

## Home-Based Early Childhood Services: The Case of New Zealand

The main purpose of this policy note is to outline information about New Zealand home-based services. It highlights the importance of Government's role in supporting the quality of provision for children in home-based care, and it is intended to be of use to other countries developing home-based education and care policies. Increasingly, home-based services in New Zealand are education-oriented, and cater for diversity. The note summarises key details and implications about participation and administration (funding, review, regulation, staff qualifications, and curriculum).

### Definition

Home-based care involves the care and education of a small group of children in a caregiver's home. These services (also known as "family day care") are defined by the Ministry of Education as "a cluster of homes under the supervision of a homebased coordinator. The coordinator places children with caregivers in approved homes for an agreed number of hours per week."<sup>1</sup> Unlike private services in a child's own home (employment of a nanny, or in some countries, employment of servants) used mainly by the more privileged, home-based care caters for a wide range of families.

### Development and Participation

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in New Zealand, as in other industrialised countries, the rising participation rates of children in early childhood education services has developed alongside increased participation of women in the labour market. In 2001, the apparent participation in early childhood services of children aged from birth to five years reached 60%. In the 1990 to 2001 period, the percentage of growth of enrolments in home-based services exceeded that of all other early childhood services (see Table 1). The main reason for the increase in enrolments in home-based services (and in "education and care services"), and for the decrease in enrolments at playcentres (parent co-operative centres with parent involvement in running the programme) was the rise in mothers' participation in paid work. Parents of infants and toddlers sometimes choose a home-based service, rather than a centre, because they prefer a home environment.<sup>2</sup>

By 2001, there were 184 home-based services operating in New Zealand, catering for 8,546 children aged from birth to 5 years. The major clientele of home-based care services are New Zealand European children and Maori

children (7,015 and 1,012 respectively in 2001).<sup>3</sup> Slightly more boys than girls were enrolled (4,405 males and 4,141 females in 2001). In 2001, there were 282 coordinators of home-based services; all of them were women.

Table 1: Number of Early Childhood Enrolments in New Zealand By Type Of Service, with Percentage of Change 1990 & 2001

Type of Service <sup>4</sup>	1990	2001	% change
Licensed early childhood services			
<b>Kindergarten</b>	43,792	45,439	3.8
<b>Playcentres</b>	22,668	14,786	-34.8
<b>Education and care services</b>	29,786	73,192	145.7
<b>Home-based services</b>	1,611	8,546	430.5
<b>Correspondence school*</b>	861	947	10.0
<b>Te Kohanga Reo</b>	10,108	9,594	-5.1
License-exempt EC services			
<b>Early childhood development funded</b>			
-Playgroups	5,565	15,457	177.8
-Nga Puna Kohungahunga**	...	209	...
-Pacific Islands EC groups	2,729	2,545	-6.7
-Playcentres	..	404	..
<b>License-exempt Kohanga Reo</b>	..	214	..
<b>Total</b>	117,120	171,333	46.3

.. not available / ...not applicable / \*includes dual enrolments / \*\* included in Playgroups in previous years.

Data source: New Zealand Ministry of Education Data Management Unit, July 2002

### Administration, Funding, Regulation, and Qualifications

Prior to 1986 in New Zealand, the Department of Social Welfare was mainly responsible for administration of home-based early childhood services. In 1986, responsibility for childcare (including home-based services) moved formally from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education.<sup>5</sup> The Ministry of Education is currently responsible for administration and (partial) funding of the home-based education and care services. Each home-based scheme receives the same level of funding, per child per hour, as that available to centre-

<sup>3</sup> [Http://www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz)

<sup>4</sup> Summary definitions of these services include:

*Kindergartens*: free standing, community run, sessional centres (governed by regional associations) for 3- and 4-year-olds. *Playcentres*: parent-cooperative, sessional centres (governed by regional associations) for children from birth to school entry. The educators and administrators are parents of enrolled children. *Education and care centres*: Childcare centres, with diverse ownership and governance arrangements, full-day care or sessional care. *Home-based care*: Family day care, often under the auspices of Barnardo's NZ in recent decades. *Correspondence School*: distance early education provided by the state correspondence school. *Te Kohanga Reo*: involve total immersion of children from birth to school age in Maori culture, language, and values. Centres are governed by a national body of venerable Maori elders. The educators and administrators are parents or elders of the children.

<sup>5</sup> Meade, A. & Podmore, V. N. (2002). *Early childhood education policy co-ordination under the auspices of the Department/Ministry of Education: A case study of New Zealand*. UNESCO Early Childhood and Family Policy Series No. 1. Paris, France.

<sup>1</sup> [Http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/document/document\\_page.cfm?id=6189&p=1037.3832.6120/](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/document/document_page.cfm?id=6189&p=1037.3832.6120/)

<sup>2</sup> Callister, P. & Podmore, V. N. et al., (1995). *Striking a balance: Families, work, and early childhood education*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

based services. Funding levels are therefore linked to participation rates. As the home-based enrolments have increased relative to other services (Table 1), so too have the funding levels.

The rise in early childhood services, including home-based services, has been accompanied by research, lobbying, and government initiatives aimed to enhance the quality of services. Research studies of family daycare in North America support the importance of: licensing and regulation of services, qualifications of providers, and commitment of providers to taking care of children and to learning about children's development and care.<sup>6</sup> Few New Zealand studies have focused specifically on quality in home-based settings,<sup>7</sup> but some small-scale, in-depth studies are now in progress. New Zealand Government initiatives to promote and monitor the quality of the services provided include requirements regarding: reviews, regulations, and qualifications.

Home-based services, along with other early childhood services receiving government funding subsidies, are reviewed externally by the Education Review Office (ERO), the government department with responsibility for reporting publicly on the quality of education in early childhood services/schools. ERO evaluates the safety of children, learning programmes, and the performance of management. Home-based early childhood services are regulated in accordance with the Education (Home Based Care) Order 1992. The Order specifies requirements for premises and facilities, and states that each coordinator must hold a qualification approved by the Secretary (the head of the Ministry of Education). However, to date no formal early childhood qualification requirements are specified for home-based caregivers. Changes to qualifications, requiring a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or equivalent for coordinators in home-based services, are currently being implemented.<sup>8</sup> A recent strategic plan report to the Minister of Education recommends that the system of qualifications for home-based educators needs further development. The new qualifications requirements for coordinators of home-based services are identical to those required for persons responsible for early childhood centres. There is a national, bicultural early childhood curriculum framework (*Te Whaariki*) in place for all early childhood services. *Te Whaariki* was developed in partnership with Maori (the indigenous people), and is inclusive of home-based services. Policy initiatives are also in place to encourage improved outcomes for children through educators' self-evaluation.

<sup>6</sup> e.g., Galinsky, E., Howes, C., Kontos, S., & Shim, M. (1994). *The study of children in family child care and relative care*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

<sup>7</sup> Everiss (1999). *Bringing it back to mind: Two decades of family day care development in New Zealand*. Occasional paper No. 5. Wellington: Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University.

<sup>8</sup> A diploma-level qualification requires at least 2 years of full-time (or equivalent) study at an approved tertiary institution.

### Implications

What are the implications for countries where home-based programmes are in the hands of individuals, with no administration and funding from government? In New Zealand as in other countries where governments are responding to research on the educational and social benefits of high quality early childhood education and care services for young children, priorities are to increase participation and to enhance the quality of a diverse range of services. Integral parts of meeting these priorities potentially include:

- developing appropriate administrative infrastructures, regulations, curriculum, and support systems;
- fostering quality through education (qualifications of coordinators and caregivers, and ongoing professional development).

These requirements are important, to avoid problems of administrative fragmentation, and most importantly to enhance quality. A key reason for Government support and regulation is that the quality of early childhood services, including home-based services, is linked to long-term educational and social benefits for children and families.

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