities establish teen-parent units and also benefit from the co-location of early learning services. There is potential in the longer term to look at legislation that allows schools to operate early learning services.

The Ministry will also work with services that are already on school sites to clarify lease expectations, including responsibility for building maintenance.

### 5.4 Strengthen governance and management support for Pacific language and other community early learning services

Governance and management capability is fundamental to sustainable, high quality early learning provision. Good governance provides the foundation that drives the direction and sets expectations for service delivery, helps to manage risks and assure service compliance and viability.

Community-based services, which have arisen to reflect specific community, language and cultural aspirations may not 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.

There is considerable information, training and governance and management advice currently available for organisations, including small businesses of a scale similar to small early learning centres. The Ministry's initial focus will be on identifying, repackaging and promoting these as necessary. This will be done in consultation with the sector, along with agencies and organisations such as the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Institute of Company Directors, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, the Pacific Business Trust, and Inland Revenue.

**“Individual, community services governed by volunteers are in immediate need of expert, passionate, and practical help”**

Consultation feedback

The Ministry will explore ways to support governance and management, including options for new models of governance and management in the context of network planning. There will also be a focus on encouraging people with the appropriate competencies and capabilities to engage in governance of community based services. Part of this will involve assessing options to encourage consolidation, as well as increased sharing of leadership and management supports and functions (e.g. relief teacher pools, administration). Specific attention will be given to supporting the sustainability of Pacific early learning services which support parents' and communities' language and cultural aspirations.

Underpinning this will be clear expectations and accountability. The regulatory review will consider how to make requirements for sound governance and management more explicit.

### 5.5 Introduce a consistent and rigorous programme of monitoring and licensing

The Ministry licences early learning services and has legal powers to enforce regulations and progress regulatory interventions, including complaint and incident investigations. Other agencies such as Public Health Units, Fire and Emergency New Zealand and local councils are also involved in the licensing process.

Both the Ministry and ERO are involved in monitoring early learning services. ERO reviews and reports on the performance of early learning services on average every 3 years. ERO is implementing a risk-based approach that identifies services needing greater attention. In such services ERO uses an Assurance Review methodology focused on compliance with licensing requirements. Where ERO finds non-compliance, it informs the service and the Ministry of what actions are required and seeks assurance that these matters are addressed. In serious cases where there is risk to children, the Ministry reassesses the service's licence.

The Ministry and ERO are working closely to ensure there is a shared understanding of regulatory requirements and timely information sharing where a service is at risk of non-compliance. During the life of the plan the agencies will work to align their regulatory and monitoring activities for better efficiencies.

Along with its current licensing activities and responses to complaints or incidents, the Ministry will develop a programme of targeted visits for services at risk of poor quality in order to identify needed support and broker remedial action. These visits will focus on compliance with licensing standards and will help to better monitor practice and identify support.

In the future, where a regulatory response is applied, services will need to inform families of the reasons for the sanction and the steps being taken to address issues.

It is proposed to review regulations to strengthen the Ministry's ability to take account of an early learning service's licensing history when deciding to grant a probationary licence. Serious concerns about a service through a provisional licence, a licence suspension or licence cancellation could trigger an automatic review of all of a service provider's other licences.

The regulations will also be amended to enable the Ministry to cancel the licence of any service that is repeatedly put on a provisional licence.

### 5.6 Improve transparency of funding for parents, teaching staff and government

Funding rules and conditions will require services to publish information about the amount of government subsidy children attract. This information will help improve accountability for funding by making sure that parents are well-informed about how government supports children's participation.

Service providers will also be required to report annually to government on income and expenditure by licence in specified categories. This will support greater transparency on the cost drivers of early learning. It will also help the Ministry to identify services at risk.

### 5.7 Co-design an appropriate funding model with Playcentre Aotearoa New Zealand

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 usually the educators. To continue to support playcentres as a valued form of provision, the Ministry is co-designing a funding model with Playcentre Aotearoa New Zealand and considering qualification requirements to align with the organisation's preferred operating model.







## How will we **monitor** and **evaluate** progress?

**The Ministry and ERO will work together to monitor and evaluate the impact of actions in this plan. As a start, we will set out a clear intervention logic and ensure we have baseline measures in place against which to measure change.**

The Ministry already collects data relating to a range of indicators. These include measures of children's participation in early learning, opening and closing of services, licensing interventions, and some information about the workforce. ERO collects data about the quality of services through its Assurance Reviews and Quality Evaluations and national Education Evaluations that look at aspects of system performance.

The Ministry and ERO will also consider investment in new measures where there are measurement gaps. Evaluation milestones will be developed alongside the intervention logic and evaluation plan.

**“ I love playing on the monkey bars, puzzles, reading, drawing circles, reading books, drawing, drawing houses; I love everything, I love it all; I am going to smile all my days and all my weeks.”**

Child in early childhood education,  
New Zealand European.<sup>13</sup>

# Early Learning Strategic Plan

## Phasing of implementation

### Objective 1

- 1.1 Improve the ratios of adults to children under the age of 3 years in teacher-led centre-based early learning services
- 1.2 Require teachers to be organised among groups of children in ways that support secure and consistent care, language learning pathways, and positive transitions for children and whānau
- 1.3 Develop advice about group size, centre design and wider environmental factors, and how to improve quality standards in these areas
- 1.4 Support parents and whānau to navigate their choices of education and language learning pathways through better access to information

### Objective 2

- 2.1 Review equity and targeted funding to ensure that they best support children to benefit from access to high quality early learning experiences
- 2.2 Develop advice to facilitate wrap-around health and social services to support children and their whānau to engage in early learning and ensure that it is clear who holds key responsibility for co-ordinating learning support in each early learning service.

### Objective 3

- 3.1 Incentivise for 100 percent and regulate for 80 percent qualified teachers in teacher-led centres, leading to regulation for 100 percent.
- 3.2 Raise the levels of home-based educators' qualifications
- 3.3 Develop an early learning teacher supply strategy that aligns with the wider education workforce strategy
- 3.4 Implement a mechanism that improves the levels and consistency of teachers' salaries and conditions across the early learning sector
- 3.5 Improve Initial Teacher Education to ensure that teachers are well-qualified to implement the curriculum in collaboration with other professionals
- 3.6 Develop a sustained and planned approach to professional learning and development
- 3.7 Develop innovation and research hubs for early learning services
- 3.8 Support early learning services to participate as equitable partners in cross-service and cross-sector collaboration
- 3.9 Support the workforce to integrate te reo Māori into all early learning services

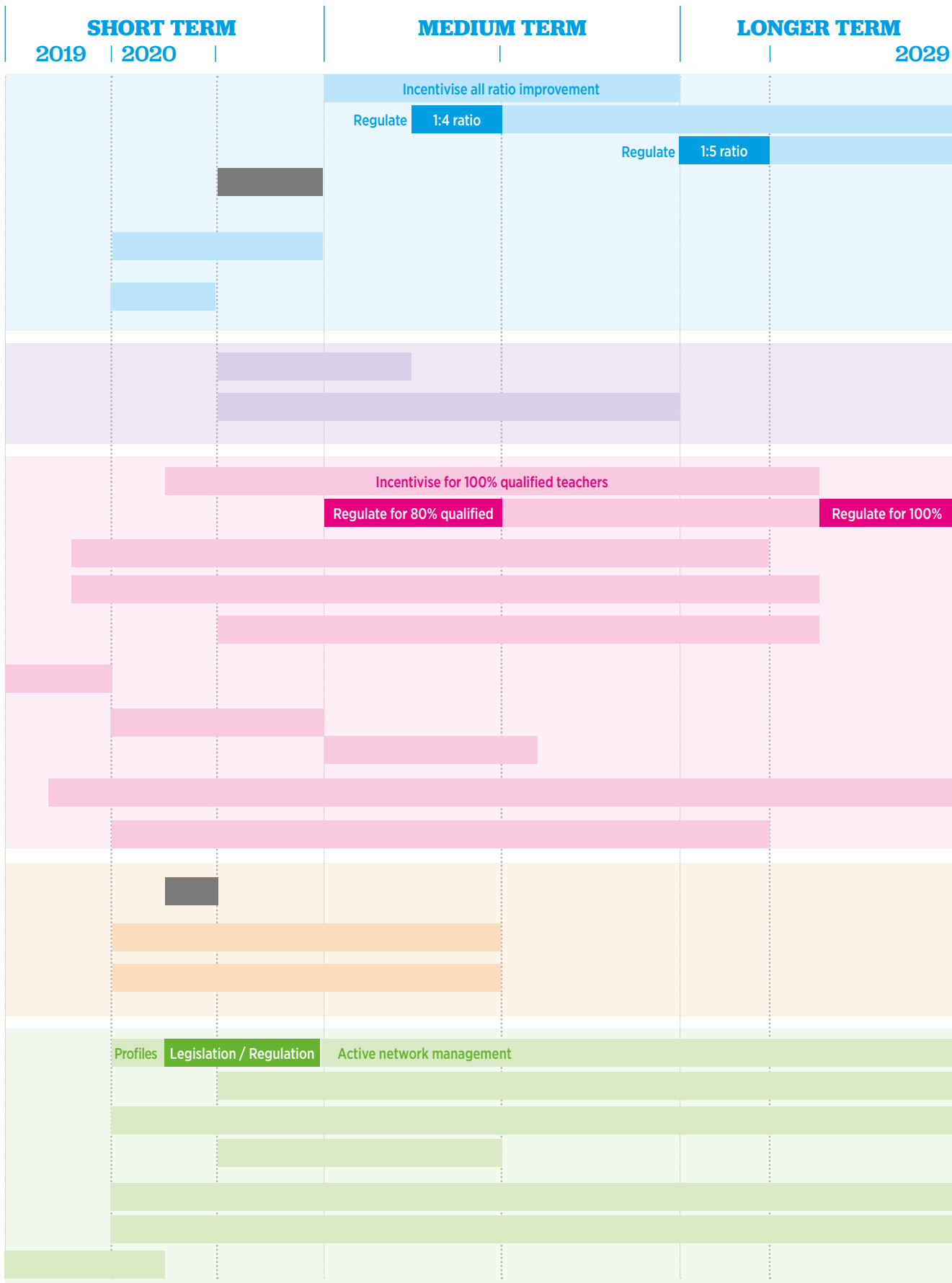
### Objective 4

- 4.1 Gazette the curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki*, to support engagement with the principles, strands, goals and outcomes when designing local curricula
- 4.2 Co-construct a range of valid, reliable, culturally and linguistically appropriate tools to support formative assessment and teaching practice
- 4.3 Support services to undertake robust internal evaluation that strengthens implementation of *Te Whāriki* and ensures ongoing improvement

### Objective 5

- 5.1 Introduce a managed network approach to ensure high quality, diverse and sustainable early learning provision
- 5.2 Identify options to address supply of early learning services in under-served communities
- 5.3 Set aside space for early learning services alongside school sites where possible
- 5.4 Strengthen governance and management support for Pacific language and other community early learning services
- 5.5 Introduce a consistent and rigorous programme of monitoring and licensing
- 5.6 Improve transparency of funding for parents, teaching staff and government
- 5.7 Co-design an appropriate funding model with Playcentre Aotearoa New Zealand

Licensing criteria or gazette notice only. Outside scope of regulatory review



Have your say about the future of education.

# Annex

## Annex 1

### Shaping a stronger education system for New Zealanders

#### 30-year vision for education

We are descendants of explorers, discoverers and innovators who used their knowledge to traverse distant horizons. Our learning will be inclusive, equitable and connected so we progress and achieve advances for our people and their future journeys and encounters.

#### 10-year objectives for education

EDUCATION STRATEGY

Learners with their whānau at the centre	Barrier-free access	Quality teaching and leadership	Future of learning and work	World-class inclusive public education
Learners with their whānau are at the centre of education	Great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner	Quality teaching and leadership make the difference for learners and their whānau	Learning that is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and throughout their lives	New Zealand education is trusted and sustainable



National Education & Learning Priorities (NELP)

Tertiary Education Strategy (TES)

ENABLING REFORMS AND ACTIONS

<b>Legislative reform</b>		
<b>Early learning action plan</b>	<b>Reform of Tomorrow's Schools</b>	<b>Reform of Vocational Education implementation action plan</b>
<b>National Education growth plan</b>		
<b>Learning support action plan</b>		
<b>Ka Hikitia and Tau Mai Te Reo</b>		
<b>Action Plan for Pacific Education</b>		
<b>Curriculum, Progress and Achievement Programme</b>		
<b>NCEA Review</b>		
<b>Workforce Strategy</b>		
<b>Careers Action Plan</b>		



## Annex 2 Tables and figures

**Table 1:** Number of licensed and certificated services in 2000 and 2018

		2000	2018
<b>Licensed services</b>	Casual Education & Care	45	8
	Education & Care	1476	2584
	Home-based	180	434
	Hospital-based		22
	Kindergarten	600	654
	Kōhanga Reo	583	453
	Playcentre	517	407
	<b>Total licensed services</b>	<b>3401</b>	<b>4562</b>
<b>Certificated services</b>	Playgroups	773	908
<b>Total of all service types</b>		<b>4174</b>	<b>5470</b>

Source: Ministry of Education, Education Counts.

**Table 2:** Early childhood participation intensity – June 2019 results

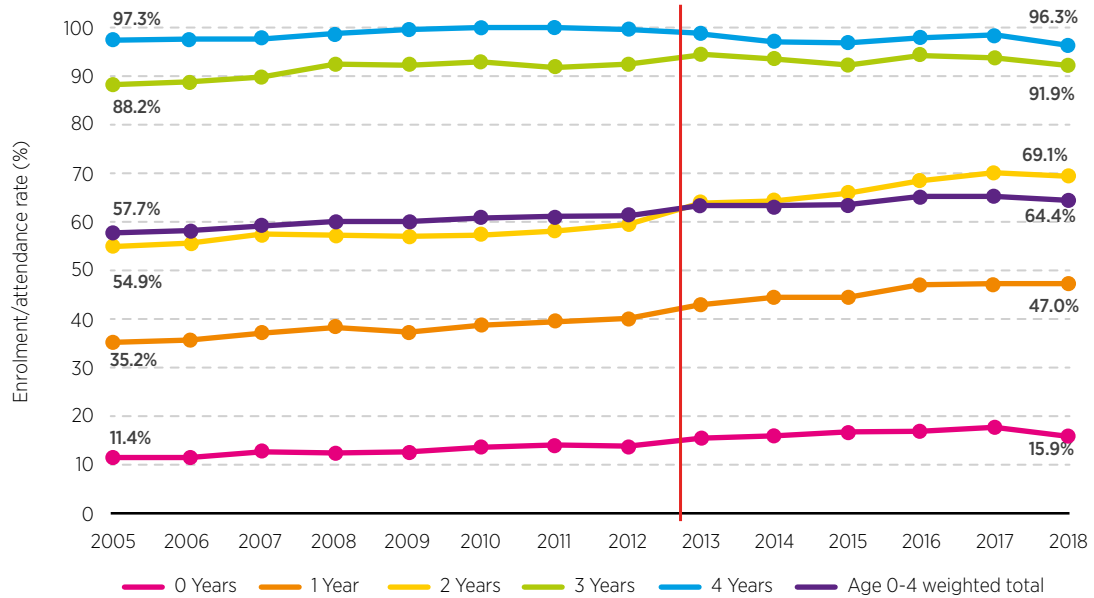
	Current 4 year-olds when aged 3		Current 5 year-olds when aged 4	
	10+ hours a week	20+ hours a week	10+ hours a week	20+ hours a week
<b>Licensed services</b>				
<b>Total children</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Māori</b>	62%	28%	71%	31%
<b>Pacific</b>	67%	34%	75%	35%
<b>Low socio-economic areas</b>	68%	31%	77%	34%

Source: These measures are based on demographic data from the ELI

**Notes:**

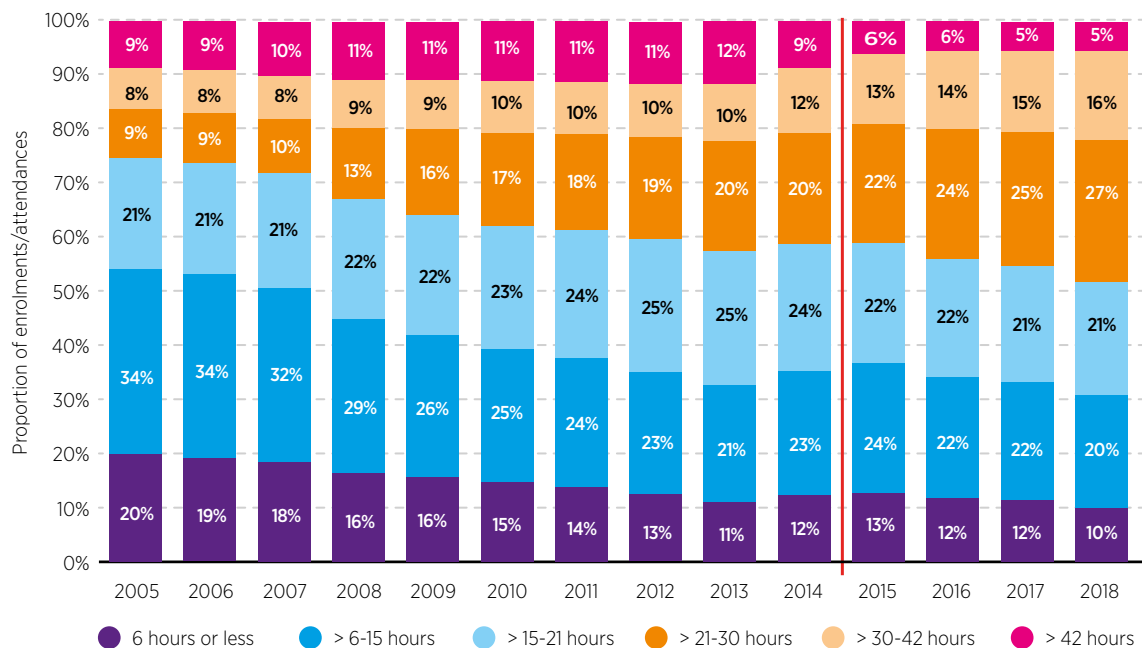
- » The population of 4 and 5 year olds on 30 June 2018 is taken from Stats NZ, National ethnic population projections, by age and sex, 2013 (base)-2038 update, 50th percentile (median) scenario.
- » Based on demographic data from the Early Learning Information system (ELI), we have used the following percentages to approximate the number of children in high, medium and low socioeconomic areas: 30% of the population of children are in high socioeconomic areas, 37% in medium socioeconomic areas, and the remaining 33% in low socioeconomic areas.
- » The participation intensity measures are calculated using attendance data from ELI.
- » These measures are calculated from the day each individual child turns 3 for the age 3 measure, and from the day the child turns 4 for the age 4 measure. Attendance when a child is aged less than 3 years and 5 or older are not included.
- » These measures do not include attendance from services that do not report their data via ELI, such as ngā kōhanga reo or playgroups.
- » Because the attendance data and the Stats NZ projections are from two different sources, the sum of the proportions for 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2018 do not add to 100%.

**Figure 1.** Enrolment/attendance rates by age of child 2005-2018 as a proportion of the age cohort in the population (licensed services only)



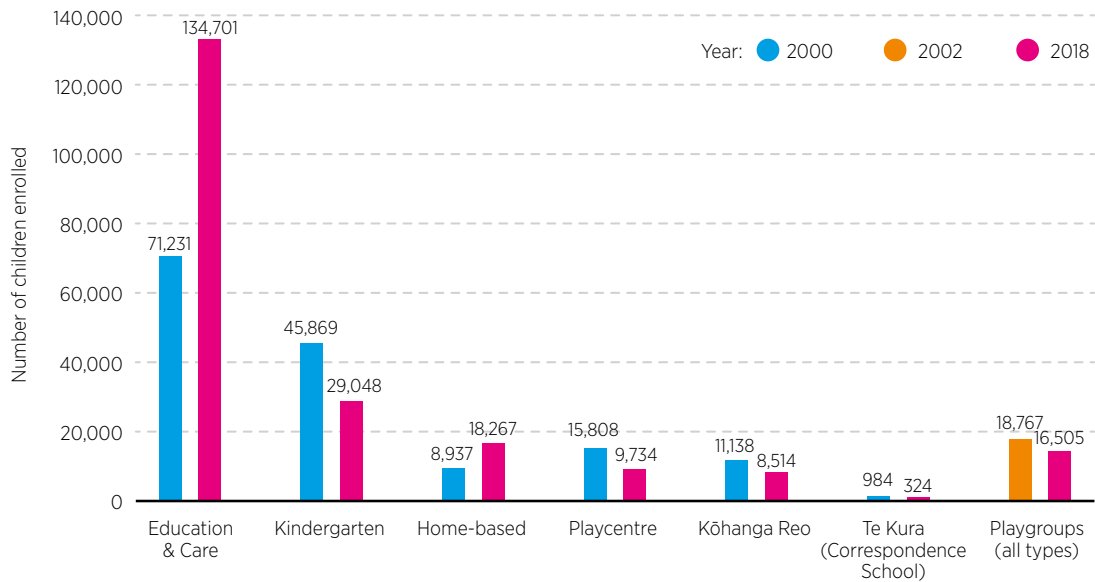
**Source:** Ministry of Education and Statistics NZ. Data collection methods changed after 2013 so pre- and post-2013 data is not directly comparable. From 2005 to 2013, this figure shows enrolment data and from 2014 onwards attendance data. The red line indicates when the collection method changed.

**Figure 2.** Percentage of attendances in licensed services by number of hours a week - 2005-2018



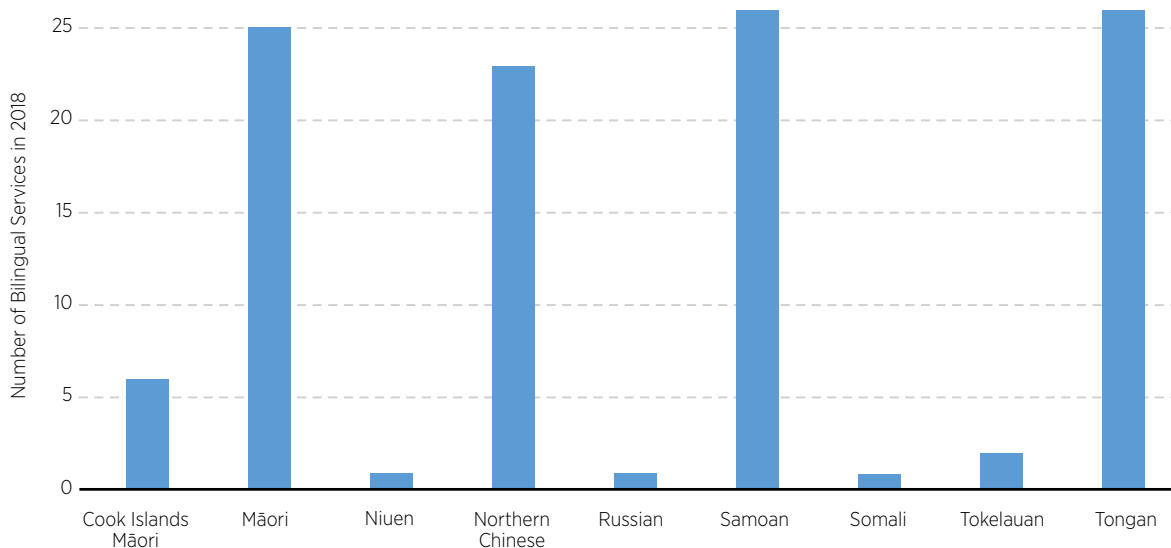
**Source:** Ministry of Education annual ECE census. Data pre-2013 shows enrolled hours and from 2014 shows attendance so it is not directly comparable. Ngā kōhanga reo data is not available.

**Figure 3.** Number of children in early learning services by type in 2000, 2002 and 2018



**Source:** Ministry of Education annual ECE census. 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 has been used instead. Hospital-based service enrolment data is not available.

**Figure 4.** Number of ECE services offering bilingual language instruction in 2018

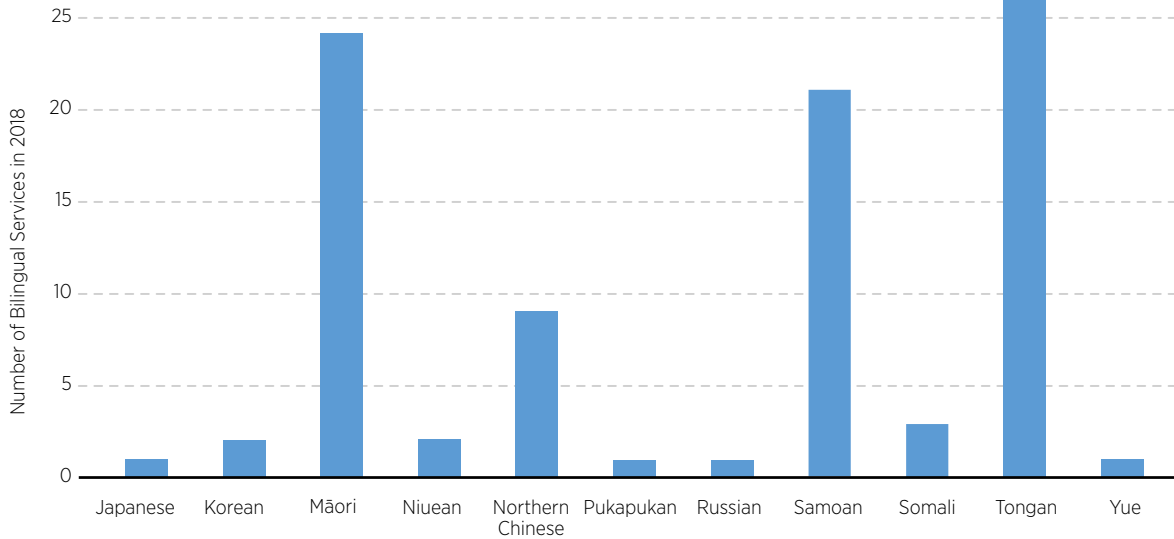


**Source:** Ministry of Education, Education Counts

**Notes:**

- » Of the 4,562 early learning services in 2018, 111 offer bilingual language instruction where the service spends 51-80% of their teaching time in a language other than English.
- » The most common languages for bilingual instruction to be offered in are Samoan and Tongan (26 services), followed by Māori (25 services), and Northern Chinese languages (which includes Mandarin, 23 services). In 2018 there were two services offering bilingual Tokelauan instruction.
- » There were 59 bilingual education and care services in 2018 and 52 bilingual home-based services.

**Figure 5.** Number of ECE services offering immersion language instruction in 2018 (not including kōhanga reo)



**Source:** Ministry of Education, Education Counts

**Notes:**

- » Figure 5 does not include kōhanga reo services. Kōhanga reo are the largest provider of immersion language early learning with 453 services. Kōhanga reo offer a total immersion te reo Māori whānau programme for mokopuna (young children) from birth to 6 years of age to be raised within their whānau Māori.
- » Of the 91 ECE services offering immersion language instruction (81-100% of teaching time in a language other than English), Tongan was the most common followed by 24 te reo Māori and 21 Samoan services. Of these 91 services, 60 were education and care services, 30 were home-based services, and one was a playcentre.



### Annex 3 Ministerial Advisory Group and Reference Group membership

#### 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

#### Reference Group members

Name	Organisation
Karen Affleck	Steiner Education Aotearoa New Zealand
Sandie Burn	NZEI Te Riu Roa
Susan Bailey*	Playcentre Aotearoa New Zealand
Jill Bond*	NZ Kindergartens Inc.
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 of Aotearoa New Zealand
Phil Grady*	Early Childhood Leadership Group
Angus Hartley*	Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust
Marianne Kayes	Hospital Play Specialists Association of Aotearoa New Zealand
Lealofi Kupa	Whānau Manaaki Kindergartens
Shelley Hughes*	NZEI Te Riu Roa
Jo Lambert*	Barnardos New Zealand
Helen May	University of Otago
Helen McConnell	Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu
Sean McKinley*	Playcentre Aotearoa New Zealand
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
Esther Tinirau*	Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust
Maree Stewart*	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

\* **Note:** These reference group members served part-terms on the group for their organisation.

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**Kōrero**

**Mātauranga**

**Me kōrero tātou**

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